

Trinity and mission

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[0 : 0 0] Let me add my good morning. My name is Sam. If I don't know you, hopefully I know most of you. I just wanted to, before I started, add two things quickly. I may have just not been paying attention enough, but I wanted to let you know that tonight at five o'clock, because we are joining you at 9.30 for church this morning, we thought, great, we have an opportunity to gather for some prayer, particularly with mission coming up. So it would be fantastic for as many as possible of us to gather tonight at five o'clock. It'll be in either this room or that room. If you turn up, you won't be able to miss us. We're going to gather, and instead of having a service, we're just going to pray, and we're going to praise God, and we're going to ask Him to work mightily. So tonight, five o'clock, please come back. It will be very worth the trip for you, and it'll be very encouraging for us as we cry out to God to work. The other thing I wanted to share with you is a big encouragement, and perhaps a little challenge, as we prepare for mission.

I wanted to encourage you that our young people are leading the charge on this. On Friday night, our young people brought 21 of their friends for the very first time to youth group to hear the gospel. If you are not encouraged by that, you need the person next to you to slap you so you can wake up. And if you are not challenged by that, you should be. That is exciting, but our young people, I want them to keep going even harder, but we as the slightly older generation need to be modelling to them what it looks like to be on mission for God. So that's an encouragement and challenge for you to file away as we prepare for mission in a couple of weeks. But let me pray, and then we'll get stuck into John 17. Father God, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that You're a God who wants to be known. We thank You for the opportunity we have had over this series to wrestle with what it means to know You, with who You are, that we have a relationship with. And Lord, we pray that this morning as we look again, that our knowledge of You, our relationship with You would begin to shape what it means for us to call ourselves Your church, to call ourselves Your followers. God, please soften our hearts now, strip away any hard edges or any just established routines that are not in line with the God that we follow, the God that You are, and instead by Your Spirit, shape us to reflect the love that You have shown us. Amen. I want to begin by asking you a question.

What is it that you think God wants from us as a church? Maybe more specifically, what is it that you think God wants from you as an individual? We are preparing for a focused week of mission, not a week of mission because we are always on mission. It's one of our core values to have local and global impact, but as we approach this focused week of mission, what is it that you think God wants from you? Now, before you get too far down answering that question, I want to confess, it's a trick question.

And yet it's a question that we ask. It's a trick question because if that is our starting point, we are betraying that somewhere in our minds, somewhere deep down, we have a picture of God that begins with Him wanting something from us, that begins with Him trying to take things from us.

God becomes almost like a leech to us. He's trying to suck out our energy or our time or our gifts. But over the past five weeks, we have wrestled with what it means to know God, with how important it is to know God because He is the defining reality. He is the center point for everything that exists.

[3 : 44] He is the anchor. And without a right picture of Him, we get lost and we start to ask questions like the one that I just asked you. As you reflect on the things that we have learned through the series of knowing God, looking at God as Father, Son and Spirit, I wonder if you can recognize the part of God's character that has come out louder than any other. The part of God's character that has come out more than any other. We've looked at many aspects of Him as Father, Son and Spirit, but one thing is true of Father, Son and Spirit. And I'll give you a clue. It comes in 1 John chapter 4. In 1 John chapter 4, we are told God is love. That is the defining attribute. We've seen through the series the mutual love that the Father and the Son share. We saw the way that the Spirit serves both the Father and the Son out of love. We looked at the love that God has shown us in many ways. And yet still, when it comes to something like mission or mission week, we revert back to this picture of God who wants something from me, who is just about taking from me. I mean, it's no wonder that so many of us balk at the extra commitment of a mission week. It's no wonder we have trouble finding enough people to put up the students as billets, or we have trouble finding volunteers to help with events, volunteers to walk up to people in the street and tell them about Jesus. If we feel like we're doing it out of some duty or some obligation or something that God requires of us, if mission is a burden we carry, then we shouldn't be surprised that mission week tends to not look that different for most of us. It's a week where we talk about mission and we expect the students and the staff to do a whole lot of it. When we have this vision of God as someone who takes, it's not a surprise that we struggle with something like mission. But we need to be clear that that is not the God who we follow. We need to look again at the vision that has been unpacked for us over the last five weeks, and in fact every week when we open the Bible. That is nothing like the God that we follow. We need to see Him clearly if we are to understand what it means for us to be on mission.

And so again, we're going to look at John chapter 17. I know we looked at this last week. Think of that as a gentle encouragement that there is always more. You can keep reading the same passages, lots and lots and lots. We're going to look at John 17 and see what it means for the God who is love to send us on mission. First thing I want to show you is that God is love, and that love is a giving love, not a taking love. Look at the way in this passage that the Father's love for Jesus is marked by generosity. Some of this is recap for where we've been.

Jesus is given the place of highest honour. It's Jesus who gets glorified by the Father in the early verses there, verses 1 and 2. His life, death and resurrection are an opportunity for the Son to be lifted up by the Father. And as Jesus reflects on the work that He has completed, listened to His words from verse 6.

Jesus speaking, I pray for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those you have given me.

And they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. And then verse 10, one of the key statements, all I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.

[7 : 56] I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. Everything from the disciples as Jesus followers, to the words that Jesus speaks in His earthly mission, to the power He has, to the specific tasks that He does, even the name that He carries is given to Jesus by the Father.

It's not something the Father requires from the Son. It's something the Father gives to Him. It's something the Father provides. This is the opposite of divine child abuse. This is not the Father forcing the Son to do something. This is abundant, generous love, as even in the cross, the Father gives to Jesus. The Father loves the Son even as He dies. Even in the mission that Jesus has of drawing people into a relationship with God is a gift from the Father. Sure, it's the Son who draws them in and presents them to the Father and unites us with the Father, but it's not His duty.

It's not something He does out of burden. It's His delight out of love for His Father. It's not the demand from the Father, but it is the gift from the Father to exalt the Son as the one who saves.

It is love from Father to Son which chooses Him for this specific role. If you flick back to John chapter 3, a very, very well-known verse, it says that the Father sends Jesus out of love. The loving and the sending are actually connected action. Look at chapter 3, verse 16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save Him.

[10:04] It is love that sends Jesus, not duty, not obligation. The Father actually loves Jesus by sending Him into the world. It's not that He loves Jesus and He sends Him. The sending is part of His love for the Son. In sending Him, He has chosen Him and He has given Him the path towards ultimate exaltation, the path to the name above every name. The Father sends Jesus. He loves Jesus by sending Him to earth to reveal the giving love of God. He gives Him that highest of privileges to be the place where the rest of us will discover the love of God. And He loves us at the same time.

In loving His Son, in sending His Son, He also loves us. It's not multiple actions. The love of the Father flows to the Son, through the Son, and then outwards towards us. God's love for you is marked by giving.

It is marked by generosity. He has given Himself to us according to verse 3. That's why Jesus comes, that we may know Him, the only true God. He's given us access to Him and He has drawn us into the relationship of love that exists between the Father and the Son. Look at verse 23.

This is Jesus praying for us. We've been reminded of that multiple times. The bishop reminded us two weeks ago. And He says this, start at verse 22. I have given them the glory that you gave me. Again, the Father gives to the Son and the Son has given to us that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

We are now loved like Jesus. The love that sent the Son now rests on us.

[12:14] And Jesus continues to be generously loved by His Father throughout the whole process. He sends His Son to die and to rise again so that we might know His love.

But even in that process, the Son continues to be the object of the Father's affection and delight. God's love is so all-encompassing and powerful and outward focus that it flows to the Son and through the Son to us without ever stopping the ultimate love that the Father has for the Son.

God's love is mind-blowingly generous. It flows out. It pours out. It overflows. And it cannot be contained.

God's love is missional love. It is sending love. The God who is love loves outwardly. It's not just this contained circle of Father, Son and Spirit, this little ball of love.

That's not how it works. God's love is outward. It always was outward. It is revealed as outward in Jesus and it will always be outward for all eternity.

- [13 : 26] The relationships we have seen between Father, Son and Spirit through this series continue on in heaven. The Father will continue to rejoice in His Son who was sacrificed. The Son will continue to delight in His Father and point to Him that all glory might go to Him. And the Spirit will continue to testify to the glory of both Son and Father. The outward love will continue to flow and overflow from God.
- So the question we need to ask with that fresh reminder of the God who we follow is what does that mean for how we approach mission?
- I guess in particular, our focused week of mission coming up. But what does it mean for how we view the call to go in Matthew 28? The call to make disciples. Three things.
- Firstly, the mission is God's, not ours. The mission is God. Look at verse 18.
- [14 : 28] As you sent me into the world, Jesus speaking, I have sent them into the world. The sending of the disciples and by implication the sending of us is the Father's mission which is being carried out by the Son.
- The mission that Jesus is on in His earthly ministry does not end as He is exalted to the throne. It continues even as He leaves.
- Jesus continues to be the place where we see the love of God ultimately displayed. But now, He will display that love through His disciples and through us as His followers by the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit.
- Jesus' mission continues. Jesus continues to point to the Father and His mission of proclaiming the love of God is and always will be God's mission.
- Which by grace, He has included us in. The Father gave it to the Son and according to verse 18, the Son now gives it to us by the power of His Spirit.
- [15 : 33] It's not so that Jesus can return to heaven and get into His recliner, put His feet up and start relaxing. That's not how it works. The reason Jesus gives it to us is for our sake.
- It is out of love for us. In the same way that the Father gives the mission to Jesus out of love, Jesus gives the mission to us out of love.
- The Father doesn't need Jesus to accomplish His will. He is God completely, fully, almighty. But He includes Jesus out of love for Him. He uses the Son out of love for Him.
- And likewise, we have been included out of love for us. It is something that God has given us. Even the content of our mission is gifted by God.
- We don't have to come up with a good story or a clever way of explaining the gospel. Verse 6 tells us, Verse 14 says, I have given them your word and the world has hated them for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.
- [16 : 46] The Father has given us His word to speak. We don't have to generate anything. The Father has given us the word which testifies to Jesus. But even more significant, I think, God's mission is one of glorifying Himself.
- One of revealing Himself. And to empower us to do that, He lives in us by His Spirit. That's the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer.
- That's the answer to verse 23. I in them and you in me. Father in the Son, Son in us by the Spirit. The power of God living in us is the provision of God to do the mission of God.
- It's still His mission. It is still something that only He can accomplish. But He has provided His Spirit so that we may be a part of it. This mission is God's mission. And He has given, He has gifted it to us out of love for our sake.
- First thing, the mission is God's. We need to grab that. Second thing, the mission is for our joy. Let me show you what I mean. The primary means of our mission is God's love in us.

[18 : 02] It's not what you do or don't do. It is God's love in us. You can see it in Jesus. In spite of the opposition that He faces in His earthly ministry, He describes in John's Gospel that doing the Father's will is like His food.

The writer of the Hebrews expresses it. It says, For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross. The joy that was set before Jesus was His glorification, His exaltation, to the glory of the Father.

The joy for Jesus was knowing that He had been chosen for this incredible mission that would ultimately glorify the Father. and He knew that this was a gift to Him.

The Father includes the Son for the Son's sake. Jesus delights in His mission because central to it is the love of the Father being displayed in His life.

Jesus' mission is to show God the Father and the way He shows it is by being loved by the Father. It is by God's love being so obvious in Jesus' life that people cannot deny it.

[19 : 12] Now, it's worth acknowledging that this doesn't mean Jesus' mission was easy. There's plenty of examples in His life that we can go to. His family didn't understand Him. He was rejected in His hometown. He was strongly opposed.

He was ultimately tortured and murdered. But through all of this, He continued to delight in the generous and abundant love of His Father.

He continued to delight in the fact that the Father loved Him enough to choose Him to be the Savior and King for all creation. Even though there was pain and difficulty at its core, for Jesus being on God's mission meant being loved by His Father.

The mission that Jesus is sending us on here in verse 18 is an opportunity for joy. It is an opportunity for us to so delight in the love of God that it overflows and spills into the lives of those around us.

I mean, it's almost like bragging. That is what God has called us to in being a part of His mission. I remember very distinctly the Christmas Eve about five and a half, maybe six and a bit years ago now, when my gorgeous wife said, yes, she would marry me.

[20 : 31] I can't tell you how many people I annoyed with that exciting news. Every person that I went up to, people who didn't even know me or her that well, I just needed them to know that I was marrying the most beautiful girl that there was.

And I wanted to rub it in. I wanted them to know that there was nobody who could bring more joy to anybody else. And I just bragged and bragged. And I had a job in a church. I was at the front. People were stuck listening to me all the time.

And I would just tell them how fantastic my fiancée was because there was nobody who brought me joy like she did. It's the same for us as followers of Jesus.

The call to be on mission is a call to rejoice in the joy, to celebrate, to bask in the love that God has shown us in Jesus.

To be daily overwhelmed and excited and to need to just tell somebody how good your God is. that is a gift. That's not a burden.

[21 : 30] Real joy like that just comes out. I couldn't have kept a secret. I remember when I found out that Sal was pregnant with Bailey. It was the hardest thing in the world not to tell you.

I found out at the four week mark and it is a miracle, it is an act of the Holy Spirit that I kept that secret till the 12 week mark. If I'm really honest, I let it out to one or two people. But even that is an act of the Holy Spirit because I was just busting with joy at this gift that I had been given.

God is infinitely better than bay, than Sal, than anything that He has given us. And mission is an opportunity for us to delight in God and to let it run out of us.

To let it spill over. When we lose this vision of God, when we lose this understanding of the gift that He has given us, the gift that He is to us, mission becomes the duty of the few rather than the delight of the many.

When we have this leech view of God, mission becomes something we avoid at all costs, something we outsource, something we get a team to come in and do for us rather than something we all rejoice in.

[22 : 51] But when we feel like that, we need to come back to who God actually is. We need to come back to the vision that He has shown us, back to the loving, giving God who has revealed Himself as sovereign and supreme, the God who loves us so much that He includes us for our sake and not because He needs us.

There is an amazing testimony in the example of the Ephesian church. If you have time later on, have a flick through Acts 19, I think it is.

Ephesus is a significant city. It is a port, it is a trade centre and there are many pagan gods there. There are temples, there is lots going on and Paul arrives and starts preaching Jesus and what we see is that mission happens so effectively that many of the temples start to almost go out of business.

The temple of Artemis suddenly is concerned because they are losing the money. The silversmiths aren't able to keep making the little idols to be worshipped or to be carried around because people aren't following Artemis anymore.

The mission is so effective and so explosive that there is, you know, they try and kill Paul. They try and get rid of him, they try and have him removed. The port starts to struggle because the emphasis is no longer on the things that made the city rich and powerful and the question we need to ask is what is it that made their mission so effective when we look at so many other churches that have zero influence on the world around them.

[24 : 30] Let me read to you from Revelation chapter 2. This is obviously at the end. It says, These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

This is a letter to the church at Ephesians. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men. You've tested those who claim to be apostles but are not and have found them false.

You've persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. There's this list of things that are going fantastically. They're testing false teaching. They are persevering.

They're not tolerating wickedness amongst them. They're enduring hardship. They're not growing weary but something is missing and it comes in verse 4 of Revelation 2.

Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen.

[25 : 29] Repent and do the things you did at first. What was it that saw the Ephesian church explode with the love of God? It was love for God.

What was it that saw the Ephesian church grow so quickly that it was a threat to the government and the organisations around it? It was their love for God.

And sadly, somewhere along the way they got so caught up in all these other things that they were required to do that they lost that first love. That first sense of gift from God.

God's mission is a gift for our joy. The Ephesian church at the beginning didn't need to be told to do anything. They were just so in love with Jesus that people were drawn in.

God's mission is a gift for our joy. One last thing. Missional is who we are. Mission is not something that we do as God's church, as God's people.

[26 : 35] Missional is who we are. It's part of who we've been created to be. Mission is not a hobby. It's not a pastime. It's not something we do on the side. It's what it means to love God is to be missional.

We learnt last week we've been drawn into the mutual relationship of love that is in God. Verse 20, back in John 17, verse 20 says, my prayer is not for them alone.

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one Father just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

So I said this last week but I'll say it again because it is amazing. The Father in the Son and the Son in the Father that is the relationship we have been drawn into. Not the Father and the Son and then us next to it.

But Jesus' prayer is that we would be in them. That we would know the Father's giving love. That we would know the Son's obedience, sacrificial service and love.

[27 : 37] The same unity which is a unity of love. A unity of outward love. A unity of missional love. A unity of sending love. To love God is to glorify Him.

To love God is to point to Him as the most delightful thing because you can't help it because you delight in Him. That's what the Father and the Son do.

That's how they love each other. And their love for each other flows out and draws us in. There is nothing one directional about the love that is in God.

Even if we just focus on the Father's love for the Son it's not just this. it's this and this and this and we are drawn into that sort of love.

So when we call ourselves Christians who love God our love for God is not like this. Our love of God is the same as the Son's love for the Father.

[28 : 37] Love that loves the Father in such a way that it flows out to those around. Loves the Father in such a way that it reveals the glory of the Father to anyone who is there to see.

Our love needs to be outward and overwhelming. Look at verse 16 in John 17 talking about the disciples. They are not of the world even as I am not of it.

Sanctify them by the truth your word is truth. As you sent me into the world I have sent them into the world. The same love that draws us out of our sin and out of the world that is rejecting God and into the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit sends us straight back into the world.

It says it Jesus says they are not of the world. They have been rescued they have been sanctified they have been drawn into the relationship with God but then in verse 18 in the same breath Jesus says as you sent me I have sent them.

Jesus' prayer is don't take them out of the world. If you take them out of the world they won't be able to practice the love that we have. They won't be able to have that outward love.

[29 : 43] Part of what it means to love God is to share his love. It's not two things. It is the one action. We as a church must not be just a love club.

We must not be just a place where we all love one another inside these walls or in this property or in our relationships. If that is all we are we have failed as God's church because that is not who God is.

God's love is outward. For us to love one another and to love him as he loves us is to love outwardly. For this to be a love club that spills and flows and runs into Chatswood community and throughout the world for people to see people who love God and delight in him.

Part of what it means to love God is for that love to flow outward. God's mission of loving people by revealing himself is for our joy.

It's part of who he has made us to be. So really quickly the last question I have is in light of that how do we go from the point we are at and I know it's not for all of us but how do we go from that point of feeling like we have to do mission to delighting in mission?

[31 : 04] Remember the Ephesians remember our first love. Go back to the beginning. Remember what it was like to see the cross for the first time.

To understand that Jesus hung there in your place paid your price offered you life. Do you remember what it was like to be so overwhelmed with gratitude and joy that you just had to start following him?

That there was nothing else you could do but fall on your knees in thankfulness? We need to go back to the beginning.

If it has become a later or a burden for us the call is the same as the call to the Ephesian church. Remember your first love. Remember the joy that is only available for those who belong to the Father for all eternity and let that joy and love flow out.

Let it overflow. The way you prepare to live a life of mission is by basking in the love of God.

[32 : 20] It's by reminding yourself daily of the love of God and allowing that love to touch the lives around you. what a gift God has given us.

His love His Son and now His mission. Let's pray. Father God again we are overwhelmed with your majesty.

we are humbled with the depths and extent of your love. We acknowledge that we fall so far short of the privilege you have called us to in loving in loving you and in loving your world.

Father where we feel burden may you lift that and replace it with gratitude and thankfulness. God where there are things that distract us may you shine brightest.

Strip away things that we lean on and that we take pleasure from instead of you and enable us to grab the fullness of joy that Jesus speaks about. God we pray that we would not be a closed community but that we would be a beacon for your love.

[33 : 43] That the way we love one another the way we love you would be outward would be the same as the way that you've loved us. God strengthen us by your spirit.

give us hearts that can grasp your majesty that can love you as you deserve and Father please draw other people in to know that love.

Please use us to show the delight and joy that comes from calling you Father. Please glorify yourself in us and through us.

Amen.