

Our Lord and Mission

September 25, 2016

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Cornerstone by Edward Mote & Reuben Morgan

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer)

My hope is built on nothing less	His oath, His covenant, His blood
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness	Support me in the 'whelming flood
I dare not trust the sweetest frame	When all around my soul gives way
But wholly trust in Jesus' Name	He then is all my hope and stay

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil

Chorus

When He shall come with trumpet sound
Oh may I then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone
Faultless to stand before the throne

Chorus:

Christ alone, Cornerstone
Weak made strong in the Savior's love
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all

Icebreaker

Is there someone or something that you get really excited about; that you can't wait to share with others?
(For example: Your favorite food or restaurant or movie or music, etc.)

Text for Discussion: Book of Acts (selected verses)

See attached sheet for selected verses.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

If the church is not a place but a people, we must consider our mission as followers of Jesus to mend the world. How are we the church sent as God's people on His mission? The book of Acts offers insight into this question. Story after story, we see how the apostles and early Christians proclaimed the good news wherever they went – even against enemies and persecution, controversies and conflicts, they spread the gospel. They could not keep silent.

But this mission didn't start in Acts. The Father sent the Son (John 20:21); the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit. Our God is a missionary God! It is in His nature to go and to save. Mission is not an optional add-on to our faith; it is part of God's nature and part of our identity. The Father sends us, for we are His missionary people. We are included in the divine calling, sent so that the world may be healed and Christ may be exalted.

The church is God's sent people on His mission by His power. That was the early church's identity. Somewhere along the way, the church became an institution instead of a movement. It settled into formalizing and protecting itself. It became about traditions, teachings moral values, and personal spirituality. Not that these are bad, but in our modern western world, somewhere along the way, the church lost its mission.

How was the early church so outwardly focused? There are many factors, but central to their mission was who they regarded Jesus to be. (See Acts 4:33, 8:16, 11:20, 15:11, 16:31, 20:35, Romans 10:9, 2 Cor 4:5). "Jesus is Lord!" We proclaim that He is comprehensively Lord of all. All things were created through Him and for Him (Col 1:16). This was a dangerous profession for early Christians because "Jesus is Lord" meant complete, risky, costly submission to Jesus over and against any other loyalty or authority.

We hear a radically different message today from our consumerist culture, which persuades us to live for ourselves, spend on ourselves, all to please ourselves. There are so many ways we can achieve this, with even more reminders of how much more we could enjoy if only we had more money. In consumerism, we don't have a Lord to whom we submit and we don't have a mission for which we've been sent. Instead, we are our own Lord and our own mission. But if we see consumerism as an enemy to our faith, we can combat it. By learning to say no to ourselves, we can make room for ways to give. More importantly, we make room to proclaim "Jesus is Lord."

Living for God's mission is rooted in seeing Jesus and seeing that He is worthy. It begins in worship. Jesus gave up everything to make us His own. Our mission therefore isn't about trying harder or doing more; it is about having our hearts captured by the beauty and worth of Jesus. Joy is the engine and worship is the fuel of mission. Jesus calls us to live for something bigger than ourselves. What would it look like to believe we are God's sent missionaries to Los Angeles? What would it look like if we loved our neighbors through word and deed? What would it look like if our lives individually and our worship corporately could display the beauty and worth of Jesus?

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What is your mission?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) What stood out to you in these various passages of Acts (see attached handout)?
 - o When you think of the word "mission", what does that mean to you? Can you resonate with that calling in your life or do you tend to see it as something that other people do? What might God be calling you to?
- 2) What does it mean that Jesus is Lord? What did it mean to the early church in Acts? What does it mean for us today?
- 3) **Guiding Question:** What is your mission?
 - o What would it look like for you to see yourself as sent by Jesus – as a missionary in Los Angeles?
 - o How can we help one another live a life of mission in our local neighborhoods?
- 4) John Piper says: "Worship is the fuel of missions". What does that mean?
 - o What would it look like if our lives individually and our worship corporately could display the beauty and worth of Jesus?
- 5) Do you agree that consumerism is a challenge to the gospel? If so, how have you seen the implications in your life and in the lives around you?
 - o What would it look like to have a regular habit of simplicity in your life?
 - o How can we help one another combat consumerism in our lives?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Spend some time in confession. Ask God to show you the areas of your life where you are tempted towards consumerism. What would it look like to confess Jesus as Lord in these areas?
- Pray a prayer of surrender: "Lord, my money belongs to you. My career belongs to you. My marriage, my kids – they belong to you. My body belongs to you" etc.
- Ask God for opportunities where you can live missionally in your neighborhood, in your work and personal relationships, etc.
- Spend some time in adoration of God. Meditate on his different characteristics (i.e. Lord, Father, Shepherd, Bridegroom, Friend, Advocate, etc).
- Feel free to read through passages of Psalms together for extended worship time.

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Selected Verses from Acts

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**" (Acts 1:8)

So those who received his word were baptized, and **there were added that day about three thousand souls.** (Acts 2:41)

And the Lord **added to their number day by day** those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47)

And with great power **the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**, and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

And more than ever **believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women** (Acts 5:14)

[after Peter and other apostles were jailed and flogged] And every day, in the temple and from house to house, **they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.** (Acts 5:42)

[after deacons were appointed] And the **word of God continued to increase**, and the **number of the disciples multiplied** greatly in Jerusalem, and a **great many of the priests** became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

¹ And Saul approved of [Stephen's] execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of **Judea and Samaria**, except the apostles. . . ⁴ Now those who were **scattered went about preaching the word.** ⁵ Philip went down to the city of **Samaria** and **proclaimed to them the Christ.** (Acts 8:1, 4, 5)

Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, **preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.** (Acts 8:25)

But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through **he preached the gospel to all the towns** until he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:40)

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for [Paul] is a chosen instrument of mine **to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.**" (Acts 9:15)

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and **was being built up.** And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it **multiplied.** (Acts 9:31)

And [Peter raising Tabitha from the dead] became known throughout all Joppa, and **many believed in the Lord.** (Acts 9:42)

When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the **Gentiles** also God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:18)

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, **speaking the word** to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, **preaching the Lord Jesus.** And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a **great number who believed turned to the Lord.** (Acts 11:19-21)

But the **word of God increased and multiplied.** (Acts 12:24)

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2, **Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey**)

And the **word of the Lord was spreading** throughout the whole region. (Acts 13:49)

and there they **continued to preach the gospel.** (Acts 14:7)

Simeon has related how God first visited the **Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.** (Acts 15:14)

So the **churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.** (Acts 16:5, Paul's second missionary journey)

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul **believed and were baptized.** (Acts 18:8)

After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, **strengthening all the disciples.** (Acts 18:23, Paul's third missionary journey)

So the **word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.** (Acts 19:20)

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, **to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.** (Acts 20:24)

[Paul lived in prison] **proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ** with all boldness and without hindrance. (Acts 28:31, the last verse of Acts)

And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the **Lord Jesus**, and great grace was upon them all. (Acts 4:33)

And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "**Lord Jesus**, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59)

for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the **Lord Jesus.** (Acts 8:16)

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the **Lord Jesus** who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 9:17)

If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the **Lord Jesus Christ**, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11:17)

But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the **Lord Jesus.** (Acts 11:20)

But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the **Lord Jesus**, just as they will." (Acts 15:11)

men who have risked their lives for the name of our **Lord Jesus Christ.** (Acts 15:26)

And they said, "Believe in the **Lord Jesus**, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31)

On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the **Lord Jesus.** (Acts 19:5)

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the **Lord Jesus** over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." (Acts 19:13)

And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the **Lord Jesus** was extolled. (Acts 19:17)

testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in **our Lord Jesus Christ.** (Acts 20:21)

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the **Lord Jesus**, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)