

# ***Multiply***

2.12.2017

**Mission is part of who we are not simply what we do.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

- Good morning! It is good to be back to worship with you all after Teresa and I got away for a weekend on the cape last weekend. Teresa's 95 year old grandmother passed away on Monday night so we had to head down for the funeral. I flew back last night and Teresa and the girls are driving back today so you can keep them in your prayers.
- Today we are finishing our series the Image of God. We have been talking about what it means to be human and what God made us to do in this world. Being human means being made in the image of God and all the purposes that come with that. We see this in the progressive facets of creation...

Humans -> Male/Female -> Marriage -> Sex -> Cultural Mandate

- To just refresh your mind, we see the Cultural Mandate given in Genesis 1 and 2  
1:28 *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*  
2:15 *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*
- So God created image-bearers to reflect his character and his glory in this world and then gave them a mission: Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. To work in this world for God's glory and our good. This is the cultural mandate and it is at the heart of every new city, language, and culture. We have families because of it, we build buildings because of it, we split the atom because of it, and we can't stop doing it.
- But we are broken. Genesis 3 shows us how man has been corrupted spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically as we rebelled against our Creator and chose to go our own way.
- Sermon Title Slide -"Man at the Crossroads" by Diego Rivera (1934) was a fresco in New York City's Rockefeller Center. It portrays a wide selection of humans on the brink of accomplishing great things and conquering the natural world. It highlights scientific advancements in every area but also includes the broken elements of our world like in the upper left corner where soldiers in gas masks are pictured.
- We are broken, finite creators but create we must. This is the Cultural Mandate. Mike did a great job last week covering the first half of the cultural mandate. He focused on the subduing the earth through work and service. He helped us to see that through Christ, work is redeemed and can serve the Kingdom of God. I am deeply encouraged by the way I see God calling many gospel-believing Christians stand up against injustice, racism, and poverty in our culture. There is a passion and zeal to protect those who are abused and mistreated. And I hope you have to come to see that we stand up because it is an image of God issue. If we really believe that all people are made in the image of God and have inherent dignity value and worth and we have been called to work and subdue the earth for the glory of God, then we WILL use our lives to make a difference. There is a ton left to do but I am encouraged by the passion for social justice.
- Today we are looking at a second aspect of the Cultural Mandate. That is to multiply and fill the earth. In the garden of Eden that was biological act of having children and while that carries over into the post fall world to a degree, what we find is the cultural mandate in the New Testament is primarily focused not on making babies but on making disciples. We are going to

trace the story-line of Scripture and see how the mission to make disciples is not something we do, it is part of who we are as the people of God.

### **Glimpses of God's Mission in the Garden**

- We begin to see glimpses of God mission to bring a restoration even before he kicks them out of the garden. The hope of mankind would not be in having children and filling the earth but in that one child would come to redeem us all. We talked about this in week 1 of our series, but right after Adam and Eve fell into sin God gives us the first glimpse of the gospel.
- Hope is PROMISED in Genesis 3:15  
*"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* Genesis 3:15
- Theologians refer to this as the proto-gospel. The first gospel in the Bible. God is promising one of the woman's offspring would crush the head of the serpent.
- Forgiveness is PICTURED in v.21. *And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.* God sacrificed the first animal. It gave its life to cover the nakedness and shame of Adam and Eve. God was picturing the sacrifice of Christ here.
- But it wasn't long before the destructive power of human sin rose up in hate, murder, immorality, and more sin. We see in Genesis 11, people doing the exact opposite of the cultural mandate. God had said "be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth." Instead, mankind gathered into one area and refused to press out to subdue the earth. Instead of filling the earth for the glory of God and the good of humanity. Humanity chose to build one city with a really high tower for the glory of man so we could thumb our noses at God.
- This is the city of babel. Later to be called Babylon. It is pictured throughout Scripture and even into the book of Revelation as the definitive city of mankind. It is mankind glorying in himself and in his sinful rebellion against God. This is the result of Adam and Eve's sinful rebellion.
- But what God does next begins a movement that would literally alter history. We see God's mission revealed through a man named Abraham (Abram at that point)

### **God's mission – to fill the earth with his glory by redeeming a family for Himself from every nation. (TURN TO Genesis 12:3, 22:18)**

- Chapter 12 begins with God starting something NEW – calls a man Abram from a pagan nation. Abram steps out in faith and God promises to literally effect the nations through him.
- "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* Gen 12:3
- Not a national blessing – God was not going to bless all the families of all of the earth with Israel. They were to be a light to the world as a nation. The world was supposed to see Israel and get a glimpse of God and his goodness but this was always to prepare the way for Jesus. Christ is the blessing that blesses all the families of the earth!
- God makes it a little more clear to Abraham just a few chapters later in Genesis. *"... and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..."* –Gen 22:18
- All the promises to bless the world and give the land is to only 1 "offspring." It is not plural in the Hebrew.
- So, God was telling Abraham about Jesus without telling him fully. Now, just to wreck your mind for a second, to show how we get from Abraham to Jesus, Matthew, the first book of the New Testament begins with what many of feel is just a boring genealogy. But this is where we are just wrong.
- Matthew 1:1 *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* You see in the Old Testament Christ is promised and pictured but in the New Testament the

promise is KEPT. Jesus is nothing less than the descendent of Abraham, the promised offspring to bless the nations.

- Paul helps us to understand how God's promise to Abraham in Genesis is fulfilled in Jesus.
- Galatians 3:16 *"Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ."*
- Jesus is the promised means of the mission of God to be fulfilled.
- Now that Jesus had died and given his life to take on the sins of the world. The message is clear: John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* Jesus is the new Adam who doesn't give into sin but dies for our sin. He doesn't fail in the garden but stands firm on the cross. He doesn't fail and bring us all death. He dies to give us all eternal life.
- It is in that mission that we then find our mission as his church.

**Our mission: as part of God's family we join God in his mission to multiply disciples from all nations. (Mt 28:18-20)**

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Matt 28:18-20

- Make disciples of all the nations -"*panta ta ethne.*" Not geo-political organizations you see on a map. All the ethnic people groups on earth.
- Steve Timmis the executive director of Acts29 church planting network, which we are part of, describes mission as extending Eden.
- "It's the work of extending Eden for which we were made, which the first Adam forfeited and the Last Adam secured." Steve Timmis
- He goes on to highlight how "In God's purposes the command to *'be fruitful & multiply* (and so) *fill the earth & subdue it'* in Genesis 1:28 was going to be fulfilled by the followers of Jesus going to the ends of the earth and making disciples. Seven times in the book of Acts we read "the *word of God continued to increase*". The word "increased" in its simple form is translated elsewhere as "to *make fruitful.*" It has the idea of organic growth and multiplication."
- ILL – And this mission has happened for 2000 years and is happening TODAY all over the world. You may have heard me mention what Jesus is doing in Iran right now. The Iranian church is the fastest growing gospel-believing church in any country in the world. The second fastest is Afghanistan. Mike and I met with a leader of an Iranian Ministry and he showed us this short but powerful video. [SHOW ELAM MINISTRIES VIDEO](#)
- So this mission to multiply disciples is the reason that singleness is not a barrier to being a fulfilled image-bearer of God. In fact, SINGLENES can be an asset in the mission of God. While in the Old Testament, Israel grew through marriage and children, in the New Testament, the church goes forward through multiplying disciples.
- What the Bible says about sex and marriage "has a singularly foreign sound for those of us brought up on romantic notions of marriage and sex. We are struck by the stark realism of the Pauline recommendations in 1 Corinthians 7 . . . but [most of all by] the early church's legitimization of singleness as a form of life [which] symbolized the necessity of the church to grow through witness and conversion." *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* by Stanley Hauerwas
- So, how can singleness be an advantage in mission? 1 Corinthians 7 Paul highlights several reasons but one key is that Single people can devote themselves more fully to God's work: "An

*unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided" (1 Cor. 7:32-34).*

- So marriage is not bad and it has a role to point to the relationship between Christ and his church as we said a few weeks back, but marriage is not ultimate. Children are not ultimate. The Lord is ultimate. And a single person can devote themselves to the Lord's mission in a way a married person can't. And, in addition, the single person's family is more clearly seen to be the church. Their brothers and sisters are fellow Christians. Their children are the new Christians they have been a part of leading to faith in Jesus. Their sons and daughters are eternal ones not biological ones.
- Singleness is hard and I totally understand that. This is one reason why we have to be constantly pressing deeper into community as a church. It is not about having some friends. Those who don't know Jesus have friends. The church is a family. Jesus creates those family relationships where they didn't exist. We have a long way to go but it is worth pressing into.

### **How can we seek to multiply disciples of Jesus?**

#### **1. Remember mission is not something we do but is who we are.**

- The church was birthed from the mission of God and lives for the mission of God.
- "Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God. . . . Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. . . . There is a church because there is a mission, not vice versa." – David Bosch, Missiologist
- City on a Hill exists because of the mission of Jesus and his church. We exist because of it and FOR it. Without the missional church, we would all be dead in our sin and hopeless before a holy God. The early church would have died out as a temporary cult in human history. But the church exists BY mission and FOR mission.
- Mission is not what we do, it is who we are. To understand the gospel is to understand the mission of the church and to understand the mission of the church is to understand your roles as an ambassador of the gospel.

#### **2. Embrace a counter-cultural authenticity**

- Christians have always been a little weird and counter-cultural. I'm not talking about weird like I go to Star Trek Conventions dressed as or play real life games of Quiddich on the Common. If you do those things, that's fine but its not the kind of weird I'm suggesting Christians.
- Christians at their best have always stuck out a bit. There are ways they connect with culture for sure but the way they do life is counter-cultural and reflected authenticity in following Jesus.
- ILL - Tim Keller shares that Roman historian **Suetonius** (c. AD 69 – c. AD 122), one of the early pagan writers, actually said about Christians that they were actually another '*genus*.' He used the Greek word *genus*...which is a word for species...that Christians were a different species of human. He said it because Christians didn't keep their Christianity private, it shaped the way in which they lived culturally. They were a chosen race...they were a holy nation...holy means separate...they became a counterculture. Why? Well, here's what we know about the early Christians. Here are some of the things that they practiced:
  1. They didn't go to the blood-thirsty entertainment, the gladiatorial fests...and therefore they were considered anti-social
  2. They did not serve in the military in order to support Caesar's wars of conquest
  3. They were against abortion and infanticide (adopted unwanted babies)

4. They thought women and men were equal. They empowered women, allowing women in positions of leadership that were very different from the rest of society
  5. They were against sex outside marriage – that was weird, even then!
  6. They were absolutely radically for the poor – they gave way beyond that of what the Greeks and Romans gave
  7. They mixed the races and classes together in their gatherings that were considered scandalous
  8. They believed that Christ was the only way to salvation
- This is the context where Christians multiply most effectively. Living, working, serving in a way that is unique and compelling and SHARING the gospel message with those around them. This is one of the visions for naming City on a Hill Church. We want to live and share life together in such a way that there is no good explanation except that Jesus is Lord and as we do so, helping our friends find and follow Jesus.

### **3. Reach your friends**

- If you are a Christian how many of you want your non-Christian friends to have a life changing encounter with Jesus and experience eternal life? I doubt any Christian in this room said, “not me.” But do we realize that God has put us where we are as the primary connection our friends have with God?
- A statement that we have adopted from a sister church captures our purpose. “ We are here to help our friends and neighbors find and follow Jesus”” SAY THAT WITH ME.
- What would you do differently this week if you believed that Jesus has sent you to your workplace and given you the relationships you have?
- If Jesus was sent into the world on mission to seek and to save the lost, God has sent you into your little world with a specific purpose. I’m not talking about manipulation or pressure or seeing your friends as projects but seeing your friends with the eyes of Christ.
- Jesus didn’t see you as a project. He saw you as an image-bearer of God, marred and broken by sin and alienated from your Creator. He came for you precisely BECAUSE He loved you and wanted you to have eternal life. Your motivation with your friends should be the same.
- QUOTE -When you remember that Jesus came from heaven and went through hell for you, you cannot help but want to do that for others who don’t yet know Jesus.
- REACH YOUR FRIEND FOCUS this year.
  1. Pray for one friend every day.
  2. Serve this person
  3. Invite them to your home, a CG event, or to a church service.
  4. Share the gospel with them this year
- We want to walk with you this year so we are creating a system where you can opt in for weekly text messages and support. We’ll have that by next Sunday. Also, a gospel-training seminar in March. Still nailing down the date but want to help equip you to communicate the gospel to your friend in a natural way.

### **4. Keep the end in mind.**

- We can all get caught up in the immediate with work, money, relationships, and everything else but we have to fight the pull to live like this world is our ultimate home. When we do, we forget the mission and focus on what we want and what is comfortable for us and we try to create a pseudo heaven where we are the center.
- But we aren’t. And one day the mission of God will be complete and this world will get swallowed up in a giant multi-cultural worship party.

- *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"* Revelation 7:9-10
- One day this will be the scene. Same language as Gen 12 and Matt 28 – the nations will gather. This is the consummation of history and what does it look like? A multi-cultural worship gathering where the beauty and diversity of all the peoples of the world are brought together to worship King Jesus!
- AND if you are a Christian you are THERE! YOU are in the Bible! Didn't know if you knew that but you are in this scene. . .
- So here we stand – between the Great Commission and the Great Celebration at the end.

## CONCLUSION

- QUOTE – we aren't motivated by guilt but by glory! Jesus' glory!
- Mission is part of who we are not simply something we do. Let's press out as the new image-bearers of God to make Jesus name known in our city and around the world.

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