

This is Reality: Missional.

(Keynote slide of series logo—put up as soon as I take the stage and leave up until next Keynote slide)

John 1

Intro:

- A mini-series called ***This is Reality: Theological. Missional. Relational***
- An attempt to identify and explain why we approach things the way we do as a church
 - Theology—We want to be biblical and consonant with the character of God
 - Mission—We want to be proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel in all we do
 - Relationship—We want to make sure that we are caring for and loving people
- Who, what, how – God, mission, loving relationships

This paradigm helps to keep us on track and in touch with our goal—**to glorify God and participate in the purposes of God**—in a way that is consonant with who God is.

Theological:

We are concerned about and formed by an understanding of who God is

- God and Scripture dictate, shape and inform who we are and what we do as a church
- Not the needs, ideas or opinions of people and culture
 - We care about and address those things, but we are not shaped and driven by them
 - The reason we exist and gather and scatter is because of and for God
 - **But, because of who God is, we desperately want to tell the world about Him—so, we are missional**

Missional:

We want to be careful with our use of this word

We are aware of its current uses in mission and church leadership circles

- It is currently/often being used to identify **almost anything that new churches** are doing that more traditional churches and usual evangelicalism are failing to do (an adversarial and overused buzzword)
 - Used to describe something **conservative** churches are not (but we are conservative)
 - Used to describe something **mega-churches** are not (but we are a mega-church)¹
- Has become largely associated with the **emerging church** and often more **liberal** churches (we are neither)
- It has become closely identified with the '**social gospel**' (values societal change over indv. salvation)
- Though the term is currently very vogue it is not new
 - John Stott; Lesslie Newbigin (England) et al for decades
- The term itself is simply the **adjectival form** of the noun "mission"
 - But since it has so many connotations we have avoided it for some time ("on mission")
 - But because it is so popular currently, and really does get at something meaningful when used simply and sincerely, we want to define it as we see it

What it means to be “missional”:

To be (1) aware of and concerned about what God is doing in the world around us, and (2) to endeavor to be directly and daily involved in that.

- To believe that God is on mission, in our world, right now
 - And to be committed to, passionate about, active in God's mission

¹ There are about 300,000 churches in the US and about 1200 (about .4%) of them are mega-churches (weekly attendance of 2000 or more). Source: http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#sizecong

- That mission in the world flows forth from the nature/essence of God and we are a part of that mission and invited into that mission
 - To believe that mission is not merely an activity of the church but rather an attribute of God
 - All mission is God's mission and we are to be on that mission

The Attractional vs. Missional discussion

- Has to do with a general approach to being and doing church
- **Attractional:** Trying to get people to come to church (I.e. the building), and ultimately be interested in Jesus, through having quality programs, excellent music, enough parking and facilities, sermons that address immediate felt needs, and being cool enough for culture (make church cool and convenient)
 - Anthropocentric (It starts with people: What do people want? Lets design church around that!)
 - Big would be a goal
 - "Come and see" mentality
- **Missional:** Not so much concerned with people coming to a church building, but more about taking Jesus and His message to people outside the church. Getting people interested in Jesus by being like Jesus in culture
 - Small might be a goal
 - "Go and tell" mentality

The local church needs to be both

- We can and should be attractional and missional (in the best sense of each term)
 - Come and see annnd go and tell
 - We can and should gather in larger and smaller groups (Acts—both are needed)
 - When people come into the church (in a large or small setting) it should be **attractive** (because of the presence of Christ and the love of the people) (The idea of "come-and-see")
 - It should also be **relatable/understandable**
 - Not to merely appeal to/hook people, per say, but rather to communicate to/with people, because God loves people and His message is directed toward them!
 - **We don't try to make the Gospel relevant, we endeavor to show how it is relevant**
 - But we should also be **missional**
 - Understanding that some people will never come into the church building and so we go **out into the world** to take the person and message of Jesus to them (The idea of "go-and-tell")
 - This too we do with the realization that Christ in us should be attractive and that we also need to communicate Christ in word and in deed **in ways people understand**
 - This idea involves something that is popularly called **contextualization**
 - "Contextualization is not giving people what they want, it is giving them God's answers (which they may not want) to the questions they are asking and in forms they can comprehend."² (also known as common sense!)
 - We are not trying to **make** the gospel relevant, rather we are trying to **demonstrate** and **explain** the relevance of the Gospel
 - But both our **gathering and our scattering**, our **attractional and missional** elements need to be based on who God is, what God wants and what God is doing (Theocentric), not necessarily on what people want and are doing (anthropocentric)
 - Realizing that God knows what people ultimately want and need (**love and salvation**)
- ...

² From a lecture by Tim Keller (Not sure which one)
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The fact that we are missional is based on things theological—

God is a missionary God

- The nature/essence of God as revealed by the Word of God/Bible
- Trinity
 - Father, Son, Holy Spirit
 - **I John 4:8** (love)
 - = A **community of love** that reaches out (Cf. The Church)
- "Love does not permit the lover to rest in himself. It **draws him out of himself**, so that he may be entirely in the beloved." -Pseudo-Dionysius the sixth century spiritual theologian³
 - The nature of love is to 'go out' of itself
 - To be other-centered, not self-centered or egocentric
 - To reach outward (not being inward oriented)
- Since God is love, God is on mission (**essence**)
- The nature of God is to 'go out' (**He is a missionary God**)
 - First in creation and then in redemption

What we see **in the Gospels** is the eternal movement of God, made manifest, in human history: **The Incarnation**

- Out of the communal love within the Trinity flows God's love for the world outside the Trinity.⁴

Mission is not **primarily** an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God

- We are missional because God is missional (**redeemed image-bearers**)

The Incarnation (God going out and becoming like in order to save) becomes the model for mission

- It teaches us that love "**goes to**" and "**becomes like**"
- Steps into other's world (location, struggles, worldview, thought processes) and communicates in their way/forms
- John 1:14 and 18

14 **And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

18 **No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.**
- = Incarnational Ministry (present, living among, demonstrating)

Jesus is still doing this, but now we are the body of Christ, in the flesh and on the earth

- The church is the visible manifestation of the invisible God
- We are to **exegete Jesus** (in word and deed/proclamation and demonstration)
 - To be missional is to "**do, be, and tell the Gospel**"

This requires a radical commitment to who Jesus is and to the Cross (the Gospel)

- We "...affirm the uniqueness, the centrality, the decisiveness of Jesus Christ as universal Lord and Saviour, the Way by following whom the world is to find its true goal, the Truth by which every other claim to truth is to be tested, the Life in whom alone life in its fullness is to be found."⁵
- Jesus said, speaking of His death on the cross "**if I be lifted up I will draw all men to myself**" (Jn 12:32-33)
 - The only way to be saved and the Christian way to live
 - Living sacrificially (and incarnationally)

³ As quoted in Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books), 163.

⁴ Seamands, 163.

⁵ Lesslie Newbigin as quoted in John Stott, *The Incomparable Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2001), 127.

But it is Christ's body, and Christ's mission

- Acts 1:1
 - 1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about **all that Jesus began to do and teach**,
 - 2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.
- (**Began to do and teach**—the verbs are in the **imperfect tense** not aorist = **on going action**)
 - = The Book of Acts annnnd present history
- **So now, we do and teach what Christ is doing and teaching**
- His mission is ongoing in the world
 - We are part of its going on (created by it) and its going forth (involved in it)

This means that being the church on mission ceases to be about our ideas, gifts, passions, frustrations, excitements, hobby-horses and pet-projects

- Being the church is all about discovering and becoming passionate and daily involved in God's mission
- "**Our missionary activities are only authentic insofar as they reflect participation in the mission of God.**"⁶

What this means practically (tomorrow):

- We need to begin to see what God is doing around us
- Read life and local and world events missiologically
- "**The task of every generation is to discover what the Spirit of God is doing and then do that**" (Jonathan Edwards)
 - We repent of apathy
 - We desire to **change the world** not because we have **visions of grandeur** for ourselves, nor because we are **bleeding-heart humanitarians**, but because Christ and the Gospel are changing the world—for the glory of God!

This also means that doing mission stops being about doing things **for** God and becomes about doing things **with** God

- "**We are God's fellow workers**" (1 Corinthians 3:9)
- But it is God's mission

= This is the missional ideal!

- We care about and want to know about what God is doing in the world
 - **At our workplaces and in other places**
 - **At home and in Haiti**
 - We want to discover the *Missio Christi* and then participate in it
 - Macro and Micro; locally and internationally

We must realize our "**sent-ness**"

- **John 17:18 and 20:21**
- Every member on mission (commissioned by Christ)

When we understand theologically that we are **a sent-people**

- We approach life missionally
- We live life **intentionally**
 - Realize that wherever you are, you have been sent there...
 - To explain and expose Jesus (proclamation and demonstration)
 - We believe that God is as concerned with Monday-Saturday as He is Sunday!
 - He is as concerned about your going to work as He is your going to church
 - He is just as active at your place of work as He is your place of worship

⁶ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY.: Orbis, 1991), 391.
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- All for His purposes!!!
- **The key is our intentionality**
- And asking the right question (**Participation in God's life**)

We do this as both the church-gathered and the church-scattered

- We **come to** church and we **go be** the church
- **Acts 2:26** etc = gathered; **Acts 8:4** etc = scattered
 - The Spirit of God works both a **centripetal and centrifugal** force on us
 - Both of those actions have to do with what is happening at a **center point**—Jesus!

We can be most effective as a group sometimes/and as individuals other times

- (Church birthing vs. Your work)

We want to be missional in our **gathering**—We want to be missional in our **scattering**

Some of the practical ways this plays out for us:

- The way we pray
 - Part of the way we discover what God wants to do in the world around us
 - Part of the way we participate in and do the mission of God
- The way we teach and preach
 - **Ephesians 4:11-12**
 - The building (place) is not the goal but the rally point to get people on mission
 - Only 46% of Protestants that attend church at least once a month strongly agreed with the idea that they have a personal responsibility to share their beliefs about Jesus Christ with non-Christians⁷
 - We are determined to change that (**every member on mission**)
 - The acting out of the centripetal force that precedes the **centrifugal force**
 - We want to bring them in and send them out (God's idea)
 - We define success as the church gathered not by numbers but by faithfulness and transformation
- The places and frequency of our gathering
 - We do not gather in the large setting several times a week
 - Our goal is not to always get people into the building
 - The goal is to get people **living for/like Jesus**, (doing and being the gospel) as the church in culture
 - This is often best accomplished by gathering in homes and work places and public places
 - Cf. Homegroups
- The way we lay hands on people
 - **Acts 13**
 - Seeing people live for something bigger than themselves (In HGs too)
- The fact that we birth other churches and campuses
 - Jesus is building His church (**Mt 16:18**)
 - Obedient and strategic (God's strategy)
 - Multiplication
 - Campus decision driven by the Great Commission
 - Multi-Site Churches are evangelistic and experience growth⁸

⁷ Scott McConnell, *Multi-Site Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 7.

⁸ McConnell, 6-7.

- The Prayer Tours we do
- Our attitude toward other churches
 - Support and prayer and friendship (same team)
 - **Example:** Prayer in VTA and SF
 - Because there is only one mission
 - We do not bash them
- Our attitude toward culture
 - We talk positively about our cities and neighbors
 - We try to speak their language
 - We seek to apply the gospel to their core concerns
 - We also hold forth Jesus as the only way to be saved!
 - "Jesus Christ did not come to make a contribution to the religious storehouse of mankind, but that in Him God reconciled the world to Himself"⁹
 - Either the Gospel is true for all or it is not true at all.¹⁰
- The way we seek to address and care for the poor and homeless, widows and orphans, oppressed and brutalized locally and worldwide
 - **Reality as a homeless shelter, laundry love, supplies, etc**
 - We need both social action and public proclamation
 - We do not create the Kingdom on earth through social reform, but we invite people into the Kingdom through individual salvation
 - The answer to the world's problem is not cleaner water, but living water!
 - But, God does care about people's water supply (we do both)

Mission is not the goal... Mission exists because worship doesn't...

⁹ Visser't Hooft, *No Other Name* as quoted in John Stott, *The Incomparable Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2001), 126.

¹⁰ William Temple at the World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem in 1929.