

Mission 2:
Mission and Gospel
Ephesians 1:9-11

Sermon

Hobart, August 16th, 2015

Devonport, August 29th, 2015

Launceston, August 30th, 2015

Ephesians 1:9-11

⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

¹¹ Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God,* for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.¹

* Or *we have become God's inheritance.*

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Eph 1:9-11). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

A. TODAY WE ARE CONTINUING OUR SERIES ON MISSION

1. As we saw last time in John 20:21, Jesus sent his disciples to continue to be partners in his mission, the mission of the Father, Son and Spirit that he was sent to engage in here on earth

As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

B. MANY CHURCHES AND PARACHURCH ORGANISATIONS ARE FOCUSED ON CHRISTIAN MISSION

1. We have taken various approaches to it over the decades as well
2. The mission of many is getting people to repent and say the sinners' prayer in order to save them from hell
3. Some groups their mission primarily as a moral one
 - a) Focusing on what they see as societies evils and seeking to change society, to make it more Christian
 - b) This was very much the focus of conservative churches in the 1800's and most of the 1900's, and continues with many groups today
4. And some see mission as persuading other to their doctrinal beliefs so they can become right in God's sight
5. Some believe mission is preaching prophecy, warning people of the end time
6. Other groups are on a mission to share spiritual or religious experiences
7. Others see mission as being going overseas, and helping people in poverty stricken areas, or helping the less fortunate closer to home

C. OFTEN AS INDIVIDUALS WE BECOME ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT A PARTICULAR MATTER

1. We or others, can become “people on a mission” to persuade others to a particular point of view
2. But true mission isn’t like a political campaign in which we try to get people to like us, and to agree with what we think and what we want to get done

D. SO WHAT IS MISSION SUPPOSED TO INVOLVE

1. What is the message that most non-Christians think the Churches are on a mission to tell them about?
2. Why don’t more people find the message they hear from Christians exciting and attractive?
3. What is the core message, focus and purpose of mission?

E. PRAYER

BODY:

II. MISSION AND MESSAGE

A. TIM FOSTER

1. is a Victorian teaching Practical Ministry and New Testament studies at Ridley College
2. He tells about a time when he was counselling a couple over four weeks in preparation for their child's baptism;
 - a) He says;

We had developed a good relationship and they appeared to be engaged by the material, so I was excitedly waiting to see how they would respond to the hearing of Jesus' deep love in his sacrificial death for them.

Their response astounded me: 'Thank you.'

I was surprised. A polite 'thank you' seemed an odd response to such incredible news. I had expected a 'Wow!', or perhaps some push back if they were unconvinced. But not something lame as 'thank you'. Perhaps they were just going through the motions and were relieved that the course was complete and their obligation was over.

As I reflected further, I realised that their response was perfectly appropriate for the message I had given them. I had spent four weeks explaining that they were not saved by their good works, which would never be enough, but by the death of Jesus; that they needed to trust his death and not their own works if they were to be saved. In other words, I had given them a ticket to heaven, a secret code to offer at the Pearly Gates.

God; Why should I let you in to my heaven?

Couple: Because Jesus died for our sins.

God: Correct answer, you may enter.

Hence, 'Thank you'!

From this vantage point I began to think more about the gospel I had been sharing and its implications.²

3. Tim goes on to comment;

I realised that my gospel message had a focus on what happens in the afterlife, but had very few implications for this life. This created the impression that life was only good for evangelism, while we hung on for our 'pie in the sky when we die'.

4. Clearly we aren't to manufacture a new gospel message just to become more popular, exciting or acceptable to our culture,

5. But Tim Foster is asking a very important question pertaining to the mission of the church, and in particular about the gospel message that we are conveying.

B. WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS THAT WE ARE ON A MISSION TO SHARE?

1. What is the message we are sent to share?

2. After all, we are sent as Jesus was sent, to communicate what the Father sent him to live, and teach and enact

² Tim Foster, *The Suburban Captivity of the Church*, Acorn Press, 2014, p. 11-12

III. GOSPEL & MISSION

A. IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNISE THAT A MESSAGE THAT FOCUSES JUST ON OUR PERSONAL FUTURE SALVATION—OR MORAL LIVING—IS INCOMPLETE

1. What is missing from that message?
2. As we saw last time,

B. TRUE MISSION IS AT THE HEART OF WHO GOD IS

1. God and thus his mission is one of love,
2. His mission, the mission we are sent on, is one of outreach and communion
3. God's mission is focused on the restoring of broken relationships

C. GOD ISN'T JUST ABOUT SAVING US WHEN WE DIE, OR SPARING US FROM FUTURE PUNISHMENT

1. His mission includes beginning his new life in us, and with us, right here and now
 - a) Foster says;

I began to notice that God was concerned, not just with redeeming humans, but also with renewing the *whole* of creation. ...it was not clear how my message fit into this bigger picture. After all, the gospel I was used to preaching was concerned entirely with people and their eternal destiny, so what did it matter what did it matter that the earth would also be renewed.

This gospel ...was highly individualistic. It was all about me-*my* need for salvation, Jesus' dying on the cross *for me*, and *my* eternal life. Of course, the gospel is personal, and offers many benefits for the individual. But rather than challenging my human self-centredness, this approach capitalised on it, presenting God as the servant of my needs. Yet, I realised, salvation ought to be about us serving *his* purposes.³

2. He goes on to add that one of the greatest struggles for church pastors is that,

³ Foster, p. 12

Increasingly, Christians are attending church as consumers, seeking to have their needs met and regarding the minister as the producer of religious goods and services.

D. SO WHAT IS THE MESSAGE, WHAT IS THE GOSPEL THAT LIES AT THE HEART OF JESUS' MISSION?

1. Tim Foster came to see that he was so fully focused on Jesus' death, that his life and resurrection got sidelined, as did their central importance to the gospel message

2. He saw that mission, and the gospel message needs to be seen within a much larger framework,

A framework that puts God and his purposes at the centre.⁴

3. Foster came to focus on the *gospel of the kingdom*—how it focuses on the big picture of God's plan to restore his people and all things.

4. Genesis 1:27-28 tell us that God created us in his image, and we were given the task of looking after the creation

a) When all was complete, God rested.

b) As Foster reminds us,

These narratives also establish that God's ultimate purpose is for the creation to enter into God's rest and enjoy God's presence.⁵

5. Since mankind turned away from life in relationship and trust with God and from his rest and peace, God in his grace has been working to reconcile and restore all things

a) As we read last time;

II Corinthians 5:18-6:1

¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's

⁴ Foster, p.13

⁵ Foster, p.16

ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

E. JOHN MCLEAN WROTE RECENTLY,

...Jesus came from the inner life of God to show us who God is, and to save us – not just from sin, but for fellowship. God’s purpose is sharing his life and love with humanity – with creating communion. And the church is part of this plan – “a long range plan, in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth” (Ephesians 1:6-10 The Message).⁶

Ephesians 1:9-11

⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. ¹¹ Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God,* for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.⁷

1. Acts 3:21 talks about the final restoration of all things
2. The Old Testament prophets and Revelation talk of a time when everything on earth and in the entire cosmos will be in full fellowship and communion with God
 - a) All will be restored and made new
 - b) And everyone, and everything will experience the love and peace that is God

F. HOW MUCH MORE COMPREHENSIVE, AMAZING AND EXCITING IS THIS FULLER AND MORE COMPLETE MESSAGE

1. It is positively focused, and far more expansive and profound
 - a) It is also much more relevant and attractive

⁶ John McLean, *Deep Church*, article in Life Together, GCI, 2015

* Or *we have become God's inheritance*.

⁷ Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Eph 1:9-11). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

2. It is a message that relates to the concerns, the questions and issues of both young and old, rich and poor, because it focuses on the realities that challenge each and every one of us on a daily basis
3. As we have been focusing on, the gospel is about peace, shalom, the restoration of that which is wrong, that which is broken
4. The message and work of mission addresses the basic questions of people's lives, of who they are, what their purpose in life is, what the future holds for them and our planet, and the fact that they are truly loved and valued by someone greater than themselves who can make a real difference our individual lives, and the state of our societies, and the whole creation

IV. TWO VIEWS OF THE GOSPEL

A. THE WAY WE AS CHRISTIANS VIEW AND TEACH AND LIVE THE GOSPEL

1. —has a massive impact on how God and his message is perceived by non-Christians

B. WHAT WE ARE SEEING, IS THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

1. One is what is called the *punitive* or legalistic view
2. The second is what we have been focusing more and more on over the years, and is sometimes called the "Telic" view of the gospel

C. THE PUNITIVE OR LEGALISTIC VIEW OF THE GOSPEL TENDS TO START WITH HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVIL

1. It is certainly true that we humans are responsible for much of the mess we see in the world around us
 - a) We are guilty of rejecting God's purposes, and God is angry about that.

b) But that anger is in love, it is because he doesn't want us hurting ourselves or each other.

2. It is all too easy to focus on human guilt, and become condemning, and judgmental, focusing primarily on guilt and punishment for sin

D. BUT HUMANS ARE ALSO VICTIMS OF EVIL

1. While we all have a responsibility for the part we have played in making the mess,

2. We were all born into this world and subject to its broken, dysfunctional state.

a) We are weak, and overwhelmed and unable to fix ourselves or our world.⁸

3. So, we not only need forgiveness, but help and rescue, peace, hope, healing and loving, gracious redemption, and ongoing guidance, nurture and strength

E. OLD TESTAMENT

1. Genesis tells us how evil increased over time and the results

2. But we also, see how God through Noah, and later through Abraham sort to rescue, and restore, to recreate

a) To continue with his original plan and purposes—to live in loving relationship with his creation

3. The story of Israel is another example of God's mission to redeem and restore, to carry out his purposes on earth

a) His promises and actions focused on this priority of establishing, restoring and building relationships

b) But the people continued to fall victim to their own weaknesses, and the power of sin and evil.

⁸ In effect trying to be good apart from God is at the heart of human sin, as pictured by the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. It is what Adam and Eve were tempted into, believing that they could be like God, on their own.

4. By the end of the Old Testament era, it is abundantly clear that we are helpless victims

- a) Moral codes, religious practices, warnings and punishments didn't solve the problem
- b) Clearly punitive, legalistic messages didn't work

F. NEW TESTAMENT

1. When Jesus was born Mary sings and others prophesy about how he will rescue God's people from the forces of evil and sin, and make them one with God, fulfilling God's promises and original purposes

2. Jesus demonstrated and taught the new life that fulfils God's plan

- a) He healed and rescued the victims of our broken world that has abandoned God
- b) He lived and invited others into the life of faith, hope and love, lived in intimate, humble relationship with the Father through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit

3. He announced and demonstrated the Kingdom of God, the new life with God

- a) That was at the centre of his mission, the mission that we are to be partakers and co-workers in
- b) This was the positive mission Israel was supposed to be involved in

G. JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION BROUGHT HIS MISSION TO A CLIMAX

1. As Foster writes;

The cross was the means of God fulfilling his covenant, defeating the principalities and powers, destroying the power of death and evil, forgiving sin, redeeming slaves, abolishing the law, reconciling Jew, Gentile and all things, bringing life to all and supremely revealing the love of God.⁹

⁹ Foster, p.18

2. Through the cross, Jesus both forgave us for our part in rejecting God and his purposes, and causing the problems of our world,

a) And at the same time he rescued us from being victims to the power of evil that oppresses, and damages our true humanity and destiny as beings created in the image of God.

3. Foster;

On the cross, Jesus took part in a cosmic battle between good and evil. By submitting to the worst of human rebellion and refusing to respond with anything other than submission and forgiveness, Jesus broke the power of evil, defeating it.¹⁰

4. As Tom Wright puts it, the cross,

was a victory that consisted in Jesus' allowing evil to do its worst to him, never attempting to fight it on its own terms.¹¹

5. So clearly, Jesus rescued us from life apart from God, from evil and sin, and forgave us for our part in it, and restoring our relationship

6. Through his resurrection, and his ascension and sending of the Spirit, the Paraclete,

a) We are enabled to live and share in his life with the Father, and in turn play a part in his ongoing mission

H. SO THIS IS OUR MISSION AND OUR MESSAGE.

1. We are not called to a mission and message of condemnation, but one of hope for peace, reconciliation, new life, close and meaningful relationships based on grace and love

2. But the message of God's judgment is involved,

a) However, it is a judgment of putting things right in love

b) It is a judgment in which, through Jesus Christ, God will put all wrongs right in love, and in the interests of peace and reconciliation, and of a better quality of life ahead

¹⁰ Foster, p.19

¹¹ N.T. Wright, *New Tasks for a renewed Church*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1992, p.72

3. Tim Foster puts judgment in perspective;

It is little wonder that judgement is viewed in much of the New Testament as a day of great joy rather than despair. It is a day of joy because it will see the completion of God's work of restoring the world and recovering his purposes. It will be a day where Jesus is vindicated, or proved right, and with him all those who belong to him by faith.

Whereas the punitive approach places the prospect of judgement early in the outline as the problem when we frame the gospel around God's purposes we place judgment at the end as the solution. Here, judgement immediately precedes the final consummation of all things, just as it does in Revelation 18-21.¹²

4. Foster describes these two approaches to the Gospel message, the *Punitive* or legalistic Gospel and the *Telic* Gospel.

I. **THE PUNITIVE GOSPEL**

1. Emphasises moral failure, sin, the urgent need for repentance, and forgiveness, so we can receive salvation at Christ's return.
 - a) It is focused on human responsibility for sin and evil, and God's judgement first, and then focuses on Jesus as the means of escaping sin and judgment
2. How does this effect Mission?
3. What reaction does this Punitive Gospel elicit from non Christians?

¹² Foster, p.21

J. THE TELIC GOSPEL

1. *Telic* comes from the Greek word *teleos*, which means the completion, the fulfilment of a purpose

- a) The Telic Gospel is what we have been discussing today.
- b) The good news that God loves us all, and in Christ he has come to rescue us from ourselves and the powers of evil,
- c) To set things right
- d) To heal and redeem us, to restore our relationship with him, and give us a share in his life of peace making, faith, hope and love.
- e) To make all things as he intended when he created them

(1) Punitive vs. Telic Gospel

	Punitive	Telic
The Beginning	God created us perfect	God created the world according to his good purposes
The Problem	Human sin brings us under wrath	Human sin opens the door for evil, undermining God's purposes
The Solution	Our sin and its consequences are transferred (imputed) to Jesus on the cross	He took our punishment Jesus conquers evil, brings forgiveness and defeats death
The Future	There will be no condemnation	There will be a new social and political order according to God's purposes
The Present	We trust in the atoning death of Jesus. We live a holy life by the power of the Spirit. We wait, hope and persevere	The new order has begun with the resurrection of Jesus. We live in the light of the future in the power of the Spirit

Diagram¹³

2. Foster sums the Telic Gospel up;

In short, the gospel concerns the demise of the present order and the coming of God's new order. It addresses the present situation, offering hope to those who are oppressed and suffer. It projects a vision of the future in which

¹³ Foster, p. 25

humans, indeed the entire creation, enjoys freedom, justice and peace. The gospel also presents a stark warning to sinful agents who continue to ignore and undermine the purposes of God.¹⁴

V. SO WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THIS HAVE FOR MISSION?

A. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR OUR CHRISTIAN LIVES AND THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

1. In Christ, through his, life, death, resurrection and ascension, and his sending of the Holy Spirit;
 - a) we are the firstfruits of the new creation, the fulfilment of God's purposes
 - b) This includes being living examples of the hope of the Gospel, sharing the Telic gospel by deed and word
 - c) As John McLean wrote;

The Holy Spirit opens us up to be other-centred, as God is. That is, the Holy Spirit doesn't create a closed community of the church, but opens the church up to the whole world, in love and genuine care for all others.

- d) He points out how our part in the church's mission includes;
... A smile to those who need it. Food for the needy. Help for the marginalised. Being a comfort, encouragement and edification to others.

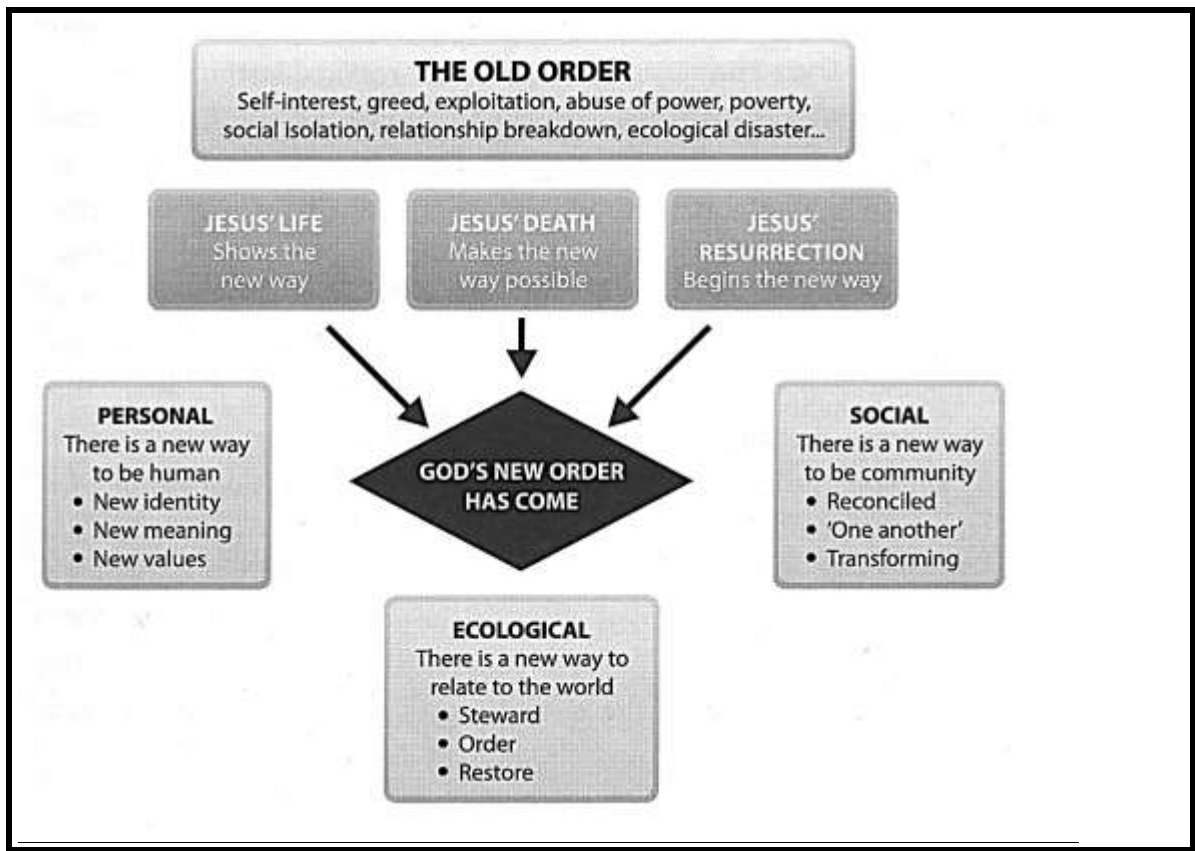
B. SO BOTH THE LIFE AND MESSAGE INVOLVED WITH MISSION

1. Is based upon the peace, faith, hope and love that is God himself, and that is at the heart of his purposes for all of his creation
 - a) Our mission is not to be heavily focused on human guilt, on condemnation, being judgmental and intolerant,
 - b) It should not be characterised by narrow legalistic or moralistic messages
2. As Foster reminds us;

¹⁴ Foster, p.24

Christians begin to express God's purposes for humanity as they live the life of God's new order in the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition to this personal dimension, faith in Christ necessarily brings his people together into a new community where the social values of the kingdom, such as reconciliation and forgiveness, are experienced. The present is not just a matter of waiting for the return of Christ, but extending the ministry of Jesus, demonstrating what his new order is like and giving the world a foretaste of its future.¹⁵

3. He put together a diagram that helps give an overview of the gospel and mission we are called to live and share.



C. AS FOSTER'S DIAGRAM SHOWS,

1. The gospel and mission of Jesus Christ is deeply relevant to the lives and needs of all people,
2. It offers hope in Christ in dealing with the problems of the old order, and bringing in a new way

¹⁵ Foster, p.20-21

- a) A new way in being human, with new identity, meaning and values
 - b) A new way for our communities to be reconciled, caring for and being there for one another in a co-operative rather than competitive way that will transform relationships and all of society
 - c) A new way of relating to the world around us, being better stewards, restoring things to the way they were intended in the beginning.
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CONCLUSION:

I. WHAT WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT TODAY IS NOTHING NEW

A. BUT HOPEFULLY IT HELPS REMIND US, AND REINFORCE HOW THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL UNDERLIES EVERY ASPECT OF THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS, CONGREGATIONS AND THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE;

1. The mission and message of Jesus Christ impacts everything we think, say and do
 - a) our words, our attitudes, our relationships in and out of the church,
 - b) the focus we have regarding the gospel
2. Our personal lives, and churches are to be in a process of being gradually transformed, healed and renewed as we submit to God's purposes being worked out in us
 - a) And that process itself is a positive and attractive witness
 - b) A relevant, helpful message of hope for those around us in our broken world, that there is something better for their lives and for our world at every level

B. PRAYER
