

1. We are going to continue talking this week about the church. Two weeks ago we talked about the church of the United States and how that in America there is something extremely disheartening happening.
2. Jesus made it clear in Luke 19 what his mission was. **Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."**
3. Jesus purpose for coming to earth was the salvation of the lost.
4. And as the founder of the church, that also has to be the mission of the church. Our primary mission is that the lost come to Jesus.
5. Here is the problem that we are seeing in the American Evangelical church prior to covid-19. Just for reference things are worse now than before.
6. According to the research that has come out the past decade only 3 in 20 churches are growing in America.
7. Seventeen of twenty are either plateaued or declining.
8. But of the three that are growing two of those three are growing because they are gaining people from the seventeen that are losing people.
9. Only one church in twenty is growing because they are seeing people saved and discipled for Jesus.
10. That means that **nineteen out of twenty churches are not carrying out the very mission that has been given them by God.**
11. If as the church we are not doing the very thing God designed his church to do then it doesn't matter how good the services are and how much money comes in the offering, what shape the buildings are in, we are missing the point.
12. So we asked the question. As believers what is our primary mission?
13. According to scripture our primary mission is to love God and bring him honor and glory.
14. How do we do that? We bring God glory by how we love him, how we love other believers and by how we love the lost. We glorify God by the way we love, not just by what we believe.
15. And so what happens when we lose sight of the mission we have from God? We begin to die a slow death.
16. That explains why 17 of 20 churches in America are dying, because they have lost sight of their mission.

17. Our mission as the church is to get people to Jesus. But there is a lost a dying world that doesn't know him.
18. They don't even know who he is much less trust him.
19. So today we are going to shift our focus back to who Jesus is.
20. Our entire mission must center around Jesus. In other words we must be missional.
21. What does it mean to be missional? The mission of God starts with Christ.
22. It begins by asking who is Jesus, why was he sent and what was his mission. We touched on that last time but we will touch on it again.
23. Next we must focus on the mission. What has Christ sent us to do? Why are we sent? What is our mission?
24. Next, we focus on the structure of the church. How will our church cooperate with the mission of God? What is our church's role in His plan?
25. Then finally it is a focus on ministry. How will we serve God's mission in our culture.
26. What is interesting is that if we are focused in the right thing in the right way, the attention never shifts to the church, it leads back to Christ.
27. Everything we do is for the purpose of pointing back to Jesus Christ.
28. Now let's break this down and dig a little bit deeper into each area.

Being missional starts with Christ.

1. In theology, the study of Christ is called Christology. In other words who is Jesus and what was he sent to do?
2. One of the most pressing, critical, doctrinal issue of our day is the doctrine of Christ.
3. We live in a world where people simply don't know who Jesus was and is.
4. 50 years ago and even 40 years ago our society generally had a basic idea of who Jesus was even if they didn't go to church and even if they weren't believers.
5. In today's society the truth of who Jesus is has blended into the woodwork if you will.

6. Notice how people talk. You will hear all kinds of people talk about God. You will hear others talk about being spiritual or religious.
7. But it is a rare occasion in our everyday world in which you will hear the name of Jesus mentioned.
8. In our society today Jesus is just another choice among many, and he may not even be a high choice. But the word of God makes it very clear that Jesus is not just a choice among many he is the only choice that matters.
9. John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
10. Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
11. Acts 16:30-31 tells the story of Paul and Silas in prison. After an earthquake the jailer was about to commit suicide. Paul persuaded the jailer not to kill himself at which point the jailer asks: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."
12. I want to quote Dr. Mel Ming, an Assemblies of God scholar and leader who did much of the research about the church in America that I told you about earlier.
13. He says..."Being missional is not about preserving our tradition, our history, or even our distinctives. Being missional is not a missions program or missions giving. Being missional is about Christ. Christ is what makes us Christian! It is living Christ's life out before out world."
14. Everything we do and say has to begin and end with Jesus Christ. This world needs Christ.
15. Next we discover that...

Christ's mission determines our mission.

1. Again, we touched on this two weeks ago but our mission is not different than Christ's mission, it is the same. So Christ's mission determines what we do.
2. What had Jesus sent us to do?
3. Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."
4. In John 17:18 Jesus prays As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

5. In John 20:21 Jesus repeats what he has instructed them earlier "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
6. Acts 1:8 tells us "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
7. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.
8. We find that just like Jesus, we have been called and we are being sent to seek and save that which is lost by telling them about Jesus.
9. That means we must be prepared to explain who Jesus is to people who don't know Christ.
10. We did an exercise with a group of people and we asked the question, how would you explain Jesus to a non-Christian. It was interesting how challenging that one little exercise was.
11. It is the very thing we are called to do but yet it challenges us to do it. That observation isn't meant to make us feel bad it is simply meant to draw us to a place where we recognize that the main thing that is acceptable to Jesus is that we be well equipped to share him with others.
12. And the most powerful testimony to a non-believer is simply sharing what Jesus had done in your life. Your life story is the greatest witnessing tool you will ever have.
13. You don't have to be a theologian who knows all the answers, you just need to be a regular person who is willing to share some of the good things Jesus had done for you and how he has changed you.
14. Next we ask the question.

What is a missional church?

1. A missional church is one that allows Christ's mission to determine how they do church.
2. The mission of the church is that of its founder Jesus Christ. The church is to do the work of Christ in this world.
3. The bible states in no uncertain terms that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 "I will build my church".

4. Colossians 1:17-18 He (Jesus Christ) is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.
5. Ephesians 1:22 And God placed all things under his (Christ's) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.
6. According to the word of God it is Christ's church. It is not my church and it isn't your church and it isn't our church it is Christ's church. It belongs to him.
7. We can't make it grow on our own. We must partner with the work of Christ if it is to grow.
8. A missional church is...
 - a. Always asking, what has God called us to be and do?
 - b. Continually looking outward, not inward.
 - c. Always faithful to the message of Jesus and the word of God.
9. The missional church is a community of believers who are passionately and genuinely living out the mission of God in their local community
10. Scott Fontenot says a missional church is... "To be focused, individually and as a congregation, on being a tangible representation of God's Kingdom to our community."
11. In other words a missional church understands that they are the only Jesus this world will ever see.
12. Jesus has already come to the earth. The next time he comes back it will be too late for those who don't know him.
13. Until then the world sees Jesus through us His church. That's why Jesus said this is how they will know you are my disciples by your love for one another.
14. The church is the visible representation of Jesus to the world.
15. When people who are lost in this world come into contact with the church they should see Christ, feel God and they should have a personal encounter with God based on what they see in that church.
16. A missional church has as its number one priority that people see Jesus.
17. That means the question "How big is your church?" should be replaced with, "How big is the impact you are having on your community?"

18. It's not about how many seats fill the seats it's about how many people are seeing Jesus and want what they see.
19. Now let me assure you, if the lost are seeing Jesus then there will be seats in the seats, but seats in the seats isn't our mission, helping people see Jesus is our mission.
20. There is a question I occasionally ask myself. My prayer is that you too will ask the question and wait for an answer.
21. Would anybody outside our congregation miss this church if it ceased to exist? Would our neighbors next door care if we weren't here anymore?
22. You see a missional church is culturally aware of their community. What do we mean by that?
23. A missional church asks the questions.
 - a. What are the needs of people in the community?
 - b. What do people care about?
 - c. What do they think about Christ and Christians?
 - d. How does the community view church?
24. Before Covid I tried as much as possible to be involved in events in our community. To meet new people and to try and stay connected to what is going on around us.
25. I love the look on a person's face when I tell them I am the pastor of Batesville First Assembly.
26. Do you know what the most common response to that statement is? Where is Batesville First Assembly? People who have lived here all their lives don't even know where we are.
27. So in answer to the question, what does the community think of us, is it possible that they don't think of us?
28. I don't know about you but that is pretty sobering.
29. The last area we are going to focus on is the area of ministry.

How does God want me to serve his mission in our culture?

1. First of all it is an understanding that God expects all of us to be involved in ministry.

2. All of us are ministers. **Matthew 5:14-16** "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.
3. I believe this implies more than just a presence or just being. We are to be active in shining the light of Jesus Christ to lost people.
4. Having a missional church starts with missional living. It means as individuals we have to live out the mission of Jesus Christ.
5. How do we do that? We actually do that by taking on the role of a missionary to our community.
6. While training to be missionaries to Africa in 2002, it was repeated over and over again until it was driven into our understanding that there are some very important characteristics of missionaries.
7. Heart for the missing.
8. Embrace the culture... Speaks the language of the culture.
9. Interpret the message of Jesus into the heart language of the people groups the leader is called to.
10. Humilitylistener to all.
11. Avoider of insider lingo.
12. Not being judgmental of those with radically different beliefs.
13. Ability to laugh at self.
14. I believe those should be qualities of each and every one of us who call ourselves believers in Jesus.
15. It was the way Jesus lived, and isn't one of goals to be more like Jesus?
16. Missional living means loving God more than you love yourself.
17. **John 3:30** He must become greater; I must become less.
18. **Paul the great missionary said it this way in 1 Corinthians 2:2** For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
19. **Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
20. **Philippians 1:21** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
21. Missional living means loving others.

22. Matthew 5:46-48 If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that? Even tax collectors love their friends. 47 If you greet only your friends, what's so great about that? Don't even unbelievers do that? 48 But you must always act like your Father in heaven.
23. 1 John 4:19-21 We love because God loved us first. 20 But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars. We cannot see God. So how can we love God, if we don't love the people we can see? 21 The commandment that God has given us is: "Love God and love each other!"
24. And finally missional living means sharing Jesus with others.
25. Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
26. 1 Thessalonians 2:8 We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.
27. We are called to be like Christ. And that means sharing Christ. Oh but that's the church's job. You are correct. And we are the church.

Conclusion:

- There is an illustration called the pit that really captures what our goal is as the church of Jesus Christ.

A Man fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out.

A SUBJECTIVE person came along and said:

"I FEEL for you, down there."

An OBJECTIVE person came along and said:

"It's logical that someone would fall into the pit."

A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST came along:

"You only THINK that you are in a pit."

A PHARISEE said:

"Only BAD people fall into pits."

A MATHEMATICIAN

calculated HOW he fell into the pit.

A NEWS-REPORTER

wanted the exclusive story on the pit.

A FUNDAMENTALIST said:

"You DESERVE the pit."

A REALIST said:

"Sure enough, that's a pit."

A SCIENTIST

calculated the pressure necessary in pounds per square inch to get him out of the pit.

A GEOLOGIST

told him to appreciate the rock strata of the pit.

An EVOLUTIONIST said:

"You are a rejected mutant destined to be removed from the evolutionary cycle." In other words, you cannot produce any more "pit-falling" offspring.

A TAX man

asked who was paying taxes on the pit.

A government INSPECTOR asked

Who got the permit to dig the pit in the first place?

An EVASIVE person

came along and avoided the subject of the pit altogether.

A SELF-PITYING person said:

"You haven't seen anything until you've seen MY PIT."

A GAMBLER said:

"CHANCES are 9 to 5 that someone else will fall into this pit."

A CHARISMATIC said:

"Just CONFESS that you're not in a pit."

An OPTIMIST said:

"Things could be worse."

A PESSIMIST said:

"Things WILL get worse."

JESUS, seeing the man, took him by the hand and LIFTED HIM OUT of the pit!!!

2. That's what we are called to do. People in our world are in a pit and we are here to reach down into their pit and help them get out.
3. It's not easy, but it is possible.
4. This world is truly hungry to know Jesus.
5. They may not know it is Jesus they need. But I assure you they are hungry.

6. Look around and you will see multitudes of people trying to fill the void, the emptiness, the loneliness, that exists in their life with things that don't work.
7. They are desperate to matter to someone. They are desperate to be loved. They are desperate for answers.
8. And the reality is that Jesus living through us, His church, is the answer they are looking for.
9. To be fair we are not talking about adding something to already busy lives. We are talking about prioritizing our lives so we can be who God intended us to be.
10. So we can function at our full potential. Because it is when we are living the life God designed us for, then we can have the full, abundant life God promises in His word.
11. I don't know about you but I want abundant life.
12. Prayer. Commit to living a life like Jesus.
13. Distribute communion elements.
14. Salvation call.
15. Communion. Focus on Jesus.