

Reading

John 17:6-26

SERMON

Made For Mission – Evangelism

Today we come to our fifth purpose in our 40 Days of Purpose. We have had

- Worship, Planned For God's Pleasure, realising that worship is the whole of our lives given to God for we are to

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30 NIV)

- Then came Fellowship, Formed for God's family. This is when we change from being WIIFMs to WIIFOs, What's In It For Me to What's In It For Others, even the awkward ones, even the EGRs, those Extra Grace Required people for

“so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Romans 12:5 NIV)

- And after Fellowship, we looked at Created To Become Like Christ, what the Bible calls discipleship. And as we become more and more like Jesus Christ, so

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:” (Philippians 2:5 NIV)

- And then last week on Sunday Darren took us through Shaped For Serving God, Ministry, which is not what a minister does, but it is all of us serving each other because we are told

“Each one should use whatever gift they have received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10 NIV)

All because we are put here for a purpose

“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

So this week we move on to something we can definitely only do when we are on earth. Jesus says in John 17:18

“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” (John 17:18 NIV)

As we have a ministry within the church, so we also need a mission in the world. We need a ministry to the Body of Christ, the family of God. And we need a mission in the world.

Through 2006 we carried out a Mission Consultancy, where we looked at our church, the area in which the church is situated. Out of the *Findings* we came up with our Vision, our Action Plan, *Going For Growth*. The Quiz Night last evening was one result of that Action Plan.

Going For Growth is because we know that we are called upon to share the Good News. Jesus said

“...Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”
(John 20:21 NIV)

We are a *sent* people not a sitting people, we are a *go* people, not a come people, we are *Going For Growth*. Notice that **Go** is in **Good** News and **Gospel**. We are to **GO** with the message NOT wait and receive.

Turn with me to Acts 1, page 1092

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 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.*" (Acts 1:1-8 NIV)

Our mission begins in Jerusalem, right where we are. We do not have to go to the ends of the earth to be a missionary, it happens right here in Redbridge.

We are called upon to tell the Good News. We are to begin right where we are. So what stops us?

There is the myth that

- **People Are Not Interested** – we have seen the Engel Scale where 1 is Against Christianity or not interested and 10 is being a Christian, then we can sometimes put people at the 1 end of the scale and assume that they are not interested in hearing our story. People are interested in spiritual things, sadly it is too often the people within the church that turns them off. People will listen to our story; we need the courage to tell them.

But there will always be that person who will not come, even to the friendship, social event and gets annoyed when we share the gospel with them – but there will be others that will want to here, that will come.

But then perhaps we fall into another trap that stops us

- **Lack of Persistence** – if we cannot talk to the person, then leave it for a while, but do not let that put us off talking about God, about his people, about our meetings together, about these aspects of our life because that is what makes you, you, just as you listen to the events and happenings in the other person's life. Do you talk about what you do on Sundays? Do you talk about what God is doing, speaking into your life? They should be as much a part of us as any other aspect of our lives and so worthy of being spoken about.

But there's a third trap why we might not share. There is the people are not interested – so we think, the lack of persistence, and also

- **Do We Need More People?** – and this does not depend on the size of the church. Big and small churches can suffer from this trap so that mission, sharing the good news does not happen.

- ➔ For some people it is that they want their church to be small so they know everyone and everyone is like them.
- ➔ For others it is that when the church gets to a certain size, when the church looks full, then the mindset kicks in which says that there is no need to share the good news with those outside because we couldn't really accommodate them anyway.

But God does not want anyone to be left behind, to be left out of the Kingdom of God. 2 Peter 3:9 says

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
(2 Peter 3:9 NIV)

We are here on earth because the task is not completed, the task is not finished. There are those who have asked me, 'Why am I still here, I'm ready to die'. Usually it is someone of more senior years who asks that. 'Why am I still here, I'm ready to die. Why doesn't God take me?' But it is obvious that God still has a work for them to do. I must share with my world - mission begins right here.

Acts 1:8 also says

...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NIV)

Jerusalem is right here, right now, Judea is a little further out. This is London. What many call the most exciting place in Britain. Full of people, with great ethnic diversity, but still needing Christ. Through the London Baptist Association we can help take our Mission to London, but we may also need to get involved as individuals, as a group.

But then Jesus also talks of Samaria. We cannot really know what that would have engendered in his listeners. Samaria was the last place they would have wanted to take the Good News to. Samaria was right out of their comfort zone. It is easy to talk about getting out of our comfort zone – it is another to do it. Getting out of our comfort zone is being where non-Christians are at, mixing with them and talking about the Good News of Christ, talking about what we have done at the weekend, including Sunday in a positive way. No-one will want to enter the Kingdom of God, become a Christian, if they hear its representative speaking negatively about it.

Also moving out of the comfort zone can be to move from the friendship stage to inviting people along to something that is still sowing but has some Christian content within it. Say something like the Café Church. On the Engel Scale, that is moving someone perhaps into the 4-6/7 range which some have termed Sowing 2. That moves the person a bit nearer to that decision to become a Christian. But in the inviting there is the possibility of rejection, something most of us are not comfortable about. There is the possibility that the person may totally reject what they hear – again making us uncomfortable. But God calls us to be out of our comfort zone.

We have to move out of our comfort zones if we are to meet people who need the gospel – we must be bridge builders not constructors of walls. Have you built any bridges lately where it might be that the 'wrong' sort of person will cross it? Or are you too busy constructing a wall to be secure behind?

We are made for mission – to share the Good News, which may mean getting out of our comfort zone, doing things differently in order to be more relevant to the world around us. There was one question which when I heard it struck right to my heart:

Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you?

When you get to heaven, is anybody going to say thank you, thank you for telling me the Good News? You knew it and you didn't keep it a secret. You knew that the heart of God was that he does not want

...anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 NIV)

But how do I begin to share? I find it so difficult. This may be because you are not using your SHAPE. Remember your SHAPE from last week

S – Spiritual Gifts – what gifts has God given you?

H – Heart – your passion in life, given to you by God

A – Abilities – what are you good at.

P – Personality – how are you wired? Outgoing or a reflective person

E – Experiences – the things that God has used to mould you.

Maybe you are trying to be an evangelist when you are a carer. However you are wired by your Spiritual Gifts, your Heart, your Abilities, your Personality, your Experiences we can all witness, we are all God's ambassadors, we can all talk about the Good News. But we may need help in sharing the gospel, we are told by God in 1 Peter

“...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”
(1 Peter 3:15 NIV)

And so this morning, Paul reminds us in Ephesians of himself, but it applies to us all

“...this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:8-11 NIV)

Or as the New Living Translation put it

“...I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church. This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Ephesians 3:8-11 NLT)

Apparently one day an angel went up to God and asked God, “What is your plan for the world?” God said “My plan is to give the Good News to My children on earth and ask them to share it.” And the angel said, “What if they don't? What is plan B?” And God said, “There is no plan B.”

We're it. Being on mission is the greatest privilege we're ever given, to be in on making history, that's what it is all about.

PRAYER

Father, we know you're calling all of us to accept our mission from you, and we pray you'll give us the courage to do the right thing and not walk away in disobedience. Thank you for the privilege of being invited to be a part of the greatest cause, the building of your family and to be a history maker.

"Father, more than anything else, I want to fulfil the purposes you made me for. So today, I accept the purpose, my mission to tell others. I want you to use me any time, any way, any place. I want to bring others to you. I want to serve your purpose in my generation. And I want to be a part of what you're doing in the world. From this day forward, I want to build my life around your eternal purposes, and I want to help our church do the same. Help me to reach one more for Jesus. In your name I pray. Amen."