

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Small Group Bible Study

Missions Emphasis Month

SERIES INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Missions Emphasis Month! Let's begin by asking a basic question, "What is "missions"?"

Since the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven and the advent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1&2), the people of God have been empowered to be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The first "missionaries" were God-fearing Jews and converts to Judaism from every nation declaring the wonders of God in their own languages (Acts 2:5, 11). They were ordinary folks, probably merchants and traders, gathered in Jerusalem to worship God and glorify his holy name.

We see that worship and missions are intimately connected. "Missions" as witnessing the wonders of God begins with a worshipping people of God. Its ultimate goal is to draw people from all nations, tribes, and languages into God's Kingdom so that they too worship him.

God's people declare God's wonders both through the ordinary affairs in their lives and also intentional efforts of Gospel outreach. What we are, how we live, and what we do as Christian people matter to God's Kingdom. There is no sacred and secular dichotomy to our being and living. This is what it means to live a missional Christian life that glorifies God and expand his Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Are we a missional people of God? Let's explore!

5 Oct

Worship as the Beginning and End of Missions

Revelation 7:9-17

12 Oct

Missions in Everyday Life

Acts 2:37-47

19 Oct

Bringing God's Word to the World

Matthew 28:16-20

Worship as the Beginning and End of Missions

REVELATION 7:9-17

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

MAIN PERSON/S

KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

Companies and businesses have mission statements. They define what the organization/entity stand for and what they seek to achieve. For example, when a group of body-builders gathers, what is their hallmark? – Muscles. Or when a band of soldiers gathers, what is their hallmark? – Guns and green. In the same way, Christian missions define what the people of God stand for and what we seek to achieve. When a group of Christians gathers, what is our hallmark? – Worship and witness. What does it mean to be a worshipping and witnessing community? How does our identity shape behavior and action as a missional people? We need to look at the end so that we may know how to live in the present.

For Study and Discussion

1. Overview

Read Revelation 7:9-17.

a. What is the overall atmosphere of this gathering of God's people?

b. Imagine yourself to be in this scene much like you were at the National Parade (except this would be much grander). How would you describe your emotions if you were there?

2. A Worshipping People (7:9-12)

a. Why was John shown a "great multitude" and what were they doing?

b. Consider John's descriptions of the multitude.

i. What is the significance of holding palm branches in their hands? (Cf. John 12:13)

ii. What message does the loud voice declare? Why is this message significant? (v10)

iii. What attributes of God did they worship? (v12)

3. A Redeemed People (7:13-14)
 - a. Verses 13-14 summarize the final outcome of the saving work by the Lamb who is Jesus Christ. Who are those in white robes?

 - b. What have they done? Or more accurately, what has the Lamb done for them? (Cf. Matthew 26:28)

4. A Serving People (7:15-17)
 - a. Having been saved by the Lamb, what will they spend their days doing? In other words, what will their "life-work" be? (v15)

 - b. Although there is "work" or more accurately "service" to be done, what will God do for them in response to their labour? How is it good news for them? Consider Psalm 91:1-8.

5. A Hopeful People (7:16-17)

To the suffering people of God during the time Revelation was written – how would it impact these believers when they read these words, particularly verses 16-17? Discuss.

Discipleship Pointers

- The final vision that God revealed to John in Revelation is one concerning the Church of Christ; the people of God.
- The Church is redeemed from the world to worship God and to glorify his awesome and mighty name.
- The Church is redeemed from the world to proclaim God who alone is the Saviour.
- The Church is redeemed from the world to serve God; dwell in his presence and enjoy his providence.
- The Church as a Missional Community expresses her identity through worship, witness, and the work/service of the Gospel. That means proclaiming the glory of God in the way we live, share and work today so that others may also be drawn into worshipping God and proclaiming his name. This is our lifework – to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

Family/Group Moments

- Discuss in your group / family what you wish heaven be like. We are often too absorbed in our situations that we do not think of the end, the future state.
- It seems that worship is synonymous to service in this passage, not just when we are singing hymns or bowing our heads in prayers. It seems that service is at the heart of worship – how is your service today?
- How can our life and worship/service as God's people glorify and proclaim his attributes to the world more and more? In other words, how can we become more missional as Christians?

Missions in Everyday Life

ACTS 2:37-47

GENERAL SURVEY

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Introduction

The greatest and most significant events in the history of mankind revolve around the life, death, resurrection and ascension of one man, Jesus Christ. What one believes about Jesus determines one's eternal destiny and quality of life today. In this lesson, we will learn about the implications of believing what the apostle Peter proclaims about Jesus Christ and receiving what Jesus promises to all who put their faith in Him. Note, especially, the Holy Spirit's transforming work in Christians and His enabling power for us to live out the Gospel every day and everywhere.

For Study and Discussion

1. The Proclamation of Christ (Acts 2:14-37)
 - a. What did Peter say that caused the people to be "cut to the heart" (v37)? How did it move the hearers?

 - b. From Peter's preaching, what are the essentials of an effective Gospel message?

 - c. Have you personally committed to the Gospel? Share your conversion story.

 - d. Where do you think are the mission fields that God has placed you currently? Who will you share the Gospel with and when?

2. The Call to Repentance (Acts 2:38-40)
 - a. What clear instructions did Peter give when the people asked "What shall we do?"

 - b. What practical actions does true repentance entail?

 - c. What gift and promise are given to all whom the Lord calls?

 - d. What evidence is there in this passage that shows God is concerned about saving families? How does this encourage you? What concrete actions will you take in this mission field?

3. The Evidences of Salvation (Acts 2:41-47)
 - a. What manifestations of new life were seen in those who were saved?

 - b. To what extent do you see that happening in your life? What changes will you make in order to grow and mature as a Christian in each of the four areas mentioned in verse 42?

 - c. How can others tell you apart from the rest of the people they know? How has the Holy Spirit freed you in some ways and constrained you in other ways?

Discipleship Pointers

- Peter's message was clear and pointed in its delivery. It was (is and will always be) about Jesus – who He is and the good news of what He has done for us. Everyone must eventually give an account to Him.
- Peter's audience was a sceptical, cynical and hostile one, who had recently witnessed the execution of Jesus as a criminal. Nonetheless, Peter boldly proclaimed Christ but as Lord.
- Peter applied his message directly to his listeners. He clearly identified their sin of rejecting Christ. The Holy Spirit brought about the conviction of sin.
- Peter used Scriptures, the Word of God as the authority and power to move men and women to God.
- Baptism is meant to represent an outward confession of an inward experience true belief and faith in Christ. However, an outward rite of baptism does not necessarily authenticate a genuine inward repentance and regeneration.
- The new life of Christians was evidenced in 3 stages: (1) The receiving of God's Word; (2) The public confession of faith; (3) The growth in spiritual maturity.
- The Christian community expressed their new life in Christ through: (a) The study of God's Word; (b) The fellowship of believers; (c) The breaking of bread; (d) Prayer; (e) Practical expressions of Christ's love – sharing selflessly; (f) Worship – praising God; (g) Being witnesses for Christ – enjoying the favour of the people.
- By living out their new life in Christ, many more were brought to also trust in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Genuine Christian discipleship is missional living, i.e. "doing missions" in everyday life where he/she is.

Family/Group Moment

- As children grow, they learn to be more and more independent of their parents. How can you teach your child to be more dependent on God? What can you intentionally say to your child to help him understand the presence and reality of the Holy Spirit in his life?
- Family Bible study, family devotions, family worship and family prayer times are valuable means of your child's spiritual nurturing. Will you pray faithfully and rely on the Holy Spirit to help you incorporate these into your family life?
- Living authentic Christian life opens up opportunities to connect with people around the Gospel. Who and where can you prayerfully and boldly show and tell about Jesus just as Peter did? Commit your non-Christian prospects to God in prayer.

Bringing God's Word to the World

MATTHEW 28:16-20

GENERAL SURVEY

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Introduction

Matthew 28:16-20 contains the well-known mission text known as the Great Commission. As we round off this month's emphasis on missions and evangelism, let us again be encouraged and challenged afresh by this oft-quoted text – through gaining a larger missional perspective underlying this command, and seeing Jesus living out and teaching that perspective in His ministry, so that we, His disciples, may follow after Him “to make disciples of all nations.”

For Study and Discussion

1. The Great Commission and the Old Testament

The Great Commission is not some new mission program initiated by Jesus. It is very much linked to the plan of God and the story of Israel in the Old Testament.

- a. Read Genesis 12:2-3; 22:17-18; Galatians 3:8-9, 14. Man forfeited God's blessing after the Fall, i.e. disobeying God (Gen 3). Whom did God intend to receive His blessing of restoration? How will this blessing be realised?

- b. Read Isaiah 42:6; 49:6. What is the job description of the “Servant of the Lord”? According to Acts 26:23 and 13:47, who fulfils this job description?

- c. Read Daniel 7:13-14, 27. As the “one like a son of man” receive power and authority, what positive impact would that have in the world?

- d. How is the Great Commission related to these promises and prophecies of the OT?

2. The Great Commission and Jesus

The Great Commission was also not some last-minute instructions thrown to the disciples for them to figure out. The seed of that commission was already sown in Jesus' ministry.

- a. Which region did Jesus begin His ministry in Matthew (Matt 4:12-15)? What do you think is significant about this place where Jesus began and ended His earthly ministry in giving His commission to the disciples?

- b. Read Matt 8:5-11. In commending the faith of a Gentile soldier (v10), what worldwide impact was Jesus pointing to? (v11)

Reflect: In setting the stage for reaching out to the Gentile world, what is Jesus teaching and preparing us who professed to be His disciples?

3. The Great Commission and the Church

The Great Commission has a universal and enduring vision to it. Note the word “all”.

- a. “All authority”. Why is it important that the Great Commission be founded on Jesus’ authority over all things?

- b. “Go and make disciples”. Should the church take initiative to reach out or should the unconverted and “seekers” take initiative to approach the church? To whom is this command directed?

- c. “All nations”. Do “nations” refer to political states as we know it today, or something else? (cf. Gen 12:3; Rev 5:9). Should one nation be favoured above or prejudiced against another?

- d. “All I have commanded”. Who is the authoritative source and revealer of God’s will?

- e. What are the two activities involved in making disciples? (v.19b, 20a)? How do they help us understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?

- f. “With you always” (lit. “all the days”). Why is the abiding presence of Emmanuel (“God with us”, Matt 1:23) with His people important for this worldwide, long-term task?

Discipleship Pointers

From the Old Testament’s vantage point, the Great Commission:

- restates and fulfills the promise to Abraham and the prophecies of Israel’s prophets,
- that through Israel’s Messiah, salvation will go forth to the whole world.
- This fulfillment reached its pinnacle in the ministry of Jesus, and
- continues to be fulfilled today as we extend His ministry and teaching worldwide.

From the New Testament’s vantage point, the Great Commission is:

- Jesus’ command to His worldwide body of disciples,
- to replicate themselves in communities of baptized and obedient disciples who have entered into a relationship with Him,
- by PROPAGATING His ministry and teaching to all PEOPLES of the world,
- while assuring them of His sovereign authority and POWER, and
- promising His abiding PRESENCE with them.

Uniting the two Testaments is the grand mission of God to restore blessing to a fallen world and direct worship back to the Creator and Redeemer. As the body of Christ, we participate in this mission even as we are first beneficiaries of it. For disciples of Jesus, obeying the Great Commission is a mark of maturing discipleship.

Let us, then, not allow the Great Commission to deteriorate into:

- the Great Option – a calling relegated below other priorities or programs we consider more important; or
- the Great Omission – a calling delegated to the mission committee, career missionaries, other churches or para-church agencies while we excuse ourselves.

ORPC’s theme “Disciples Discipling Disciple-Maker” is an expression of our commitment to the Great Commission in terms of who we are, what we do and what goal we seek to achieve.

Family/Group Moment

How do we plug in to the Great Mission of God and the Great Commission of His church?

What are some areas you can explore individually and as a group?

- **Going:** A short- or mid-term mission trip. Consider a Prayer and Culture Exposure/Experience (PaCE) trip for a start.
- **Welcoming:** Mission work does not have to be overseas. In what way has the “world” arrived at Singapore’s doorstep? Who are these peoples of the world?
- **Giving:** Contribute to a specific area of mission work (e.g. a specific country, people group, Bible translation, missionary support)
- **Mobilizing:** Share your mission experiences and encourage others to be involved.
- **Intercessory prayer**

Some resources you may wish to consult:

- *Joshua Project (www.joshuaproject.net): A very user-friendly website highlighting the state of world mission and providing various resources for sharing*
- *Kairos course (www.epmc.org.sg): An annual missions equipping course organized by the English Presbytery Mission Committee*
- *Singapore Centre for Global Missions (www.scgm.org.sg): Organizes forums and seminars dealing with contemporary mission issues*
- *InterServe Singapore (www.interserve.org.sg): A mission agency partnering with local churches for wholistic ministry amongst the neediest peoples of Asia and the Arab world.*