

Series: Core 2011

Preached @ ECCC by Grant Peers on 4th September, 2011

Scripture: John 17:18

INTRODUCTION

Today we are focussing in on just one verse. Read [John 17:18](#) As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

I have been at this church now for over four and a half years. The biggest trap for organisations like churches is this: the longer the church exists, the more it becomes focused on the institution (what we have done) and the less it is focused on the mission (what we have to do). There is a certain amount of comfort and apathy that enters an organisation that is established. There is no place for apathy or free-loaders in a new company or a church-plant.

A company that experienced this was Apple. They were leaders in their field by then became complacent until Steve Jobs returned to the CEO position in 1997. He evaluated and aggressively refocused. And this company bought is the iPod, the Macbook, the iPhone and the iPad.

And the same threat faces East Claremont: once in a position of leadership and growth in the community, but now having become more complacent in the comfort of a suburban church – established ministries (CC, Social Morning, Cell Groups, Worship Bands), financially stable, and a building with necessary amenities.

Or like Scripture Union who pioneered camping, holiday clubs and schools work are having to reinvent themselves...

But for the sake of the glory of God there is no room for complacency. The purpose of a church is not 'to grow to the position of stability with well-rounded ministry offerings'! No, we exist for the sake of Christian growth, for the sake of the lost and the good of our city.

A GOSPEL COMMUNITY ON MISSION

In our CORE series we have used the statement: we are a gospel community on mission. So we looked at 'the gospel' and 'the community that the gospel creates'. This morning we are going to look at 'the mission the gospel creates'.

THE MISSION THE GOSPEL CREATES

The gospel is about the glory of God. God is glorified when humans find their proper place as worshippers of God; when they cease worshipping anything or anyone else and place God at the

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very centre of who they are. And finally he will be glorified when he restores perfection in all creation.

1. GOSPEL MISSION: ALWAYS THE FATHER'S PLAN

God a missionary God, he is a sending God. Ever since sin broken the perfection and beauty of his creation He has been reaching and calling and offering and appealing and inviting and beckoning people back to himself.

Let's go to some familiar bible stories¹ to see this:

1. Adam and Eve

He started by looking for Adam and Eve after their sin: where are you? Then he covers the shame of Adam and Eve's nakedness with garments of skin – until he sent the One who would cover completely the shame of men and women's sin and reconcile man and God.

2. Noah and the ark

God saves Noah and his family in the Ark. Noah is about God's serious approach towards sin, but it ends with a rainbow – God will never judge the world like that again. But then how is judgement going to come? What will the ark look like this time?

3. The tower of Babel

The tower of Babel is about men trying to reach God through their own efforts – a staircase to heaven, but not matter how hard people try, they can never get back to heaven – heaven would have to come down to earth.

4. Abraham and Isaac

God chooses/reaches out to a nobody from nowhere called Abraham. He gives him a miracle-son and then says he must make him into a sacrifice. So Isaac carries the fire wood and Abraham carries the fire. But there is a substitute ram.

Many years later another nobody (Mary) would have a miraculous birth. This Son would also climb a hill carrying wood on his back. Like Isaac he would trust his father and do what his father asked. He wouldn't struggle or run away.

5. Joseph

Joseph had a dream that made very unpopular. So much so that his brothers faked his death and sold him into slavery. There he was falsely accused and treated unfairly and eventually thrown in

¹ Helped here by *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, Sally Lloidy-Jones

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prison. But he would become a prince and his brothers would eventually bow before him and he would forgive them.

One day God would send another Prince, a man who would be rejected and whose heart would break. He would leave his Father's home; his brothers would hate him and want him dead; he would be sold for pieces of silver and would be punished even though he had done nothing wrong – but through all the bad great good would come!

6. Moses

When God's people were in slavery in Egypt he sent Moses. After nine plagues of warning God deals with the stubbornness of Pharaoh. God told his people to take their best lamb and to kill it and put some of it on the door frame. Moses told them that God will see the blood of the innocent sacrifice and know that a lamb died.

Many years later God would do it again. He would show his power to rescue through another Lamb. He would Passover because of the blood of another.

7. The Ten Commandments

Moses takes the people through the Red Sea and on to the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses went up the mountain to meet God while the people below made a golden calf (cause who wants to worship a God who rescues from Egypt and parts the sea anyway). He comes down with the Ten Commandments. The people pledge allegiance but they could not do it. They tried but they could never keep all the rules all the time. In fact the rules showed them they needed forgiveness!

Only One Person could keep all the rules. And many years later God would send him – to stand in our place and be perfect for them.

8. David and Goliath

God rescues Israel through one man. When the Israelites were faced with Goliath the giant scary Philistine soldier no one wanted to face him. David, the youngest son of Jesse went forward to represent the nation. He knew that God was with him – he wasn't afraid. He took his sling shot and five stones – no armour. He hit Goliath with the first stone between the eye – and the Philistines fled!

Years later God would send another son of Jesse, a young Hero who appeared weak and unlikely. He would go to fight for his people alone because he trusted God. He would rescue God's people and scatter the enemy of God.

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MINI-APPLICA

If you are a non-Christians and you're visiting with us this morning let me ask you – what is your view of the OT? What do you think all those stories are about? If you're a Christian – do you treat the OT as a storybook or as an unfolding revelation of God's missionary heart? And do you value it like the NT wouldn't make sense without the OT.

2. GOSPEL MISSION: FULFILLED IN THE SON

So, after thousands years of promise and expectation, God comes. The reason I spent so long on those stories is that I want you to get the weight of what is happening when Jesus is born. It is NOT a contingency plan cause everything else God has tried so far failed! It is his highest and greatest and most loving and fullest revelation of his heart. He sends his Son; God is incarnate; the rescuer comes. Up until then God has been working through humans – now God becomes human; he comes himself to turn people to himself.

The point: the climax the pinnacle of God's plan to rescue the world from sin is Jesus. He embodies the mission. Jesus acknowledged in John 17:18 that he was sent on a mission by God.

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

Over 40 times in John's Gospel Jesus is recorded as saying something like: 'the Father has sent me'.

So the sequence is simple: (1) God is a missionary God – his heart has always been to draw people into a relationship with himself. (2) He sent Jesus to make that possible. You can be in relationship with God through Jesus only. (3) He then sends his people out on that very same mission.

3. GOSPEL MISSION: CALLING OF THE CHURCH (EMPOWERED BY HS)

I don't know if you saw it, but in this verse we are catapulted into missions in a radical way. Jesus is drawing a parallel; he is saying there should be a likeness, a similarity, sameness about the way the Father sent the Son and the way we God empowered by the HS. He says: 'as you sent me...I have sent them' (John 17:18). So there is this mystical sameness between Christ's incarnation and the life of a Christian church on mission. We are sent into the world in the same way that Christ became incarnate. Christians (and the church) has an incarnational ministry.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHRIST'S INCARNATIONAL MINISTRY²

² Helped here by Mark Driscoll in *Doctrine: What Christians should believe*, pg 241-2

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a. Culture Crossing

Christ left his customary way of his existence in heaven and too on flesh. He wore the clothes, ate the food, went to the weddings, hung out at the pubs, used the transport, enjoyed the holidays, read the books, spoke the language of the day. He completely got involved with sinners and their lives, but he not sin (he went to the pub, but he didn't get drunk).

The incarnation of Christ then implies that we must not be insular, hidden, comfortable, and holier-than-thou; being missional means that we are deeply immersed in the world. Do you know how many churches allow their members to get so involved in the church and what it is doing for itself that they cut off all their non-Christian friends and bunker down hiding from all the people who need them most!

b. Evangelistic

Incarnational life is evangelistic – we're not just there to hang out with people! Jesus did not just come to live a good life, heal people, do good works and walk on water. His primary purpose was to save people – that was his mission. And we have that focus to our lives. Jesus' people are likewise to pursue lost people for evangelistic friendships.

If you are thinking 'where do I start?', if you are looking for a bite size chunk then this is what I suggest. Decide on just one person for one year. I think that is the minimal response that an incarnational life demands. Surely it is not too much to ask that each of us find one person in our lives for whom we are going to pray for one year; that we will invite to church functions, invite to cell group, invite to church services, have a gospel conversations.