

We have seen from Eph 1 and 3 that God's plan is to unite all things in Christ, starting with a church unified around Christ. The global purpose of God is the glad praise of Christ and the display of his glory through the church among the peoples of the world. The end goal of a healthy church is not a holy huddle, but a holy headquarters. The end goal of a healthy church is more healthy churches. I want us to consider God's heart for the nations this morning. A healthy church shares God's heart. Our God is a missionary God and we are to be a missional church. Missional is simply joining God on his mission.

Our Text this morning is the whole Bible. I want to *douse* you with Scripture this morning. We put the sermon manuscripts on the website so all these references will be there. Open up to **Gen 1:28**. The fundamental calling of mankind is to bring the rule of God to bear on all the earth, to rule and represent, spreading his glory until it covers the earth as the waters cover the sea and displaying his glory as a people centered on his Son.

And to have babies. Be fruitful and multiply and train them up to rule and represent. They were to have dominion and expand God's rule from Eden to the whole world, to widen the boundaries of the garden into the outer spaces, spreading the glory of God everywhere.<sup>2</sup> We call this the cultural mandate and you can see the great commission in seed form.<sup>3</sup> Then there is continued sin and the flood, but God tells Noah the same as Adam: be fruitful and multiply. **12:1-3**. The command to be fruitful has turned into a promise: you will be fruitful. Two goals: to form Abram into a great nation and to bless all nations through Abraham's family. Abraham and his family were to be a recipient of blessing then the mediator of blessing. Blessed in order to be a blessing to the whole world. / **18:18, 22:17-18, 26:3-4, 28:3-4**. Out of all nations, he chose one nation to bless all nations. **49:10**.

The point of the redemption and formation of Israel was the nations. God's plan all along was to save a people and use that people to save the rest of his people. We are a "so that" people. Blessed – not in order to manage our blessings but to extend that blessing to the world.

What about Exodus? **Exo 9:16**. Joshua tells us why he did the Exodus: "For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever" (Josh. 4:23–24, cf. 2:9-10).

What about the forming of the nation of Israel? Well, because God promised Abraham that he'd become a great nation. Well, here we are. And what is their purpose? Blessed in order to be a blessing: **19:4-6**. The whole nation was to be obedient and they'd be a kingdom of priests. What do priests do? Priests are

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<sup>1</sup> J.D. Greear, *Gaining by Losing* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

mediators. They are go-betweens. They were to be priests and their parish was the world. They were to draw the nations in.

What about the Law? **Deut 4:5-6.** / Listen to what Solomon says when he prays and dedicates the Temple: “Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name’s sake (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name” (1 Kin 8:41-43).

What about Goliath? 1 Sam 17:46: “This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”

What about the Psalms? They are filled with God’s heart for the nations. **2:7-8 22:27-28, 67:1-5, 72:8-9 86:9-10, 87.** He has a book. He is registering the nations as he keeps his promise to Abraham. **96.**

What about the Prophets? They are filled with God’s heart for the nations. **Isa 2:2-3, 12:4-5, 49:5-6, 56:6-7.** Jer: “O LORD, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble, to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and say: “Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, worthless things in which there is no profit. Can man make for himself gods? Such are not gods!” (Jer. 16:19–20). **Zep 2:11:** “The LORD will be awesome against them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.” **Mal 1:11:** “For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.”

But was Israel obedient? Were they a light to the nations? No, they became like the nations. They did not live up to their vocation. Their behavior is embodied well in the prophet Jonah. Remember Jonah? God calls him to go preach to the pagan Ninevites. Everyone and everything in the book obeys God . . . except the prophet of God. The storm obeys, the lots that are cast obey, the sailors obey, the fish obeys, Nineveh obeys, the worm obeys. But Jonah knows that God is a gracious and merciful God and he doesn’t want non-Israelites to experience grace. He was ingrown.

Sadly, the Jewish people were much like Jonah when Jesus came. Do you remember when Jesus began his ministry in Luke 4? He opens the Isaiah scroll in the synagogue and says today this is being fulfilled and they all liked him. Then he recounted two stories from the OT where there was a need in Israel but instead God met a Gentile need (Luke 4:16-30). How’d they react? They tried to throw him off a cliff! What in the world? What gives? The Jewish people had become self-focused. Blessed in order to manage our blessing. Holy huddles. Inward focused. They were Jonah. This is why Jesus had run in after run in with the Pharisees. They, like Jonah, thought it was just God – Israel. Jesus shows the original intention: God – Israel – Nations.

This is what got Jesus in trouble again and again. He goes into the temple and overturns the tables and declares that “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17). You know, there are only three events found in all four gospels: the feeding of the five thousand, the cross and resurrection, and the sending out of the disciples.<sup>4</sup> We speak of the GC, but there are really 5 GC’s. First, Mark 16:15: “Go into

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<sup>4</sup> Todd Ahrend, *The Abrahamic Revolution* (Colorado Springs: Book Villages, 2011), 62-63.

all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” Luke 24:44-49: “Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” This is incredible. Jesus is saying the whole Bible finds its fulfillment in two ways: the cross and resurrection and in the mission to all nations. The whole OT is messianic and missional.<sup>5</sup> Messianic: pointing to Jesus the Messiah and missional: pointing to the church’s mission to the nations.

John 20:21: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” John refers to Jesus as the sent one 40 times and the 40<sup>th</sup> time is John 20:21. Are you sent? You don’t have to wait or the liver quiver. The sent one sends us. So we are all sent. The question is not if, but where. Then there is Matt 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Here we have the great announcement then the great commission. A great foundation, a great commission, and a great promise.<sup>6</sup> Jesus has all authority and we go out on that basis and with the promise of his presence as we go. Christopher Wright says, “The words of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20, the so-called Great Commission, could be seen as a Christological mutation of the original Abrahamic commission – ‘Go . . . and be a blessing . . . and all nations on earth will be blessed through you.’”<sup>7</sup>

Jesus is Lord. Mission is the summons of the lordship of Christ.<sup>8</sup> One author has come up with the mission equation: if there is one Lord to whom all people belong and owe their allegiance, the people of that Lord must promote this reality everywhere.<sup>9</sup> Jack Miller writes, “He is not proposing an elective course of action, an option for the evangelistically gifted. He is telling each of us what is our first duty. It is to disciple all nations. Since the King has spoken, it should be clear that He expects all of us to obey His will without reservations or delay. But it should also be clear that the majority of local American congregations are, in practice, saying no to His will. They do so by ignoring it.”<sup>10</sup>

And the early church was a missional church seeking to spread the fame of her missionary God. The global purpose of God is the glad praise of Christ and the display of his glory through the church among the peoples of the world. **Acts 1:6-8** is the fifth GC (3:25-26, 13:47). **Acts 8:1, 9:15-16, 11:19-20**, Missions in the NT is church planting. **13:2, 14:21-23, 26**. This is the work we are to be about. Building healthy strong churches, raising up leaders, strengthening souls, and starting more strong churches. And this is all ordinary believers. Speaking of the book of Acts, Michael Green writes: “The gospel spread most of all by the enthusiastic witness of the nameless people who loved Jesus and could not keep quiet about him. It was a people movement, this early Christianity. That is why it succeeded. It did not depend on big names, but on little people who had a big God and were not afraid to put into the test as they went out in his name. And if that is not a challenge and a rebuke to the modern church, I do not know what is.”

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 30

<sup>6</sup> Ahrend, *The Abrahamic Revolution*, 64.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 213.

<sup>8</sup> Johannes Blauw, *Missionary Nature of the Church* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2003), 89.

<sup>9</sup> John Dickson, *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 31, 35, 115..

<sup>10</sup> C. John Miller, *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 15-16.

That's Acts. What about the letters? Rom is a M support letter. Rom 1:5 Paul's call is to bring about the obedience of faith among the nations. Rom 1:14 we are under obligation to get this gospel out. Rom 10:14-15: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Rom 15: "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand." (Rom 15:18–21)

Gal 3:8: "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." Gal 3:13-14: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith" (Heb 6:13-15, 1 Jn 2:2). / Okay, I think the case has been made. More could be shown. How should we respond? 6 ways:

**1. Learn** – Study these passages. To study the Bible is to study the mission of God and our role in it. Download an app. Joshua Project. Go to [imb.org](http://imb.org). Read missionary biographies: Adoniram Judson, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael, Jim Elliott and a thousand lesser known missionaries. / Come to the monthly missions meeting, first Sunday of the month 3:45pm, right before our monthly Sunday evening service. First one is 10/3. /. Take the Perspectives on World Missions Class. It is being offered this January. We will cover half the cost if you will take it. [Perspectives.org](http://Perspectives.org).

**2. Send** – Sending is mostly praying, giving, encouraging. Pray for our partners faithfully. They are in our prayer directory. 3 John 5-8: "Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth."

Sign up to receive newsletters from our missionary partners. Down front. Work with their advocate to send a care package. / Give! We are really excited about increasing our missions giving next year. Give to us and we'll steward your money well and give beyond your tithes and offerings to missions. Did you know that Americans spend more money on dog food than missions annually. Start praying and planning now about what you will give for Lottie Moon Christmas offering, that all goes to international missions. The cause of God is greater than our little earthly comforts.

**3. Go** – In light of what you have seen in God's word, what would be the obstacle or fear in your going? Start with short term. We are getting aggressive in 2022. You heard the announcement and you should have received an email this week. If you are not receiving our weekly email, you can sign up at our site. 8 trips. Email Josh. / College students, use a semester or summer to impact the nations. The IMB has lots of options: Hands On semester, Summer Sojourner. You are freed up right now in a way that makes it easily doable. It is not about your current ability but a heart of availability.

For those of you who should stay here, be missional here in Abilene. Be on mission. All are to be going. All are sent. All are to – Col 4:5 – walk toward outsider. See yourself as sent here as an ambassador for Christ. The gospel came to you because it is on the way to someone else. Be intentional in the small stuff. One of my fav ministry books says, “Major events have a role to play in church life, but the bedrock of gospel ministry is low-key, ordinary, day-to-day work that often goes unseen. Most gospel ministry involves ordinary people doing ordinary things with gospel intentionality.”<sup>11</sup>

**4. Pray** – Pray for our partners. Every day in the directory we provide a UPG. Use the Joshua Project or Operation world. Every day at family worship, we close out by praying and reading about a UPG of the day, and we pray alongside a couple thousand every day. Jesus said, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send our workers into his harvest (Matt 9).

**5. Welcome** – God is bringing the nations here. Learn where. Be hospitable. Befriend refugees and international students.

**6. Mobilize** – Help get others on the field. We are all mobilizers for something. Let’s make it the nations. Parents, do you see yourself as mobilizers? If you are younger, the first step is to have lots of kids. The unreached are growing at 70K a day, 26M a year. Finland, Switzerland, UK, US all have substantial Christian influence all average 2 kids per household. Niger 9, Afghanistan 7, Pakistan 6. Muslim populations are going to outpace us because they overpopulate us.

And when you have kids, mobilize them. Watch Torch-lighters on YouTube, there are tons of awesome bios on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Ed. building in the little library at the end of the hall. Take and read and bring back when finished. American missions was started by a group of college kids. Freshmen in fact! Williams College, 1806. It is known as the Haystack prayer meeting. 5 college students gathered to study and pray for missions to Asia. One of them was Samuel Mills, who ended up forming a missionary fraternity called the Society of Brethren, the first Protestant foreign missions organization in America. Adoniram Judson would become a part of that society, who produced the Burmese Bible. Mills went on to form the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), that sent out 1250 missionaries in the first 50 years. Then he formed the American Bible Society, the United Foreign Missionary Society, and a number of others. You know what lit him up at an early age? His Momma taught him about pioneer missionaries.

Learn, send, go, pray, welcome, mobilize – or disobey. Join the mission of God. Share his heart for the nations. Here is where it is headed: Rev 5:9: “And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

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<sup>11</sup> Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 63.