

“What is the Mission of the Church?": Part 3, The Great Need

1 John 5:19 ESV; Pg. 593 We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. **20** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. **21** Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

- I. This passage is John's summation of his first letter. The main purpose of 1st John is to help people to know whether or not they are truly, biblically, in Christ.
 - A. In fact, John uses the word “**know**” 28 times in this little book. Usually it is found used in phrases like “we know”, or “that we may know”, or “you know”. etc. It is a book that seeks to give it's readers either constant assurance of where they stand in Christ, or the clarity see that they are not in him at all.
 - B. Some examples of the tests he lays out are found in passages like:
 1. **1 John 2:29** “If you know that he is righteous, ***you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.***” His point? People engaged in habitual, unrepentant sin have not been born of Christ.
 2. **1 John 3:14** “We know that ***we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.*** Whoever does not love abides in death.” He's indicating that anyone who doesn't genuinely love their brothers and sisters in the body, doesn't yet have a share in Christ's salvation.
 - C. So he begins our passage today by assuring the churches he is writing to. He says that if you've acknowledged that Jesus is the Christ, come in the flesh; if your love the family of God; if the Spirit of God dwells in you; if you are becoming increasingly free from the clutches of indwelling and besetting sin, etc., then you know that you are **from God**. “**We know that we are from God**”
 1. How comfortable are you this morning in asserting that? Do you understand who you are (and where you're from) because of what Christ has done?
 - a) Christians often struggle to view or define themselves as the Bible does.
 - (1) Self-condemnation, resulting from not understanding the deep, rich truths of what Christ Jesus has accomplished in us and for us, makes us identify only as hopeless sinners, barely allowed at God's table, as though we are polluting the Kingdom by being in it.
 - (2) The problem can also be a false humility because we think it would be proud or arrogant to speak of ourselves the way God does in scripture! But it's OK to agree with God's assessment of yourself!
 - b) So if you are in Christ, what **does** your Bible say about you? First of all it says over and over again that you have been made righteous (stated in the past tense; indicating completion)! So much so that, in Christ, the Bible constantly identifies you as **saints**, with no investigation by the Vatican necessary! Subsequently, the New Testament says that we can **successfully** pursue, and increasingly grow in true holiness!
 2. Now be honest! Is that how you have seen yourself this week? Did you roll out of bed thankful to the point of spontaneous worship that you have been **declared righteous** by the broken body, shed blood, and resurrection of Jesus? When you saw yourself in the mirror, were you struck by the reality that

you were looking into the eyes of a genuine saint? Did you marvel as you considered how you are actually becoming more like Jesus, more holy, more set apart for him with each passing day? That you were “from God”?

3. If you didn't, one of three things went wrong.
 - a) Perhaps you could not come to those conclusions because you are not truly a believer in Christ, therefore the Spirit of God (who cannot lie) could not give you any assurance of something that is not true. If this is the case with you this morning (or if you're unsure), I urge you: be reconciled to God! Any of the leaders here today will be happy to show you how.
 - b) Or (and I suspect this is true of most of us), you've truly believed in him, but perhaps have listened to the voice of your own imperfections, or the devil himself, instead of embracing the reality of who God has made you in Christ! If this is you, repent today of your unbelief and boldly agree with God that, in Jesus, you are already a righteous saint, one who is being transformed (by faith) into the very image of the Son.
 - c) Or maybe you don't really know who you are because you're distracted by the things of this life to truly enjoy life in Jesus! That's unfortunate because who you are in him is the only eternal thing about you!
- D. The Bible says that treasured things like our wealth and status, our spiritual giftings, and even our marriages will expire at the end of our earthly lives. While all these things are great, and should be considered as wonderful blessings from God's hand, we will not take any of them with us when we leave! Only our identity as the ones redeemed by Jesus will last; eternal saints, robed in a righteousness that is not our own and forever worshipping our Lord!
- II. So let it be established in our hearts that if we are in Christ we can say confidently with the Apostle John that, “We know we are from God”. But what exactly does it mean to say that we are from God? The 19th Century British Bible Commentator, Alexander MacLaren said that this phrase indicated two things:
 - A. First, to say that we are “from God” indicates that we are **1. “Derived from God”**. That is to say that we originate from God; that no one is a believer because they simply chose to be.
 1. The Bible says that no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws you to him (John 6:44). It also says that those of us who have been born into his kingdom have been born, “not of blood; nor of the will of the flesh; nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13)”.
 2. This means that no one ever “found Jesus”, but that Jesus found you! If we honestly assess how we came to him, we'll find that it usually seems mysterious, and unnatural that we should find ourselves alive to God!
 - a) Personally, I had no inclination or desire to live for Jesus, but thank God that on a September night in 1987, he captured my rebellious heart!
 - b) **“I must confess that I never would have been saved if I could have helped it” - C.H. Spurgeon.** We originate, or are derived from God.
 - B. Secondly, MacLaren says that to be “from God” means that we are continually and daily **2. Dependent on God**.

1. Just like a stream must have a constant flow of new water to remain a stream and not just a dry bed, so we too need a fresh portion of heaven's grace every day or we'll dry up as well!
 2. MacLaren postulated that without an unbroken connection to God, you can no more have the life of the Spirit residing in your spirit, than a sunbeam could continue to shine if the sun ceased to burn. We are sustained and completely dependent on God; we draw our life from him.
- C. But I would like to add a third thing for us to consider. We are not only derived from and dependent on God, but to be "from God" also implies that we are **3. Commissioned by God**. This means that we have been **sent** "from God" in order to fulfill the mission of God. This is why we have spent the last 3 weeks pondering what exactly the mission of the church is.
- III. Why are these interpretations of John's phrase "from God" important? Because of the contrast with which John follows the assurance that we are from God.
- A. Let's look at it again in context: "**We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.**" As believers, our lives are derived from, dependent upon God. But that is only half of the story.
- B. To illustrate the deeper meaning of this passage, let's look at a fascinating story found in **2 Kings 7: 6 and 7 (Pg 178)**. Here's the situation. Samaria, Israel's capital, had been besieged by Syria, leading to severe famine and even cannibalism in the city. The people are frightened, discouraged and despairing of their lives. But God told the prophet Elisha that within 24 hours, he was going to bring about a miraculous deliverance, completely turning their situation around.
1. Sure enough, sometime the next day, God sends the sound of a great military approaching into the enemy's camp. The Syrians hear it and think that Israel has hired a couple of foreign armies to come to their rescue.
 2. They flee in a panic! They leave their tents, clothes, silver, gold, livestock, and, most importantly, all of their food just lying in the abandoned camp! But no one in the city knows this has happened.
- C. Meanwhile, just outside the city are sitting 4 miserable, pitiful hungry lepers; people who, because of their condition, are excluded from their countrymen.
1. One of them finally has enough, saying, "Why are we just sitting here until we die? If we go into the city, the famine there and we'll die along with everyone else. But if we go to the enemy's camp, they'll either feed us or kill us (and we'll be no worse off!). But we can't just sit here on our blessed assurance!"
 2. So they get up and go. Sure enough they find that all of the invaders have made like a banana and split! They can't believe what they see! Food everywhere, beautiful garments! Split-level, ranch-style tents! Gold! Silver!
 3. And what do you think they did? The same thing we would have done! The pig out for awhile, then they haul off all the gold and silver they could carry and stashed it away for later.
- D. But if you look at 7:9, you'll see that they eventually come to their sense and say, "**We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household.**" So they go to the gates of the city and proclaim the

good news to the city, and soon the whole city pours out to enjoy the incredible deliverance that God has brought about.

- IV. In this analogy, you and I are the lepers. We were once sitting around unable to save, deliver, feed or heal ourselves because of our condition. But a day came when God's spirit prompted us from our place of death, depravity and degradation to conclude that it was better to rush into the camp of God, the one the one we thought was our enemy. With the Spirit's help, we concluded that it would be better to die by God's hand than to stay in the place where we were.
- A. This is how the prodigal son in Luke 15 went home. He had destroyed his life and said, "I'll come crawling home, and beg my dad to just let me work as one of his slaves so that I'll have some chance of survival."
- B. But do you remember how shocked you were to discover when you arrived in his camp (or at his house) that it wasn't wrath and judgement waiting for you? Do remember how your eyes popped out of your head when you realized there was a table spread; fresh, clean garments waiting, and a comfortable place to live out of the elements? That there was riches and provision that could be stored up for the rest of your life?
1. The riches were grace and mercy, forgiveness, healing, deliverance, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control.
 2. But most of all there was unbroken fellowship with your king, your savior, your God; along with the discovery that he wanted to be your Father!
- C. But we must not forget that we aren't the only ones in this story. There is a whole city, lying just beyond the camp of our blessings. John says it is the "whole world" and that it "lies in the power of the evil one."
1. Sometimes we are like the lepers and we just want to revel in our blessings; the bounty we think we just stumbled upon. But I pray that we would realize that there is plenty for the whole world; that we can all be satisfied with no lack be what God has provided through Jesus.
 2. I pray we are found in our services and prayer meetings, youth groups and pot lucks, offerings and small groups convicted and saying, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of **good news**. If we are silent and wait until the new creation, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the whole world, that the King loves and gave himself for."
- V. Consider deeply what it means that the "whole world lies in the power of the evil one." It means that darkness reigns in the domains that are not submitted to the lordship of Christ. That means the realms of politics, the media, technology, education, religion, etc. Not always, but often the church has made many poor responses to this truth historically.
- A. The church has often **1. Huddled Defensively**. We're so afraid that the world is going to corrupt us that we rush into our churches as if they were holy hideouts, lock the doors and pray for the rapture to happen so we can just get out of here! The world can go to hell, as long as we're safe and unscathed.
1. But do you imagine Christ's church to be so fragile as to justify this level of fear and timidity? Last time I checked, I believe that the scriptures said that "For the

earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:4)

2. God has not called us to hide out, but to permeate the darkness with the fragrance of his glory by our faithful, Christ-exalting presence in it.
- B. Often the church has **2. Ranted Offensively**. We have preached and published and posted on social media how naughty the world is, how stupid people with opposing political values are, how corrupt the media is, etc. Too often we have been great at cursing darkness and horrible at lighting candles.
1. It like someone who wants to become a doctor so they can have a big house and fancy car but doesn't want to be exposed to sick people! The doctor exists for sick people! They are the reason he gets the benefits of his job!
 2. But haven't we sometimes reveled in all of the benefits of the kingdom while complaining about all the spiritual sick people that are the reason we exist?
 - a) Jesus said that we are to be the light of this world. Why? Because it's a dark place! But when I light my candle in my well-lit office all it does is provide more light in a place that has plenty.
 - b) **(Black out everything -lights, screen- here)** But if I light it in total darkness, there may still be plenty of darkness, but the light will always overcome!
 3. Anyone can see the light, though surrounded by darkness, and anyone can make their way toward the light. But if there's no light at all in the darkness, only chaos can result. **(Bring everything back up)**
- VI. Like the city of Samaria so long ago, the world has no idea that a great deliverance has been accomplished by God through Christ. If we don't tell them, who will? “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) All believers must approach this truth in two ways: globally and locally.
- A. What is our responsibility globally? According to the Joshua Project (a missions research organization), a full 42% of the world is classified as “unreached”. That means they live in people groups where less than 7% of the population has been even nominally reached with the message of Jesus Christ.
1. Let that sink in. 3.2 billion people worldwide have **never** (or only minimally) heard the story of Jesus! Additionally, 81% of Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus have no contact with a single Christ follower.
 2. That may be sad, but what can you possibly do about it? What should you do about it? A lot actually!
 - a) Oh! that some of you would leave your homes and jobs; that you would sacrifice the American dream and go to the forgotten people of China, India and the Muslim world, trusting God to provide for you.
 - b) Oh! that we would stop infecting our children with consumerism and selfishness, teaching that a good job and a secure future is the most prized possession! That we would demonstrate what it is to treasure Christ most of all, encouraging them to follow him into the darkest corners of the world to bring the Light, even if it meant a martyr's death!
 - c) Oh! that instead of making a pilgrimage to Florida to pay homage to a cartoon mouse, we went on missions trips with our children, and let them see what is happening on the other side of the world!

- d) Oh! that we invest our wealth to send the message out, instead of buying one convenience to lull ourselves to sleep, deafened to the cries of the perishing (and, yes, if you're an American, the "wealth" applies to you!).
- e) That we would pray! Each of us adopting people groups and nations to daily bring before God. Do we still believe that prayers to God are sufficient to topple evil, advancing God's kingdom? Can we call ourselves Christians if we don't?

VII. I acknowledge that not all of you will, or can, or even should go permanently to other regions of the world (though all of us can and should give generously, pray fervently, and even consider taking short-term missions trips). But, if you stay here, you still have a responsibility locally!

- A. This is the week that will have the biggest effect on most of us. It's where we consider things like witnessing, church planting, cultural engagement, etc.
- B. Next week, I am going to wrap up this series by hopefully giving you some step by step strategies from Jesus on how to connect with your friends and neighbors. with Christ as the intentional, central focus.
- C. Let me leave you with one more scripture. **Romans 10:14-15 (Pg. 551)** ***"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? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent?"***
- D. Closing Prayer
- E. Announcements:
 1. **Andrizomai Men's Meeting on Saturday, April 14th at 8am at Sin City Ministries, 3524 Ave. Q. Tickets are \$5 and are on sale in the foyer. You can also buy them at the kiosks. For men 12 and Up.**
 2. **Speaking of Sin City, there is a bible study and worship time there every Tuesday night at 7:00pm. Randy would love to have you and you would enjoy being there!**
 3. **Our first Quarterly Missions offering will be taken on March 25th.**
 4. **Meeting for Youth Camp 18th right after church in the "Situation Room". All parents of kids going to camp need to be there.**

VIII. Worship and Communion