

Sent... for his glory

Psalm 47, 1st March 2020

Introduction

Good morning - If I haven't met you before, then welcome! My name is Tim; during the week I'm an anaesthetist and every now and then I help out on the preaching roster here at church. Another way of saying that is that Monday to Friday I put people to sleep, and on Sundays I try to keep them awake.

You found us in exactly the middle (week 5) of a sermon series on mission. This term is about preparing our hearts and minds for mission; last week Jesus commanded us to 'go and make disciples' and like the disciples, we too, are sent into the world to proclaim the gospel, so that people might repent, believe and have eternal life.

Over the next five weeks we'll be looking at what it's like to be a 'sent one', one who has been sent. What elements characterise the hearts and lives of people sent into the world to make disciples of all nations. And today is the first of those 5 weeks; and we're examining the idea that we are 'sent... for God's glory'.

Now let's be clear – none of this is just an intellectual exercise – it is our hope and prayer that in understanding these things we might all be equipped to share our faith. In fact, this series is building towards '*mission week*', when we will run a coffee tent next to Gannon's Park in the mornings, do some door knocking to invite people to church, and run a '*Super Sunday*' service where the gospel will be preached simply and clearly.

The world's take on mission

Now I can *guarantee* that some of those people driving past the coffee tent, some of the ones who stop to chat, and many of the homes we visit that week will have some strong opinions about Christian mission, and not all of them will be positive.

John Dixon relays a story of sitting in a café; talking to a friend about promoting Jesus in *their* local area. After a while he notices a woman staring inquisitively from a nearby table, and - assuming her to be a fellow Christian – he continues talking. A few minutes later, the woman gets up, pays her bill and comes straight across to John's table. And at what seemed like the top of her voice – she says '*So you want to convert the world. How dare you!*' And then she leaves. This is the point that John realised she probably *wasn't* a Christian.

'Millions of people in today's world are extremely hostile to the Christian missionary enterprise' (Stott), seeing it as;

- Politically disruptive: in that it runs *against* national culture,
- Intolerant: in that it makes *exclusive* claims for Jesus
- And worst of all (for Australians at least) – it's impolite! 'My religion is my *own* affair' they say, 'mind your own business, and *leave me alone* to mind mine!'

Which brings us to the point of today's talk. If we are going out into the world to share our faith, to be 'disruptive, intolerant and impolite' – then we **must** have good reason. **What is the *Biblical basis for mission*?** What **good reason** is there to '*impose*' on my neighbour's world view? And if it's hard, why should I and you *persevere in sharing our faith*?

Well, to answer these questions, we're going to do a few things;

1. we're going to look at the reasons for mission,
2. spend some time in Psalm 47, and
3. we're going to answer some of those criticisms

But first, let's pray!

[PRAYER]

Reasons for mission

Now there are many reasons for mission;

Firstly, you might argue that Jesus has *commanded* us to mission; John took us through Matthew 28 last week;

But most of us will no doubt also have more personal reasons to share our faith;

- It might be that Jesus means so much to you and I *personally* – that we want to share that.
- It might be out of *love* for my neighbour, or friend or relative; that I want them to live life to the full;
- Or... you can see that their life is a mess because of some addiction, or relationship or sin, and if only they knew Jesus they could be free of it,
- Or... maybe you've thought of what it will be like for them on that final day, when everyone is judged before the throne of God, and you can't bear the thought of that person you know and live facing eternal judgement.

Now these are all good reasons for mission. And in one form or another you'll find all of them in the Bible. But what if I said to you that none of these are God's *main* reason for mission – that instead there was one singular, ultimate and unifying reason that we should share our faith? Well there is, and it might surprise you. Let's have a look at Psalm 47...

Psalm 47

If I asked you to split it into two main parts, where would you make the cut?

Well verses 1 and 6 seem to go together...

'clap your hands, all you nations; Shout to God with cries of joy.'	'Sing praises to God, sing praises, Sing praises to our King, sing praises'
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They're both encouragements to praise God. And the rest of the verses are the *reasons* for doing so; plus once you pick out vv1 and 6, you can see a bit of symmetry between the two halves;

2. For the Lord most high is awesome The great king over all the earth	7. For god is the king of all the earth Sing to him a psalm of praise
3. He subdued the nations under us Peoples under our feet	8. God reigns over the nations God is seated on His holy throne
4. He chose our inheritance for us The pride of Jacob, whom he loved	9a. The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham

5. God has ascended amid shouts of joy, The Lord amid the sounding of trumpets	9b. For the kings of the earth belong to God, He is greatly exalted
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There's a few things we should take note of before we move on;

- Firstly, this phrase '*the nations*'; the term is often used to mean every country and culture, not just Israel (e.g. the world) – it's not uncommon to see '*the nations*' singled out for judgement because of idolatry or because of how they've treated Israel
- So it's unusual here to be encouraging them to get on board with worshipping God; but that's *exactly what mission is* – encouraging others to worship God!
- Part of the context here is that Jews sang Psalms, including this one, in the temple, knowing that Gentiles were in the outer courts, listening in.
- So this really is a call to the nations to join in the praise and worship of God.

Now if vv 1 and 6 are the call to worship, the rest of the Psalm gives reasons as to why they should worship God;

- 'the Lord most high is awesome, the great King of all the earth'
- 'he subdued nations under us'
- 'he chose our inheritance'
- 'God reigns over all nations'
- 'God is seated on his holy throne'
- 'The kings of the earth belong to God'

Grouping these reasons together, you could say that Psalm 47 is **totally** preoccupied with the character and works of God – that *the nations should worship God for NO OTHER REASON than for WHO HE IS and WHAT HE HAS DONE*'. That is – for **his glory**.

The application of this is that we want to see God's name praised not just in Australia, but in India, Tanzania, Iran. We want to see God glorified among the Chinese, the Lebanese and the Macedonian Australians who live in our suburbs, because 'God is the God of the nations, and all peoples of the earth belong to Him'. That's the reason we support link missionaries in Tanzania, Chile and Arnhem land. Psalm 47 says that Christians should worship God, Muslims should worship God, Buddhists should worship God. That's why we want to see people of different backgrounds in our church.

Now you might say, 'Tim – surely from a *single Psalm* you can't make the argument that the whole of Christian mission is predicated on the glory of God!' And I would say, that's an excellent point, good on you for insisting we look at more verses (I'll put them up on the screen);

Isaiah 43:6-7;

'...bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth – everyone who is called by my name, **whom I created for my glory**, whom I formed and made'

→ you, and I, and Stuart and Pam and your neighbour and your colleague exist..... for no other reason than for the glory of God. That's massive.

Or in Romans...

Romans 15:8-9;

'for I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of gods truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and moreover **that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy**. As it is written; therefore, I will praise you among the gentiles, I will sing the praises of your name'

→ *Why is it that Jesus - the son of God, God as man, the creator and sustainer of the universe - became a servant? So that the Gentiles (that's you and I), might glorify God*

Or in Ephesians...

Ephesians 1:11-12;

'in him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we who were the first to put our hope in Christ ***might be for the praise of his glory***'

→ *We were chosen according to God's will... and why? For what reason? 'for the praise of His glory'*

The *singular, ultimate* and *unifying* reason for mission is to give God the glory He is due. Now that is not to say those other reasons are wrong. Not at all. But God's glory is primary, in fact...

- The fact that Jesus means so much to you personally that you want to share it? – that glorifies God
- Your friend turning their life around because of Jesus? That glorifies God
- That person you love standing in the grace of Jesus' death and resurrection on that final day? That too, glorifies God.

John Piper put it this way;

'Mission is not the ultimate goal of the church – worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over and countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever'

This is the reason we invite people to Super Sunday, the reason we're going door knocking, reason we share John 3:16, reason we invite friends to do DBM is for the glory of God, so that his name will be praised and glorified by the people of Peakhurst.

The Arrogance of Mission? The Narcissism of God?

Which brings us to our next point. On the face of it, you might wonder that if God is the supreme ruler of the universe, why does he need my worship?

Does he have low self-esteem?

Does he have an ego problem?

Prominent atheist Richard Dawkins has said that God is obsessed with '*his superiority over rival gods*', so is God *arrogant* to want glory? Well, there's a few things to be said on this point;

- **Firstly;** When we read the Bible we see that God isn't the one commanding us to praise him; in fact it's more often *fellow creatures* spontaneously calling on one another to do so;
 - Take Moses' sister Miriam for example, 'Miriam sang to them: "**Sing to the Lord**, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea." (Exodus 15:21)
 - Or Psalm 66; 'Shout for joy to God, all the earth!, Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.'
- **Secondly;** God doesn't need us frail humans to meet his needs; Psalm 50:12 reminds us 'If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains'

- **Thirdly;**
 - Arrogance is ‘an exaggerated sense of one’s own importance or abilities’. By contrast, humility is the ‘realistic assessment of oneself, our weaknesses and strengths’
 - If God really is the ‘great King of all the earth’, if he ‘reigns over all nations’; then there is no exaggeration here. It cannot be arrogance. In fact, it is the realistic assessment of his strengths. To say that the ‘kings of the earth belong to’ him, is by definition, humility.
 - And what greater act of humility is there than to come to earth as a man, to be humiliated as he died on a cross outside of Jerusalem for the sin of a world that hated him?
- **Lastly,** have you ever wondered *why it is* that we praise anything at all? CS Lewis wrote about reflecting as a young man on this very point;

*‘the most obvious fact about praise – whether of God or anything – strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval or the giving of honour. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise... The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their game... I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but **completes** the enjoyment’*

- Let me say that again; ‘*praise doesn’t merely express, but **completes** the enjoyment*’. And there’s a subtle rebuke in there isn’t there. What is that thing that I will naturally praise given the chance? I find it much easier to talk about my work, or a podcase or chess than I do to talk about what I believe. W
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- That is the thing **that you** will most easily talk about with a friend? Is it your job? Is it a hobby? Maybe that’s where our enjoyment is, for it to overflow into praise. I wonder if the praise of God is not on my lips because it isn’t in my heart. If that is true for you like it is for me, then surely, we have to return to the reason we came to faith in the first place; to be reminded of the great cost of our sin and the incredible grace of God - that his Son would give up glory for our eternity. If our hearts are changed by his glory, then it will overflow to us wanting to see him glorified amongst the nations.

Rescue Mission? Or Reality Mission?

The premise of Psalm 47 is that, if God is king of all the earth, then all nations – all people – must worship Him. Telling someone about Jesus is less or a *rescue mission*, and more of a *reality mission* – telling them the facts of who’s in charge.

Let me close with an apparently true story of...

‘... three young men who hopped on a bus in Detroit during the 1930s and tried to start a fight with a man sitting by himself at the back of the vehicle. They insulted him. He didn’t respond. They turned up the heat of the insults. He said nothing. Eventually, the bus arrived at the stranger’s stop, and he stood up. The lads realised he was much bigger than they had estimated from his seated position. He reached into his pocket, handed over his business card and walked off the bus. The lucky young men gathered around the business card and read the words: JO LOUIS, PROFESSIONAL BOXER. It turns out they had just tried to start a fight with the man who would soon become the world heavy weight boxing champion for more than a decade. How lucky they must have felt that day!’

Now imagine we were friends of Joe Louis on the bus that day; and we say these boys carrying on in this way. Even if Louis had said nothing – surely we would have? Partly out of a fear for the young men; Louis was said to be able to knock out a horse with one blow. But there is a deeper answer; these lads were in the presence of greatness and did not know it. They had to be told. His greatness demanded it. Surely we would've said 'excuse me, before you go any further I need to tell you who this is'.

And so it is for our friends and neighbours. They live and breathe in the presence of the greatest Lord, and yet they don't know it. You and I are standing on that bus. Surely we must speak up for his glory.

