

April 4, 2004
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Chosen for a Mission Acts 1:4-9 Prayer

We have come to the end of our Lenten
spiritual growth campaign, our 40 Days of Purpose.
And it is my prayer that through these activities
the Holy Spirit has changed us and blessed us in
significant ways.

So tell me What on earth are we here for?
According to the bible what is our purpose in life?
Worship, fellowship, discipleship, service.

Today
we look at the last of our purpose statements as Christians.
We are chosen by God to share the good news of
God's love and his grace with others.
Jesus said in his priestly prayer the night before he died
in John 17:18
**As you have sent me into the world,
I have sent them into the world.**
That was his mission – that is what Jesus was all about.
And in John Chapter 20:21 Jesus during his 40 days
of Purpose between his resurrection and the
ascension speaks directly to his followers as the
risen Lord.
“As the father has sent me, I am sending you.”
The word for sending is mission.
We have a purpose beyond our selves, a mission.

Last week we talked about being called to serve.
In the family of God we are all gifted to serve one another.
But that is not the end all and the be all of the Christian
life. We serve each other in the church,
we welcome each other,
show hospitality to each other,
encourage each other in the fellowship
not so much because that make life easier or to make a
cozy comfortable community of well adjust individuals,
but because there is something greater than serving
our self and our own family.
The church exists for a greater purpose than
building each other up.
The church as Jesus prayed is called to a mission in the

world. That is the whole point of God's action in the world. God is on a mission.
We talk about mission and ministry in the church.
Ministry the way we talked about it last week is service in the church for the church. Teaching, helping, encouraging.
But the greater purpose of the church is to go out, is to be sent into the world.
Disciples making disciples.

It all came to a focus when Jesus was saying goodbye to his disciples; the 40 days were over; he was ready to ascend into heaven.
These were his last word to the church - to his friends.
And when Jesus spoke, he didn't says with his last breathe, now help each other and love each other, and care for each other and be big happy family.
No Jesus said, **"Now go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them."**

Jesus last words were words of mission.
Jesus came for a mission and so were we chosen for a mission.
In Acts 1 on that same ascension mountain Jesus said to his followers: **When you receive the Holy Spirit, when you get that power from on high you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.** And that goes for us to.

I would like for us to pause for moment at this verse.
In his book Rick Warren speaks at length and very eloquently about being a witness.
That that means you are not a salesman or a defense attorney. We are simply witnesses.
All we need to do is share with others what God has done for us.
There is a wonderful story in the gospels that tells of Jesus healing a man possessed by many demons.
His whole life was in ruins because of these demons.
He lost everything – his job, family, friends, everything.
And Jesus comes into his life and touched him and healed him, Jesus set him free in an amazing way.
In response the man wanted to follow Jesus and be his disciple. But you know what Jesus said to him?
Luke 8:38 **"The healed man," says Luke,**

**“begged to go with Jesus. But Jesus said to him.
Return home and tell how much God has done
for you. So the man went home and told the
whole town how much Jesus had done for him.**

We are called to be Jesus witnesses - to tell others
what Jesus has done for us and
how he makes a difference in our lives –
in Jerusalem,
in all Judea and Samaria, and
to the ends of the earth.

Now does that mean we all need to travel to the middle
east? To go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem?
What does that mean “be my witness in Jerusalem,
Samaria, and the ends of the earth?”

Jerusalem was their home town, their neighborhood.

This was where they worked and lived.

This is place of family and friends and church.

Jesus says you will be my witnesses in your home territory,
with the people you live with, work with,
shop with, worship with.

But it doesn't stop there.

Samaria is the place where people of different cultures,
different ethnic groups, people of a different skin color,
a different denomination live.

Now usually people of Jewish descent would travel
10's of mile around Samaria because they wanted
no contact with Samaritans.

Today we would say they're racist and prejudiced.

But Jesus says, my followers and my disciples will
witness in Samaria too.

They will reach across barriers of race and language
and color and denomination so
they can share what Jesus has done for them.

Do you know what baptism and teaching means?

Jesus said “go and make disciples of all nations baptizing
and teaching them.

Baptizing is the way the church welcomes people
and includes them in the family.

So when we are called to witness in our Samaria,
God is calling us to go beyond our comfortable
boundaries of home and church

and to share what Jesus has done for us
with our neighbors who are different than us,

people who have different customs and different languages,
and welcome them as brothers and sister in
the family of God.

And not only do we witness to people who
are different and live near,
we also witness to those living far away,
in other countries. To all nations.

You see God has a heart for people.

God does not want anyone to be lost, (2 Peter 3:9)
to die without his love and grace; and so
God sends us, like Jesus, into the world
to be his witness.

God wants all people to change their hearts and minds
and come to him and live forever.

To be part of his family.
To enjoy the abundant life Jesus came to give.

Those were the words Jesus spoke at the end of his 40 Days of purpose. And we have
come to the end.

But what does that mean for us?

Is the mission of God central in our lives and
our community and our church?

In your life is the mission central?

Is sharing God's love with others
one of our highest priorities?

How are you, how am I witnessing in Jerusalem
and Samaria, and in nations far away?

How are we reaching beyond our comfort zone and
sharing what Jesus has done for you?

Here at Hope International Church we are convinced that

God has given us his love and his grace so that
we can share it with others.

This not something we hang onto for ourselves.

We give it away.

We share it with people like us,
but also people from other nations.

People near by but also people far away.

In our church you can get involved with the mission of

Jesus and witness to what he has done

in our ESL program, or

our community youth program on Wednesday nights,

or donating time or food to the Arcadia Welfare

and thrift mission to the homeless.

You can get involved with one of the other
congregation in our fellowship here.
Go to their worship and help out with their ministry.
We take offerings for the hungry and refugee and
participate in an annual crop walk.
These are all Samaria type missions.
And then we have our all nations missions.
We support our missionaries
in the Philippines (Stan Kruis) ,
in Japan (Ed Boswell),
in China (Tim Park) and
in Uganda (Hamlet Mbabazi).
We support our denomination's world and
home missions programs.
These are our "to the ends of the earth missions."

Now as I talk about these mission opportunities
you may get the impression that we have it all together.
That we are a mission kind of church.
What do you think?
Are we a mission kind of church?

My feeling is that we still have a ways to go.
Our mission involvement is rather impersonal.
And as the pastor in Hope International Church
I get the sense that the Holy Spirit is challenging us
when it come to the five purposes
especially in this area of mission.
Jesus wants us to get involved personally,
to share our personal testimony,
not just to give our money so that others can do it for us.

And so as we hear Jesus last words from his 40 Days of
Purpose "to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and
Samaria and the ends of the earth,
let me leave you with a final word a final quote
from the Purpose Driven Life book.

It's the challenge for us

to shift from local thinking to global thinking. p. 300

"The best way to switch to global (mission thinking) thinking is to just get up and go on a short term mission trip or project to another country. (or state). There is simply no substitute for hands on, real life experience in another culture. Quit studying and discussing your mission and just do it! I dare you to dive into the deep end. In acts 1:8 Jesus gave us the pattern for involvement. His followers were to reach out to their community Jerusalem, to their country Judea, to other cultures Samaria, and to other nations. Note that our commission is simultaneous, not

sequential. While not everyone has the missionary gift, every Christian is called to be on a mission to all four groups in some way. Are you an Act 1:8 Christian?

Set a goal to participate in a mission project to each of the four targets. I urge you to save and do whatever it takes to participate in a short term mission trip overseas as soon as possible. It will enlarge your heart, expand your vision, stretch you faith, deepen your compassion, and fill you with a kind of joy you have never experienced. It could be the turning point in your life.” And the turning point in our church.

God bless you as you live your life on purpose. And remember: We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. Amen?