

Missions: Why All The Fuss?

Various Scriptures

Get Bibles in hand – we’re going to look at quite a few verses from Gen to Rev
I’ll put some on the screen, and quote even more
I would encourage you to at least write them down
And if possible, turn to some of them if it won’t distract you from listening
You can start with Rev 5 – we’ll get there in a few minutes

The message today is – Missions: Why All The Fuss?

Why the big deal about missions? Why spend a month talking about it?
Why devote 10% of our budget toward it, and hopefully more in the future?
Why have someone on staff with that as their sole responsibility?

- When our church first started I used to call all the first-time visitors
From time to time I’d have quite the interesting discussion, most of which I’ve long since forgotten – but there was one phone call I’ll never forget

I was talking to this guy, and out of the blue he says –

“I just hope you don’t do any of that missions stuff”

“Everybody already knows about Jesus by now anyway”

“We have enough of our own problems; we don’t need to be wasting time/\$ on theirs”

I didn’t even know what to say – I had never heard that before

After getting over the shock of it, and responding as graciously as I could . . .

I thought, that’s most near-sighted, un-biblical, pig-headed thing anyone could ever say

It’s anything *but* a vision for the nations; It’s anything *but* the heart of God

And had that been the attitude of those who’ve gone before us, we wouldn’t be sitting here today – hello

- Yes, we have our own issues; and yes we have a responsibility to impact the kingdom of God right here in our backyard – that’s why we spend 90% of our budget here
But it’s about as ethnocentric as it gets (arrogant and culturally self-centered) to say –
“To heck with the rest of the world, we’re going to take care of ourselves”
“They can figure it out on their own”

So we have fussed about missions around here from the get-go, and we will continue to fuss about missions – because God has a plan, and he’s chosen us to carry it out

Because God has a plan (Rev 7:9)

A plan first of all . . .

- To exalt himself (Mal 1:11) – to elevate himself in the eyes/hearts/lives of all people
Mal 1:11 says it as clear as any – *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 [OT symbolism for worship] For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.*

God has a plan to exalt himself, and God has a plan . . .

- To bless all nations (Gal 3:8)

This goes all the way back to God’s promise to Abraham in Gen 12:3 – *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*

Then it was reiterated to him time and time again, first in Gen 18; Then in Gen 22

Then in Gen 26 when God confirmed it to *Isaac*, Abraham’s son, saying – *in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*

Then in Gen 28 to *Jacob*, Isaac’s son, saying – *in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed*

And lest you think it’s just an OT thing, the apostle Paul reiterated it in **Gal 3:8** when he said – *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.”*

Over and over again, going back 4000 years to the patriarchs of our faith, God established a plan to bless *all* the nations of the earth – Jews and Gentiles alike

A blessing we now know came through Jesus Christ, the offspring of Abraham

And in Rev 5:9, God reveals his plan to bless all nations by redeeming people . . .

- To redeem people from *every* tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev 5:9)

In his vision of heaven, John hears people singing to Jesus before the throne – listen to what they’re saying (**Rev 5:9**) . . .

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals [to initiate and unfold the events of the end times], for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed [rescued, saved, redeemed by a self-sacrificing act] people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation . . .”

There’s so much fuss about missions because God shed the blood of his only Son to pay the price for people’s sin who don’t even know they’re in bondage, let alone that they can be forgiven and free

At such a high cost, he will not allow his plan to fizzle

He certainly won’t allow his Son to die in vain

So he continues to instill in our hearts a passion to see it come to fruition

Until then, much fuss will be made

- To gather his people to himself (Rev 7:9)

In Is 43:7 God says – *“I will . . . bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”*

God has a plan to gather his people, the church, to himself

And in **Rev 7:9** we get another glimpse of that in John’s vision of heaven at the end of the age, where he describes –

A great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb

Think of the most culturally diverse crowd you’ve ever been in

Then put that together with best time of worship you’ve ever been a part of

In the middle of it all, put Jesus, in the *flesh* – glowing in brilliance and power and glory, and tenderness and love and security

Put all that together, and you *start* to get a glimpse of God’s plan – his plan to exalt himself, bless the nations, redeem his people, and gather us together

And he's chosen us to carry it out (Rom 10:13-14)

He's entrusted us with the responsibility to be his witnesses, proclaim his gospel (Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8), and to preach his word, like **Rom 10:13-14** says –

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? [they won't] And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? [they can't] And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [they won't]

We *have* to preach the word so that the nations will hear, believe, call on his name, and be saved – that's why all the fuss about missions

God has a plan and he's chosen us, of all people, to carry it out

Because God wants our worship (Jn 4:23)

Doesn't mean he's some megalomaniac whose ego has to be fed by his followers; Because

- He *deserves* our worship (Ps 96)

You could start with the fact that he's the all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present creator of the world and Savior of our souls

Any one of those would be reason enough to deserve our worship

In addition to that, Ps 96 says that he is *greatly to be praised* (4a)

He is to be feared above all gods (4b); *Splendor and majesty are before him* (6a)

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary [the place of his presence] (6b)

And that he rules – *The Lord reigns* (10a)

God wants our worship because he deserves it; and . . .

- He's *looking* for worshippers (Jn 4:23)

John 4:23 – *The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*

God is looking for worshippers who will worship him in *spirit* – independent of the place they live, or the circumstances of their life

And in *truth* – according to what is true about God, not according to what man makes up in his various religions or creeds

Why all the fuss about missions?

Because God is *looking* for true worshippers, he *deserves* our worship, and . . .

- He *will* be worshipped (Rev 7:10)

That's the picture John paints of the church in Rev 7

That one day we will all stand *before the throne and before the Lamb and worship him*

IOW, *worship* is the end toward which all history moves

It's what we were made for, and it's what we will do for all eternity

And it will be the greatest joy of our entire existence to do so

If you didn't want Thursday night to end with Lincoln Brewster, you haven't seen anything yet

God wants our worship, he deserves our worship, he will be worshipped, and he's looking for more worshippers – there's only one problem . . .

• And many have yet to offer it (Rom 12:1)

Missions exists because worship doesn't

It's the very thing Paul urges us to do in **Rom 12:1** – *I appeal to you therefore, brothers [I urge you], by the mercies of God* [on account of God's loving-kindness], *to present your bodies* [to offer your whole life] *as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship* [the right thing for you to do].

Why all the fuss about missions?

Because compelled by the *worth* of God, and encouraged by the *word* of God, how can we do anything less than urge people to *worship* God?

Especially when so many have yet to do so; When so many have yet to offer their lives as a sacrifice of worship to the God who loves them

- Do you realize that almost 2 billion people out of the 6.5b in this world, haven't even *heard* about the God who wants their worship . . .

Let alone been urged or given the chance to offer it

There are 24k people groups in this world

People Group – A distinct ethnic group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance due to language or cultural differences

Of those 24k, 10k have yet to even hear about the true and living God, let alone the good news of his Son . . .

- Who isn't coming back until they do; until they *have* heard

Mt 24:14 – *This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

When put that together w/ Rev 5&7, the end won't come until all nations have heard, & *someone* from every tribe, tongue, & people is a worshipper of the Lord Jesus Christ

So all the fuss about missions is our effort to tell and urge those who haven't heard, to worship the living God

Because Jesus commands it (Mt 28:18-20)

We find this in Mt 28:18-20

Instead of reading this very familiar passage, I thought I'd show it to you with a short little **video** (Great Commission)

Jesus commands us to go to the nations, the people groups of the world and make disciples of them

To encourage and influence more and more people to become followers of Jesus Christ

Followers who love him, trust him, obey him, and get baptized to show it

Missions is an obedience thing – that's why there's so much fuss about it

Jesus commands it . . .

• And the church modeled it (Acts 8:4)

Their obedience is our example

In **Acts 8:4**, referring to the believers who were forced to flee Jerusalem, it says – *Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.*

And the rest is history – the history of missions where disciples were made, churches planted, and God's kingdom established for the glory of Christ and joy of all peoples

And I'm pretty sure it wasn't supposed to end w/ them because Jesus told them just before he ascended to heaven, they would be his witnesses *to the end of the earth* (Act 1:8)
Since they obviously didn't make it to the end of the earth in their generation, the implication is that his command was for subsequent generations as well, including us
And perish the thought that we should fail to obey, or pick up the baton, or abdicate our responsibility
Jesus commanded it, and the early church modeled it – fuss and all

Because people are lost (Lk 19:10)

Lost is a biblical word, a metaphor, that comes from shepherding
And it refers to having – no home; no leader; no purpose; no rest
And there's so much fuss about missions because apart from faith in Jesus Christ, that describes *people*
They have no permanent home (capital H), no leader to guide them, no purpose to fuel them, no rest to restore them

God said in Ez 34:11,16 – *Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out . . . I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak*
And we know fr the NT that Jesus fulfills that promise of God, having said in **Lk 19:10** –
“*The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*”

The fuss of missions is due to the fact that people are lost the world over
Some know it and are searching; Others don't and are wandering
In either case – Christ came to save them, and he uses *us* to find them
And we will if we share his burden to give them a chance
If we share his passion to save their souls (like the recent Yembi-Yembi emails . . . etc)

That's why there's so much fuss about missions – because people are lost . . .

• **And the need is great (Lk 10:2)**

I think we know that in our minds, but we don't feel it in our hearts
Or we lose sight of it due the busyness of life
Or we're so near-sighted that our vision for the nations doesn't go beyond the 30 mile radius of our homes
Therefore the overwhelming need for churches like ours among the nations is lost on us
The desperate need for the love of God is lost on us
Consequently, the lost are lost on us

- One of the best things God has used in *my* life recently, to re-open my eyes to the great need of missions, is a little video I found on the internet at www.miniature-earth.com
It's produced by a secular organization (not all of which I would agree with), but the message for us is clear – people are lost and the need is great

Video – Miniature-earth.org
Sobering huh?

- Those are just the physical facts – that doesn't even touch on the spiritual need which is the greatest need of all
A spiritual need that *far* exceeds in both quantity and urgency, the physical and emotional need in our world

I firmly believe that by placing us in this affluent, North American culture, God has given us a greater responsibility to reach the world
A responsibility/opp of biblical proportions, literally
But it requires a vision for the nations

A vision that Jesus made clear in **Lk 10:2** – *The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*

The harvest is plentiful – the number of people who need to be reached is immense
But the number of people to reach them is small
Therefore pray he says, that God will send people into missions

Pray; Will you pray?
You'll not only grow in your vision for the nations; And become a better sender
But you might even go yourself – God does that when we pray
Because people are lost, and the need is great

- Why all the fuss about missions? Because God has a vision for the nations
After today, I trust you do as well
As opposed to my buddy on the phone