

Missions Sunday 2023 – 08/20/2023

Our Mission

- Today is the heart of our 2023 **Missions Conference**.
- Last night, we saw a great **Missions movie**.
- This morning we prayed for our **Missionaries**.
- We've heard from several of our **Members in Mission**, and we'll hear from others later.
- So, with all this emphasis on **Missions and Missionaries**.
- Let me ask a question.
- **What is our (the churches, Christians, each one of us...)**
- **What is our Mission?**
- Now at Bridges we have a **Mission Statement...**
- It's summarized on our walls.

The mission of Bridges Church is to glorify God by renewing lives through the power of the Holy Spirit and equipping people to bring Christ centered change to the world.

- That's our attempt to summarize the Mission that we believe God (through his word) has given us as a church.
- This mission is stated in different ways, with different emphasis throughout the Bible.
- But probably the most familiar **statement** is found in **Matthew 28**,
- This is what Christians call **the Great Commission**.
- *Let's stand and read this out loud together... Jesus Said to his Disciples...*

¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

- Our mission is to take the gospel to all **nations**, baptizing and making disciples.
- And it's important to understand that the word **nations** isn't talking about the land contained in the borders of a country.
- It's the Greek word **Ethnos**, where we get our word **Ethnic**.
- It refers to a **group of people** that relate together based on a common **culture and language**.
- Former President of the **Southern Baptist International Mission Board**, **David Platt** said...

What we need to understand is that Jesus did not command us simply to take the gospel to as many individual people as we can. Instead, he made it clear that his followers are to make disciples among every people group in the world. (David Platt)

- Our mission isn't just to reach people for Christ, but to reach *peoples* for Christ.
- To take the gospel of Jesus Christ to **all** ethnic groups.
- **Now Historically (from our founding in 1975) this has been a VALUE in our Church.**
- It's included in our **CORE Values - Engagement in the Great Commission**.
- In fact, some have called Bridges a **MISSIONS CHURCH**.

- What do I mean by a **Missions Church**?

*A **Missions Church** takes an active role in seeing the gospel of Jesus Christ go to the unreached by sending and supporting qualified people (missionaries) to places where the church either does not exist, is only beginning, or is very small and weak.*

- **PAUSE OR REPEAT** for Time...
- In **Acts 13:1-3** we read about the first "**Missions Church**."

¹ Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers... ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

- This is the **first example** we have of **missionaries** being sent out.
- And notice that **Paul and Barnabas** are sent out by **the church in Antioch**.
- The call to send them came **through the Holy Spirit**.
- But it came to both **the missionary and the church**.
- ***The responsibility for sending missionaries to the unreached belongs to the church.***
- Now I think we would all agree that not all churches are **missions' churches**.
- It seems that for many people and churches, **Missions** is an **optional program** that may or may not be emphasized.
- **Hudson Taylor**; founder of China Inland Mission would **not agree, HE said....**

The Great Commission is not an option to consider but a command to obey. (Hudson Taylor)

- Jesus **COMMANDED** not **Suggested** that His followers Go Make Disciples of all nations.
- All ethnic people groups.
- The history of BRIDGES Church testifies to our desire to be part of the Church's mission to reach **all peoples**.
- Not that we've done everything we can do.
- And not that we can't do better.
- In fact, I believe that we can do better.
- I pray that God continues to use this church to raise up and send qualified equipped people to the nations.
- People who will take the word of God, **the gospel of Jesus Christ** to a specific ethnic group and make disciples.

This is Our MISSION

- But I want to be clear that being a **mission church** does not mean we are not a **local church**.
- For some reason there can be tension between **right here ministry** and **out there missions**.
- **But that tension need not exist.**

- Every church is called to **minister** to the culture and community they're in.
- To minister to people's **physical, emotional**, and most importantly **spiritual needs**.
- To proclaim the gospel, teach the word, baptizing and making disciples **where you are**.
- **Missions**, on the other hand, is the effort of the church to penetrate an unreached people group with the gospel and establish an ongoing, **indigenous**, ministering local church.
- The bottom line is **we are all on the same team**.
- **As the local church succeeds and grows**, more men and women can pursue **Missions**.
- Put simply, missions (our mission) involves **exporting of the local church across cultural boundaries**.
- **So, today**, on what we call **Missions Sunday**, I want to reinforce the value that **our church has and will continue to place on OUR MISSION**.
- My prayer is that our resolve to actively engage in seeing the gospel go to the unreached will **GROW**.
- That some might see, for the first time, the importance that God places on **reaching all peoples**.
- And others, who've heard these things before, will **be motivated to increase their involvement in Missions**.
- So, with that in mind, I want to give you **three reasons** why we must never lose **the VALUE we place on being a Missions Church**.
- **And we begin where all our values should be found... THE WORD OF GOD...**

1. Our Mission is Central to God's Word

- We've already seen this briefly in **Matthew 28**.
- But I think that many Christians have the false impression that God's heart to reach the nations, began and is only really found in the **Great Commission**.
- That in the **OT**, **God** was only working with one ethnic group, **The Jews...**
- And that Missions didn't really come along until after Jesus' death on the cross.
- But that's not the case.
- And I want to show you this, by hitting some of the **MISSIONS** highlights found both in the **Old and New Testaments**.
- I want us to see that **from the beginning** God's heart has always been to reach all peoples.
- So, let's begin close to the beginning in **Genesis 12:1-3**
- This is called the **Abrahamic Covenant**
- But before we read these verses it's important to see the context.
- In the previous Chapter, **Genesis 11** we have **the tower of Babel incident**.
- **Which Ash Described for us last week**.

- Prior to **Genesis 11**, everyone on the earth shared the **same language**.
- And they came together to build a tower to heaven so that they would not be scattered among the earth.
- They were seeking their own glory and violating God's command **to Adam and Eve**,
- **"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."**
- So, the Lord came down and confused their language and they were scattered over all the earth.
- This sets the stage for **Genesis Chapter 12**.
- We have an earth with many different groups of people, speaking many different languages.
- And **in Genesis 12:1-3 we read...**

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

- It was as if God looked down from heaven,
- And seeing all the different groups of people **and wanting to reach them all**,
- **He came up with a plan.**
- Now he could have **chosen a representative** from each people group, but he didn't.
- He chose **one man** to start a **new group** that would be his **chosen people**.
- God chose **Abram** (Abraham) from among the peoples.
- He chose **Abraham** to Father a new nation.
- God made a covenant with **Abraham**.
- And this covenant included the fact that through him, through Abraham's descendants,
- **all the families (peoples) of the world would be blessed.**
- The **Apostle Paul**, close to 2,000 years later, In **Galatians 3:8**, wrote of this **covenant...**

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." (Galatians 3:8)

- That word **Gentiles** is the Greek word ***Ethnos***. (Peoples)
- When God made his covenant with Abraham, he was not thinking of the Jewish people only.
- He had **all peoples in mind**.
- Yes, Abraham, I will bless you, I will make you into a great nation, and you will be a blessing.
- God, from the beginning was planning **for the gospel to go to all peoples**.
- And ultimately as Paul points out that blessing would come through **JESUS CHRIST**.
- So again, from the beginning of nations (peoples) God's heart has always been to bless, to reach them all.

- **But wait a minute...**
- Isn't the Old Testament filled with examples of **God judging the nations**.
- Yes, it is.
- And it's also full of examples of God judging the nation, Israel.
- But in both cases, God's judgments were more than **punishment**.
- **Through judgment** God was demonstrating **his great power**.
- He was **revealing himself to Israel and to the nations**.
- Let's look at one of the **harshest judgments** ever recorded in the **OLD TESTAMENT**.
- **The Ten Plagues**.
- What was God accomplishing through **the Plagues**?
- Was his only desire to **crush the Egyptians** and force them to let His people go?
- **Or was there more?**
- Well in **Exodus 7:5** God **states at least part** of his purpose for **the ten Plagues**.
- He says to Moses.

⁵ The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.” (Exodus 7:5)

- Each of the **plagues** God sent was **calculated** to both show God's POWER and to destroy the Egyptian's trust in **their false Gods**.
- And in one so called **God in particular**.
- The **Egyptians** worshipped **their Pharaoh**.
- He was **God in Human Form**.
- And with each of the **plagues** God demonstrated that **Pharaoh** was powerless against the one true God.
- **So, what happened?**
- Well, we've all read the story or seen the Movie.
- We know that Israel escaped through the Red Sea.
- **But is that all?**
- Well, in the movie ***“The Prince of Egypt”*** ***there's a very brief scene during the Exodus that gives the answer.***
- We see two Egyptians holding spears and watching the Children of Israel depart.
- The Egyptian don't say a word, they just look at each other and drop their spears and join the **Exodus**.
- And you might say, who cares about a scene in the Prince of Egypt.
- **But this scene is based on a true story**, that's just what the Bible says happened.
- ***In Exodus 12:37-38 we read...***

³⁷ And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ A mixed multitude also went up with them... (Exodus 12:37-38)

- Who was this **mixed multitude** that left Egypt with the Children of Israel?
- They were Egyptians and other foreigners who lived in Egypt.
- They were people, who after seeing God demonstrate his power, realized their greatest hope was to join with God's people.
- So even God's Judgments on the nations were meant to demonstrate who he was that some might see and turn to Him.
- God's heart has always been for all peoples.
- Now, moving along to the time when the Jewish people are well established in the Land of Israel.
- They've set up a kingdom and King Solomon is **dedicating the temple to the Lord**.
- In **1 Kings 8:41-43** we read part of King Solomon's Prayer of dedication.

⁴¹ ...when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake ⁴² (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, ⁴³ 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 Kings 8:41-43)

- Solomon knew that people in other nations would hear of God's greatness and come to the temple seeking Him.
- And his prayer was that God would answer the prayer of the foreigners,
- Thus, spreading the word of God to all the peoples of the earth.
- But unfortunately, Solomon married foreign wives and allowed the worship of foreign God's in the land of Israel.
- This began a downhill spiral for the nation.
- Their Kingdom was divided, and they had one bad king after another.
- Because of Israel's continued disobedience to God, they were judged.
- They were defeated in war, taken out of the promised land, and placed in **exile**.
- But even in exile, God is working through his faithful servants to be witnesses to the nations.
- One of the greatest examples of this was **Daniel**.
- If you were with us in our Daniel series or even if you weren't you probably know the stories of Daniel well.
- He was faithful to God in the midst of a pagan culture.
- When prayer to any God but the King was forbidden,
- Daniel held his ground and continued to pray to the one truth God.
- And because of his faithfulness he was thrown into **the lion's den**.
- **We all know the story.**
- God intervenes, Daniel escapes the Lion's den, and those who had him thrown in are punished.
- And that's usually where we end the story.

- But that is not where it ends.
- **Daniel 6:26-27** tells us what follows.
- Here are the words of **King Darius**, the ruler of the **Mede Persian Empire**.

²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.” (Daniel 6:26-27)

- God's deliverance of Daniel was such a great witness to **His power** that a pagan King issued a decree commanding the worship of the one true God of Daniel.
- And OLD TESTAMENT has many other examples of God's heart for the nations.
- We could have talked about **Joseph** and the blessing he was to the nations during great FAMINE.
- We could have talked about **the law** and how God wanted His people to treat foreigners with mercy and justice.
- We could have talked about **Jonah** the reluctant missionary to Israel's enemies in **Nineveh**.
- And don't forget the **Psalms**.
- They are full of praise and worship of God,
- but that praise and worship has a context, a place to praise God.
- And that place is often **among the NATIONS**.
- We saw this last week in **Psalms 67** which we will touch on in our next point.
- And in one of the most familiar verses in the Psalms, **Psalms 46:10** God says...

¹⁰ “Be still, and know that I am God... (Psalms 46:10)

- Most of us have heard this verse, I even have a T-shirt with these words on it.
- But again, as in the story of Daniel, **most of us stop there...**
- And when we do, this becomes a personal call to rest in the LORD.
- To be quiet before Him, to listen.
- But the verse doesn't end there...

...I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” (Psalms 46:10)

- Pause and know the awesome power of GOD,
- Listen because that awesome power and might and holiness and righteousness is to be declared among the nations.
- Yes, in Christ we can have those still quiet moments with God, but never forget God is more than our personal savior, our friend HE is the GOD of all peoples.
- And all peoples must hear of HIS GLORY!!! Because God's heart is for all peoples, **AMEN!!!**

- Okay, we need to move to the **New Testament...**
- We looked at the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:18-20**
- **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...**
- **But in each of the gospels and the book of Acts Jesus also gives similar commissions.**

• **Mark 16:15**

¹⁵ And [Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15)

John 20:21

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21)

Acts 1:8

⁸ 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)

- **We’ll get to Luke shortly.**
- **But each of these verses clearly states the Mission that God has given his church.**
- And if you take the time to read the **book of Acts**, which I recommend,
- you’ll see the early church giving themselves to this mission.
- The **main human character** in the book of Acts **is the Apostle Paul.**
- And his story is of a man called by God, and driven by that call to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
- In **Romans 15:20** Paul writes....

²⁰ 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, (Romans 15:20)

- Paul’s ambition was to preach the gospel.
- But not just preach the gospel,
- **Paul to the Great Commission Seriously** and his mission was to preach the gospel where it had not been heard before.
- **To the unreached.**
- So, I hope it’s clear that Our Mission (reaching all peoples) is central to God’s Word
- Both the Old and New Testaments.
- But just in case it’s not I have one more passage to look at.
- I saved **Luke** for last because it shows **in the NEW Testament** that **Our Mission** was central to the **Old Testament.**
- In **Luke 24:45-48**, after his resurrection, Jesus is speaking to his disciple, and we read...

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:45-48)

- This is Jesus' Summary of the Scripture.
- **But what Scripture?**
- The **Old Testament**, because at this point there was no **New Testament**.
- Jesus says that The **Old Testament** covers two main themes.
- First that **The Christ will suffer, die, and rise from the dead.**
- This speaks of redemption,
- this speaks of the fulfillment of the sacrificial system,
- This speaks of the fulfillment of prophecy and much more.
- And second, **that repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.**
- This too speaks of redemption.
- It speaks of the nation Israel's being a blessing to all nations through Christ.
- It makes it clear that Our Mission is Central to **ALL the WORD OF GOD.**
- That God's heart, revealed in God's word, has always been for all peoples.
- And therefore, Our Hearts and Our Mission must include all peoples.
- Ask yourself, do I, like the God I claim to follow, have a heart for the world, for the unreached, for those who've never heard the gospel?
- And that brings us to our **second point...**

2. Our Mission Brings Hope to God's World

- If you remember from several weeks ago when we looked at **Psalm 24**,
- in the first verse David writes...

¹ The earth is the LORD'S and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, (Psalms 24:1)

- The earth, the world and all who dwell therein belong to the Lord.
- All people belong to the Lord, they are his and his heart is for them.
- And our Mission is to take the gospel to all His people in His world.
- And why should we do that?
- Certainly, because it is commanded by God in His word.
- But it is commanded for a reason.
- And that reason is that without the gospel **there is no HOPE.**
- There is no HOPE in this LIFE and there is no HOPE in the LIFE to COME.
- The WORLD is full of problems, and the gospel is the only **Eternal Solution.**

- The Gospel brings hope, not wishful thinking but surety in God's future promises...
- If you remember from our study in the book of Colossians, several months ago.
- Paul writes to the church...

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, (you who had no hope) ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. (Colossians 1:21-23)

- **Do you see our mission here?**
- To proclaim the gospel that gives hope to **a hopeless world.**
- The Colossians heard it through **Epaphras** who heard it through **Paul.**
- And it's our mission to proclaim **the same gospel of hope,**
- the gospel of Jesus Christ to God's world today.
- But I think we tend to forget about the World.
- We get so focused on our own issues and problems,
- the problems in our city, our state and our country, of which there are many,
- So many in fact that we tend forget about the World that we've been commanded to reach.
- We need to be reminded.
- And I've asked **Jai Choi** to give us a reminder.
- Jai and Suzanne work with the **Mission organization Frontiers,**
- Frontiers helps the local church send missionaries to the Frontiers,
- to the places where the name of Christ is not known.
- And Jai and Suzanne have recently spent some time going out into God's world.
- So, I've asked **Jai** to share with us, not only about his ministry but about how the gospel brings hope to the world.
- **Jai.**
- **Jai Comes and Shares...**
- Thank Jai and Comment...
- So, we've seen that Our Mission is both central to God's word and brings Hope to God's World.

- But there's one final and crucial aspect of our mission...

3. Our Mission Increases God's Worship

- This really follows **up on Ash's Message** in **Psalm 67**, from last week.
- Let me just read and comment on the first three verses...

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah

- Why? Why does the Psalmist pray for God's blessing.

² that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

- God blesses his people so that ***his way may be known on the earth.***
- That his saving power might be understood among the nations.
- Or we could say, God blesses his people that they might go forth to the nations and declare his ways, to make known his saving power.
- And why do we go forth to the nations, declaring the saving power of the Lord? **Verse 3...**

³ Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! (Psalms 67:1-3)

- We go forth that the peoples, the nations, might praise and worship and honor and glorify God.
- Yes, we go forth in **obedience to God's word.**
- Yes, we go forth to **bring hope to God's world.**
- But ultimately, we go forth to **increase God's worship**, To bring God Glory.
- Why did God give us this Mission?
- Why is it so important that all peoples are reached with the Gospel?
- Well, you might answer, so people don't go to hell, and that is part of it.
- But it's not all or even the ultimate purpose of Our Mission.
- We must understand that God **not man** is the focus of all things.
- It's not about you, and it's not about us, and ultimately, it's not about the WORLD.
- **It's about GOD.**
- When we understand that he deserves the worship, praise, honor and glory of all peoples
- When we understand that he is the creator of ALL THINGS.
- That this is HIS STORY.
- When we understand that the hope and joy of the world will only come through the Glorification of God.
- Then God not man becomes central to our Mission.
- This moves our **Mission** and its ultimate importance to a new level...

- John Piper in His Book, “Let the nations be glad” says it well,

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. (John Piper)

- Our MISSION is not only to see the salvation of the nations.
- But to SEE GOD'S GLORY DECLARED AND INCREASED AMONG ALL PEOPLES
- To see men and women from every tribe, tongue and nation Worshiping the one True GOD..
- **A.W. Tozer said,**

God saves men to make them worshipers. (A. W. Tozer)

- Ultimately our Mission is to DECLARE GOD'S GLORY TO THE NATIONS
- That men and women everywhere might have the opportunity to Worship and Glorify God this side of Heaven.
- And to one day join in the Heavenly Chorus of Worship.
- Saying...

¹³ ... “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13)

- So I hope we've seen that Our mission is central to God's Word, brings hope to God's World and Increases God's worship.
- And the question I want to leave us with is this.
- What are you going to do about it?
- How are you going to engage in the Mission God has Given you who are part of His church?
- Let me encourage you with several possible ways... (not in your notes)

1. **First, Learn** about Our Mission:

- Read a Missionary Biography, I can recommend several.
- Go to the web sites of the missionaries we support, there is lots of great information about what God is doing int world.
- **Learn about the places and needs where we have sent and are supporting Missionaries or other places that God puts on your heart.**
- **POINT TO THE SCREEN...**

2. **Second, Pray** about Our Mission:

- Take a few of the missionary cards in the foyer and begin praying for one or two of our members in Mission.
- Become a prayer partner and or financial supporter of one of our missionaries.
- Talk to the members in mission who are here today about how you can pray for and support them.
- Do a study and pray based on Jesus **only prayer request** which is found in **Matthew 9:37-38**

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37-38)

- Pray also about how God would use you personally in his harvest field.

3. And then finally, **Act** on Our Mission

- Join our church missions' team.
 - Go on a short-term mission trip, were looking to possibly going to Spain next Summer.
 - Begin seeking God about serving long term in a place where the Gospel is not established.
-
- These are just a few suggestions, there are many ways to engage in Our Mission.
 - And if you are unsure about how and what to pursue, I would like to offer to help in any way I can.
 - I would love to talk to anyone about how they can become more involved in Our Mission to make disciples of all nations, all peoples.
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- **Would you pray with me!**