

Mission OF GOD:

STUDENT HANDOUTS



A Bible Study
from
Mission of
Christ Network

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MISSION
OF CHRIST
Network

Mission of God: A 7-Week Bible Study

Lesson 1: Sent for Relationship

Key Truths: Mission is God’s sending work for the sake of reuniting His family. God – who sent the prophets, who sent His Son, and who sends the Holy Spirit – is also sending the Church for the sake of restored relationships.

Now What? Spend some time praying for lost siblings, both those you know by name and those you have not yet met. Pray also for God to align your perspective of mission to His.

Lesson 2: Old Testament Sending

Key Truths: From the beginning, God’s purpose for Israel was to call the nations to Himself. As the new Israel, the Church today is also called to be a kingdom of priests and light for the world.

Now What? Pick either the image of “priest” or “light” – whichever one you connected with more today. What is one way that you want to live out this role this week?

Lesson 3: Sending the Unlikely

Key Truths: God uses the most unlikely of people to be His missionaries. The mission is His and the power comes from Him and His Word, so there is no one He can’t use to be an agent of His grace!

Now what? Pray about the things that make you feel like an unlikely choice to be God’s missionary in the world. Ask God to show you how He can work through your uncertainties and insecurities. Consider people in your life you might think of as unlikely to believe the Good News about Jesus. Pray for a heart of love for all people and for greater trust in the power of God’s Word to change any heart.

Lesson 4: New Testament Sending

Key Truths: The New Testament describes a sending Church that is called to go out into the world to serve and proclaim the Gospel. God’s Mission is for all people, and He sends us out as His ambassadors.

Now What? What is a specific way that you can be Christ's ambassador this week? Where do you have the opportunity to appeal for spiritual reconciliation, declare God's praises, or live a good life in a way that brings glory to God?

Lesson 5: God's Kingdom and the Church

Key Truths: God's Kingdom is His reign in the world, His presence, power, and mercy with and for us. As citizens of God's Kingdom, believers are brought into a new and restored relationship with God and a new relationship with the world. The Church is vital for evangelizing and discipling believers as well as sending them out into the world.

Now what? Where do you have a chance to intentionally "gossip" the Gospel this week? Pray for God to open moments in everyday conversation for you to share the Good News with others.

Lesson 6: Blessed to Be a Blessing

Key Truths: God has chosen us and given us His blessing for the purpose of proclaiming His goodness and blessing to the world! The Mission is all in God's control, but He chooses to work through us, His resurrected people, in all of the stations and relationships we have in life.

Now What? What is one truth from this study about your identity, security, or purpose that you want to hold onto this week? What is one relationship in your life that you want to focus on this week as a place to be part of God's Mission? Pray about this individually or with a small group.

Lesson 7: Let God Be God

Key Truths: Only God can give faith and only God can save. We don't know exactly how God will use us, but we know that He will. We walk by faith – working hard and moving out to go where the fish are – but trusting in God to do His mission.

Now What? Think back over all the lessons of this Bible study series. What are 3 key takeaways for you? What are 2 specific action steps that you want to take in response to these takeaways?

Sent for Relationship

Opening Discussion:

How would you answer if someone asked you, “What do Christians mean when they talk about *missions*?” (Consider all the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why?)

Part 1: Relationship in Creation

Our God is a God of relationship:

Genesis 2:18 – “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”

Genesis 3:8a – “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.”

Discuss: What types of relationships do we see in the Garden of Eden? Describe these relationships.

Part 2: Sin Breaks Relationships

Genesis 3:8b – “And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

Matthew 15:8-9 (Is. 29:13) – “‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

Matthew 23:37 – “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”

Discuss: How have you seen sin break relationships in your own life or the lives of others? Consider both broken relationships with other people and with God.

Part 3: God Wants His Family Back

Genesis 3:9 – “But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

Discuss: How is Genesis 3:9 a word of Gospel?

Genesis 3:15 – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Discuss: Have you ever lost a child momentarily or been estranged from a family member? What was that like?

How does it affect your view of God and missions to think of Him as a Father trying to bring His family back together? How does it affect the way you think about unbelievers if they are our lost siblings?

Part 4: A Sending God

Throughout the rest of Scripture we see God sending prophets, judges, kings and others.

The sending of Christ:

John 1:14 – “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 17:18 – “**As you sent me into the world**, so I have sent them into the world.”

The sending of the Holy Spirit:

John 14:26 – “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

John 15:26 – “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.”

The sending of the Church:

John 17:18-23 – “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

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

Discuss: What difference does it make to see God’s sending of the Church into the world in the context of all these other sendings?

Part 5: The Word Mission

Our English word “mission” comes from the Latin word “send.”

- *Mittere* is the verb form. We see this in the word “intermittent” as in “not continues sending.”
- *Missio* is the noun form. We see this in our word “mission” as in “the mission to the moon.”

In the English Standard Version of the Bible, the word “mission” is used in its different forms 990 times in all kinds of ways, but often with God sending (and not just sending people).

Jeremiah 9:16 – “I will scatter them among the nations whom neither they nor their fathers have known, and I will **send** the sword after them, until I have consumed them.”

Joel 2:19 – “Behold, I am **sending** to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.”

Amos 8:11 – “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will **send** a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”

Psalms 111:9 – “He **sent** redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name!”

Conclusion: Mission is God’s sending work for the sake of reuniting His family. God – who sent the prophets, who sent His Son, and who sends the Holy Spirit – is also sending the Church for the sake of restored relationships.

Now what?

- Spend some time praying for lost siblings, both those you know by name and those you have not yet met. Pray also for God to align your perspective of mission to His.

A Luther Quote to Ponder:

“For whatever remains of your life, live as those sent by Christ. It is the office of everyone to instruct his neighbor, etc. And this power is not given clergy alone ... but to all believers. When you have performed this highest work, seek to become Christ’s apostle, to serve all people, so that they may come unto God as you have.” LW 69:336

Old Testament Sending

Opening Discussion:

Where do you remember seeing missions in the Old Testament? Who was engaged in God's Mission and whom was God seeking to reach?

Part 1: Abraham's Blessing

Genesis 22:17-18 – "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your **offspring** as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your **offspring** shall possess the gate of his enemies, and **in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**, because you have obeyed my voice."

Galatians 3:16 – "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his **offspring**. It does not say, 'And to **offsprings**,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your **offspring**,' who is Christ."

Discuss: Who does the action of blessing here and for whom is this blessing given? What do these verses tell us about the purpose of God's relationship with Israel?

Part 2: Other People Grafted In

Exodus 12:37-38 – "And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. **A mixed multitude also went up with them**, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds."

Part 3: A Nation of Priests

Exodus 19:4-6 – "'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, **for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

1 Peter 2:9 – "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Discuss: Do you think that the church and all her members see themselves as priests? What does it look like to be a priest in this sense?

Part 4: Foreigners Drawn to Israel

In Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, he blurred the lines between the children of Israel and the foreigner:

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

In Micah we see that the LORD described Israel as a place to which the world will come:

Micah 4:1-2 – "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

In Ezekiel the spiritual Israel is described as a cedar where birds of every kind can nest:

Ezekiel 17:22-24 – "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.'"

Paul, missionary to the Gentiles, also emphasized that the Old Testament Scriptures said the Messiah was for all people:

Romans 15:8-12 – "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, 'Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.' [2 Sam. 22:50] And again it is said, 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.' [Deut. 32:43] And again, 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him.' [Ps. 117:1] And again Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.' [Is. 11:10]"

Discuss: We might be tempted to see the Old Testament as all about Israel while the New Testament expands the Gospel to include the nations, but clearly the Old Testament also talks about God's love for and mission to the nations. Why is this important for us to recognize?

Part 5: A Light for the Nations

The Promised Messiah:

Isaiah 49:6 – “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

The Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:14-16 – “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Discuss: Do you think the Church sees itself as a “light for the nations?” What does it look like to be this light?

Conclusion: From the beginning, God’s purpose for Israel was to call the nations to Himself. As the new Israel, the Church today is also called to be a kingdom of priests and light for the world.

Now What?

- Pick either the image of “priest” or “light” – whichever one you connected with more today. What is one way that you want to live out this role this week?

A Luther Quote to Ponder:

“Therefore God gathers a church in the world not only from the one family of the patriarchs but from all nations to which the Word made its way.” LW 6:227

Sending the Unlikely

Opening Discussion:

Who would you say was an “unlikely missionary” in the Bible? Why?

Throughout the Bible we see that God’s love is for ALL people, and He can accomplish His mission through the most interesting people...

Part 1: Unlikely Old Testament Witnesses

The father-in-law of Moses was Jethro, the Priest of Midian, yet we read this:

Exodus 18:10-12 – “Jethro said, ‘Blessed be the Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.’ And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.”

Rahab the prostitute is listed in Hebrews 11 as one of the heroes of faith who helped the spies take down Jericho in Joshua 2:

Hebrews 11:31 – “By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.”

Joshua 2:8-9, 11 – “Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof and said to the men, ‘I know that the LORD has given you the land . . . And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.’”

Ruth was a Moabite and this is her confession of faith:

Ruth 1:16-17 – “But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.’”

Naaman was commander of the Syrian army, and yet he believed:

2 Kings 5:15, 17 – “And he said, ‘Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel . . . please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the LORD.’”

Part 2: Jonah, the Reluctant Missionary

Read Jonah 1:1-2:3.

Jonah does exactly the opposite of what God tells him to do. God tells him to “arise” and go (1:2) and yet every action we see him take in chapter 1 is a movement “down.” What references do you see in these verses to Jonah going down?

When we go against God’s call, the result is upheaval! Things get “pitched about.” What references do you see in these verses to things being thrown?

Discuss: Look at Jonah 1:14-16. What is ironic about this passage? Who is the missionary? Who are the believers and unbelievers?

Part 3: Jonah, the Power of God’s Word

Read Jonah 3:1-10.

Isaiah 55:10-11 – “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

Discuss: Look again at Jonah 3:1-5. Jonah’s sermon is 5 words long in Hebrew. Would you call it a good sermon? Why or why not? Why do the people repent? Do we trust God’s Word to be so powerful?

Part 4: Jonah, a Story about God

Read Jonah 4.

Jonah becomes angry because God is too merciful! Jonah is ready to die. It’s at this point we realize Jonah is really a story about God, about God’s grace to Jonah and God’s grace to the people (and even cattle!) of Nineveh.

Discuss: In what ways did God use reluctant Jonah to accomplish His Mission? What other “agents of blessing” (even non-human agents) do you see in the story?

Part 5: We, the Unlikely

Isaiah 52:7 – “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”

Romans 10:14-15 – “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? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”

Discuss: We know that as believers we are called to be “beautiful feet” who bring the good news of God’s salvation to others, and yet many of us feel like unlikely choices for this important work. What things make you feel like an unlikely choice to be God’s missionary? What difference does it make to think of yourself in the context of all the other unlikely missionaries we read about in Scripture?

Conclusion: God uses the most unlikely of people to be His missionaries. The mission is His and the power comes from Him and His Word, so there is no one He can’t use to be an agent of His grace!

Now what?

- Pray about the things you identified above that make you feel like an unlikely choice to be God’s missionary in the world. Ask God to show you how He can work through your uncertainties and insecurities.
- Consider people in your life you might think of as unlikely to believe the Good News about Jesus. Pray for a heart of love for all people and for greater trust in the power of God’s Word to change any heart.

A Luther Quote to Ponder:

“For God has always been accustomed to collect a church for Himself even among the heathen.” LW 8:135

New Testament Sending

Opening Discussion:

When you think of the Church's mission, do you think primarily of people being drawn into the Church or the Church going out? What difference does this make?

Part 1: God's Mission in the Gospels and Acts

Matthew:

Matthew 9:35-38 – "...pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Matthew 24:14 – "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations..."

Matthew 28:18-20 – "...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."

Mark:

Mark 16:15-18 – "And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.'"

Luke:

Luke 4:18-19 – "... he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Luke 24:46-48 – "[He] said to them, 'Thus it is written ... that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations ... You are witnesses of these things.'"

John:

John 1:1, 14 – "In the beginning was the Word...The Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."

John 3:16-17 – "... he gave His one and only Son . . . in order that the world might be saved through him."

John 17:18 – "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

John 20:21 – "... Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

Acts:

Acts 1:8 – "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 ends of the earth."

Acts 2:17-18 – "And in the last days ... I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

Part 2: God's Mission in the Epistles

God's mercy is for all people:

Romans 5:18 – “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.”

2 Corinthians 5:15 – “And he died for all...”

1 Timothy 2:4 – “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

2 Peter 3:9 – “... not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

Galatians 3:28 – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Revelation 7:9 – “After this I looked, and behold, 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, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”

Discuss: “God's mercy is for all people” may seem like an obvious truth, but we often as a Church don't live as if we believe this. In what ways have you seen the Church (and yourself) worry more about taking care of our own than about proclaiming God's mercy for ALL people?

We might not have Jew/Gentile or slave/free divisions, but what other divisions show up in the Church?

We are God's ambassadors:

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 – “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

1 Peter 2:9-12 – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

Discuss: What is an ambassador and what do they do? What does it look like to be Christ’s ambassadors both individually and as a church?

Closing Discussion:

1. Georg Vicedom says, “We actually have a pleasure-seeking Christendom, which exhausts itself in edification and constructing, but never becomes the living building [Eph. 2]. So long as the ministry of the office is performed only under the aspect of taking care of the church, it can have no influence on the outside world.” *Mission of God*, CPH 1965.
 - a. What do you think he means by “a pleasure-seeking Christendom”?
 - b. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
2. When Jesus sent out the Twelve, he told them to heal, raise the dead, and cast out demons along with their preaching of the Good News (Mt. 10:8). What impact is the Church in North America having in service to our communities? What examples of this outward-focused serving have you seen in your church or community? How is this a blessing both for the good of the community and for the preaching of the Gospel?

Conclusion: The New Testament describes a sending Church that is called to go out into the world to serve and proclaim the Gospel. God’s Mission is for all people, and He sends us out as His ambassadors.

Now What?

- What is a specific way that you can be Christ’s ambassador this week? Where do you have the opportunity to appeal for spiritual reconciliation, declare God’s praises, or live a good life in a way that brings glory to God?

Luther Quote to Ponder:

“Whoever you meet, bring here!” ‘Go out!’ The apostles did this until the table was full. And this continues still every day, and the servants will continue to do so until the end of the world.”

WA 15:714.35ff, Luther on Matthew 22:9-10

God's Kingdom and the Church

Opening Discussion:

In our last lesson, we talked about the New Testament Church being sent into the world. Some people might hear this and conclude that there is no need for gathering. We should shut down church buildings and just go out and be the Church. How would you respond to this?

Part 1: The Kingdom of God

Matthew 3:2 – “Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven** is at hand.”

Matthew 9:35 – “Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the **gospel of the kingdom** and healing every disease and every affliction.”

Matthew 24:14 – “And this **gospel of the kingdom** will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Discuss: What is the Kingdom of God? How would you explain this phrase?

In Lutheran catechetical terms the Kingdom of God is:

- Power
- Grace
- Glory

All of these things are true, but they can lead us to focus only on the future Kingdom rather than seeing the Kingdom of God at work among us now.

Discuss: What if we think about it in terms of the **Reign** of God? What does it add to your understanding of these verses from Matthew if you read them using the phrase “Gospel of God’s Reign” instead of “Kingdom of Heaven” or “Gospel of the Kingdom”?

The Kingdom of God = The Reign of God

- God’s reign/kingdom is outside our thoughts. (Isaiah 55:9)
- God’s reign/kingdom is a gift. (Ephesians 2:8)
- God’s reign/kingdom is rescue. (Luke 4:18-19)
- God’s reign/kingdom is yesterday, today and tomorrow. (Psalm 145:13, Luke 1:33)
- God’s call to His reign/kingdom includes repentance and justification. (Luke 24:46-47, Mark 1:15)

Discuss: What does the Kingdom/Reign of God have to do with God sending us out as part of His Mission?

Part 2: Living in God's Kingdom

Many of God's gifts come to everyone:

Matthew 5:45 – "...For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

But living in God's Kingdom also means new and different gifts:

Philippians 3:20 – "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..."

Matthew 6:25, 32-33 – "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Romans 5:1-2 – "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Discuss: What is different about being in the Kingdom of God? What gifts come only to those who are citizens of God's Kingdom and why are these gifts important?

Part 3: Kingdom, Church, and Mission

Acts 2:42 – "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Hebrews 10:25 – "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

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

Acts 17:11 – "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."

Discuss: Why do we as established believers need the Church? And why do new believers need the Church?

Even as we seek to evangelize the world, the world is evangelizing us. What kind of "evangelism" from the world leads people away from Christ and God's Word? How can the inward evangelizing and discipleship work of the Church counteract this?

Ephesians 4:11-13 – "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **to equip the saints** for the work of ministry, **for building up the body of Christ**, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..."

Acts 4:20 – “for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Romans 10:14-17 – “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? **And how are they to preach unless they are sent?** As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’ **So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**”

Discuss: What is the role of the Church in God’s Kingdom and His Mission? How is the gathering together of the Church essential to sending out believers into the world?

The early church “gossiped” the Gospel in marketplaces and at work. How can the Church better equip individual believers for sharing the Gospel in the world?

“God’s Church doesn’t have a Mission; His Mission has a Church.”
(Ed Stetzer, *Christianity Today*)

The Church “must pass [the Gospel] on if she wishes to keep it, otherwise it will die.”
(Georg F Vicedom, *Mission of God*, p. 96)

Discuss: What do both of these quotes say about a) why the Church is necessary and essential – but also b) why the Church can’t only be concerned with inward-focused care for herself?

Conclusion: God’s Kingdom is His reign in the world, His presence, power, and mercy with and for us. As citizens of God’s Kingdom, believers are brought into a new and restored relationship with God and a new relationship with the world. The Church is vital for evangelizing and discipling believers as well as sending them out into the world.

Now what?

- Where do you have a chance to intentionally “gossip” the Gospel this week? Pray for God to open moments in everyday conversation for you to share the Good News with others.

A Luther Quote to Ponder:

Luther’s Large Catechism on the Second Petition, Thy kingdom come:

“This we ask, both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and in order that it may gain recognition and followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world.”

LC 2nd Pet.

Blessed to Be a Blessing

Opening Discussion:

What does the word “bless” really mean? The first definition of the verb “bless” in most dictionaries is “to make holy or consecrate.” What are some times when we do this as a church? A second dictionary definition describes the verb “bless” as conferring prosperity or happiness. How does this fit with the phrase, “I’m blessed” or the use of “#blessed?”

Part 1: Abraham’s Blessing and Us

Genesis 12:2-3 – God told Abraham, “And ... I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

When we receive the Aaronic blessing at the end of a church service we hear, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)

Discuss: How do these verses fit with the definitions of blessing we looked at earlier? As we think about Abraham and him being blessed to be a blessing, what are the implications for us as we receive God’s blessing?

Part 2: Identity, Security & Purpose

Robert Kolb talks about how everyone will look for identity, security and purpose in life.

Ephesians 2:8-10 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

1 Peter 2:9 – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Discuss: How do we see identity, security and purpose in each of these two passages? Be specific.

Part 3: God Working Through Us

God works through those He raised:

Colossians 2:13 – “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him.”

God chooses us imperfect human beings, not holy angels, to be His proclaimers:

1 Timothy 1:15 – “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”

2 Corinthians 4:5-7 – “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”

God equips us with His Spirit:

John 15:26-27 – “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

Acts 1:8 – “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 13:52 – “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Mission happens where we are not in control:

Hebrews 11:8 – “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 – “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”

God uses us in our stations:

1 Samuel 10:7 – “Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you.”

1 Corinthians 7:17, 24 – “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches ... in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.”

Colossians 3:18-24 – “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly

masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

Discuss: In part three, there are five statements in italics. How do each of these truths relate to our identity, security, and especially purpose as God’s children?

What do each of these statements say about being blessed to be a blessing?

Conclusion: God has chosen us and given us His blessing for the purpose of proclaiming His goodness and blessing to the world! The Mission is all in God’s control, but He chooses to work through us, His resurrected people, in all of the stations and relationships we have in life.

Now what?

- What is one truth from this study about your identity, security, or purpose that you want to hold onto this week?
- What is one relationship in your life that you want to focus on this week as a place to be part of God’s Mission? Pray about this individually or with a small group.

A Luther Quote to Ponder:

“Then the major premise will not fail you because the Holy Spirit testifies both by this example and many others that God’s people please God even in the least and most trifling matters. For He will be working all things through you; He will milk the cow through you and perform the most servile duties through you, and all the greatest and least duties alike will be pleasing to Him. ” LW 6:10

Let God Be God

Opening Discussion:

When are you tempted to not “let God be God”? What things in your life is it hard to let go of and place fully in God’s hands?

Part 1: Only God...

Only God can see the future and fully knows the past:

Isaiah 55:8-9 – “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Psalms 147:5 – “Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.”

Only God has authority over all:

Psalms 33:9 – “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”

Matthew 28:18 – Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”

Psalms 135:6 – “Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

Ephesians 1:20-22 – “He raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.”

Only God works faith:

John 6:29 – “Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.’”

Hebrews 12:2 – “Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...”

John 6:44 – “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...”

2 Corinthians 4:6 – “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

John 14:6 – “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Only God saves:

Acts 4:12 – “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Isaiah 43:11 – “I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.”

Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Let God be God! We have no business pretending that we are responsible for any of the things that God does. We need to let God be God.

Part 2: Aggressive Waiting – Be a Fisherman

Luke 5:1-11 – “On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ And Simon answered, ‘Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.’ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; **from now on you will be catching men.**’ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.”

Psalms 27:14 – “Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!”

Discuss: What does it mean to be like a fisherman? What things can fishermen do and what things are out of their control? What role does waiting play in fishing?

Psalms 127:1 – “Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

Discuss: How does this verse both affirm our action in God’s Mission and remind us to let God be God?

Part 3: As You Go...

Matthew 28:19 – “**Go** therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

1 Peter 3:15 – “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

Discuss: We are ready and prepared to “go where the fish are” and follow where God leads, but it’s hard to change direction if we aren’t moving. What kinds of questions could your church ask to learn where the fish are around you, how God is already moving, and how you might best join in His work?

Part 4: Engaging – Explaining vs. Proclaiming

Matthew 10:7-8 – “And **proclaim as you go**, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. **You received without paying; give without pay.**”

John 5:39-40 – “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to **come to me that you may have life.**”

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 – “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Explaining = Telling others about Jesus based on our knowledge and understanding in order to convince them of the truth.

Proclaiming = Letting God speak His Word through us to declare what He has done for YOU, leaving room for the Spirit to work and strengthen faith.

Think about the difference between talking about love and proclaiming “I love you!”

Discuss: What do you think about this distinction between explaining and proclaiming? In your experience, is explaining easier? Why or why not? Based on the verses above, why is explaining dangerous as a basis for our witness?

Try to think of specific examples of what it might look like to proclaim rather than explain in a conversation where you are sharing your faith.

Conclusion: Only God can give faith and only God can save. We don't know exactly how God will use us, but we know that He will. We walk by faith – working hard and moving out to go where the fish are – but trusting in God to do His mission.

Now what?

- Think back over all the lessons of this Bible study series. What are 3 key takeaways for you? What are 2 specific action steps that you want to take in response to these takeaways?

A Luther quote to ponder...

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

SC 3rd Art.