

Here We Stand: *Misero Dei*
(The Mission of God, The Sending of God)
Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:6-11; Romans 10:13-15; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Intro:

I hope you have enjoyed our little Here We Stand series on celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. If the Lord wills next Sunday we will conclude with the Priesthood of the Believer. This morning we will look at how the recovery of the gospel led to a recovery of missions, which is appropriate since it the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church and our collection Sunday for Samaritan's Purse.

When it comes to the Reformation Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 theses to the Wittenberg Castel Church door receives a lot of attention because it was the fuse that lit the reformation. John Calvin gets a lot of attention because of his work as the scholar who gave theological shape to the reformation. Yet there are many others who contributed to the work of the reformation.

I want to begin our time this morning by telling you the story of two of these men that loved the beauty of the gospel: Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley. Latimer and Ridley are fastened together in history primarily because they were fastened to the same stake on October 16, 1555 in Oxford, England. These two men were two of England's most influential reformers. Their commitment to the glory of Christ as seen in Scripture transformed England from Catholicism to a Reformation lighthouse.

They lived during the reigns of four English monarchs: Henry VII, Henry VIII (many wives), Edward VI, and Mary I (Blood Mary). Both of these men witnessed the Reformation's tug and pull under Henry VIII's tentative acceptance of Protestant doctrine and they flourished under Edward VI's warm embrace but it was Mary I's violent resistance to Reformed doctrine that sealed their fate. Latimer and Ridley were anything but casual observers of the Reformation or disciples of Christ.

Hugh Latimer was born around 1485 and was a committed Roman Catholic bishop. In the beginning he hated the Reformation and even went so far as to write his bachelor of divinity oration against Philip Melancthon's (Luther's right hand man) theological work. Yet it was a young Cambridge theologian named Thomas Bilney who requested Latimer study the Scriptures with him so he could explain to him what he believed. It was not long before Latimer, in his words said he, *"began to smell the word of God, and forsook the school doctors and such fooleries."* Latimer gathered his arrows and turned his bow from the Reformers and began to shoot in the other direction and for 20 years Latimer was a fervent reformation preacher. However, in 1553 Queen Bloody Mary came to the throne and she sent Latimer to the Tower of London.

Bishop Nicholas Ridley was nearly 20 years younger than Latimer. Ridley was born on the border of Scotland and became one of England's sharpest intellects. He even memorized the entire New Testament epistles in Greek. We do not know when Ridley joined the Protestant Reformation movement. All we know is that he signed the decree against the pope's supremacy in 1534 and renounced the doctrine of transubstantiation by 1545. Ridley's scholarly abilities launched him to the forefront of England's reforms until Queen Mary took the throne and in 1553 he joined Latimer in the Tower of London.

The two men had never met until they were tied to the stake on October 16, 1555. Writer Scott Hubbard recounts how the two men died for their faith in Christ, *"With Latimer in a frock and cap, and Ridley in his bishop's gown, the two men talked and prayed together before a smith lashed them to the wood. Ridley was the first to strengthen his friend. "Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or else strengthen us to abide it." As the bundle of sticks caught fire beneath them, Latimer had his turn. Raising his voice so Ridley could hear, he cried, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this*

day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."¹ And light a candle they did. Mary I [Bloody Mary] died three years later and passed the kingdom to her half-sister Elizabeth (a Protestant queen). Suddenly Latimer and Ridley's candle burst into a torch that lit up all of England.

Why would these two men allow themselves to be burned at the stake when all they had to do we recant their belief in Reformation doctrine and ideas.

- They did not die for a intellectual idea
- They did not die for religious movement
- They did not die because they desired to be martyrs
- They did not die because they were stubborn
- They gave their lives for the sake of the gospel because they had genuinely encountered the risen Christ through His gospel. Latimer and Ridley died because the hearts of the people were on fire with the presence and glory of the risen Christ. This was what God used to reach England with the gospel—people's who's hearts were ablaze with the glory of God as seen in the gospel.
- **You see the recovery of the gospel propelled** them into the mission of God for which they gave their lives. They joined God in His mission to take the gospel to the lost.

We are going to consider the Reformation's recovery of the gospel because the recovery of the gospel called a new generation to give their lives by being on mission with God: *missio dei* (the mission of God, the sending of God).

First I want to answer the question: *What is the mission of God?*

Then secondly I want to answer the question: *What is the church's role in God's redemptive mission?*

I. What is the mission of God?

When I ask: what is the mission of God? I am talking about a very specific mission—His redemptive mission. His mission to make His glory known so that He might be worshipped and enjoyed by people from all tribes and tongues. As John Piper says *God aims to bring the nations into white-hot enjoyment of His glory.*²

We are created to worship and God uses His story of how He redeemed to lead us to worship Him. Theologian Jonathan Gibson says, "*The story of human history is a story of worship. In Eden, God called his son Adam to worship him alone as Father and King—by not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At Sinai, God called his son Israel to worship him alone as Father and King—by not putting other gods before him. In Jerusalem, God called his son David (and David's sons) to worship him alone as Father and King—by walking before him in faithfulness with all their heart.*"³

It is God's redemptive story that he has been unfolding since before time began and the goal is to redeem us and lead us to worship God and thus calls us to join Him in His mission. Missions and evangelism are fueled by our worship of God. The Great Commission is grounded in God's desire to create worshippers for His glory and their joy. This is why, as a church, we must be centered on the exaltation of the majesty of God and the beauty of God in the person and work of Christ.

Let's examine God's the mission of God, His grand redemptive story, into which we have been folded.

1. The foundation of missions

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-british-candle>.

² John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*, 17.

³ Jonathan Gibson: <https://faculty.wts.edu/posts/a-biblical-theology-of-mission/>.

- The foundations of missions begins in eternity past when God the Father gave to Jesus a chosen people and commissioned Him to redeem with the help of His Spirit.
- **Ephesians 1:3-4:** *"³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the **foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him."*
- Before time began the Triune God made His plan for redemption in the covenant of redemption between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is hard for us to get our minds around because we are creatures that do not understand a Being like God that operates outside of time. However, what we find is that in the heart of Almighty God was love for His people and plan to redeem them for His glory and our joy—the foundation of missions.

2. The initiation of missions

- The initiation of God's redemptive mission comes in the Garden of Eden. God's son Adam was meant to win righteousness, life and justification for the human race and lead us to worship God in spirit and in truth but instead he brought sin, death and condemnation on the human race. He led us to rebel against God by worshipping created things instead of our Creator. Adam's failure in the covenant of works provided the **initiation** of God's redemptive covenant. This set into motion God's mission to save a people who will worship him rightly.
- **Romans 5:12-14:** *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come."*

3. The motivation of missions

- After Adam failed to worship God in spirit and truth, God did not abandon His plan to redeem mankind and secure a people who will worship Him rightly. What God did in **Genesis 3:15** was to promise that another son would come and defeat the serpent and restore the right worship of God on the earth.
- **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."*
- God's promise in **Genesis 3:15** is the beginning of the unfolding of the covenant of grace and reveals that from the very beginning God was motivated to redeem His disgraced son who was under the judgment of His Father. In the Garden Adam heard the pronouncement of the good news that another Son would come later and right the wrong he had done. *The seed of the promise of the covenant of grace had been planted and this is the motivation for God's mission that we see bearing fruit in Scripture.*

4. The progression of missions

As redemptive history was gradually revealed throughout history we begin to understand God's mission. After **Genesis 11**. The storyline of the Bible zeroed in on one family, Abraham, and then on a nation through, which the promised Son would come. In **Genesis 12:3**, Yahweh promised Abraham that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. What we learn is that God's redemptive mission takes place within the context of the covenant of grace.

Eventually the baton of mediating the blessing to the whole world is passed on to the nation of Israel. In **Exodus 4:22-23**, God called Israel His son, *"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son,'²³ and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me.'"* While in Egypt, Yahweh called His son out of the false worship of false gods and to worship Him as the only true God.

After Yahweh delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, instead of taking them directly to the Promised Land He led them to Mount Sinai, where He covenanted with Israel and called them to worship Him. He sealed the covenant by giving them the Ten Commandments and then the Tabernacle and its instructions. At Mt. Sinai, Yahweh recovered worship from His son Israel.

At Mt. Sinai, Israel is commissioned as God's national son through a covenant of grace to be a display of God's glory and worship to the nations. **Exodus 19:5-6** says, *"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;⁶ and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."* So they were to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests and thereby lead the world in the worship of Yahweh.

Next God's mission progressed from the Tabernacle to the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. Israel was to call the world to come to Mt. Zion and worship the Lord. However, there was no sending out from God's people to bring in the nations. Jonah is the only example of one being sent out and even he did not want to see any success. Yet Yahweh kept His promise that the nations would worship Him because we find that some foreigners were brought into the worshipping community: Moses' wife; Rahab and Ruth; Naaman; the Queen of Sheba and others like them. Although there was no missionary movement within Israel to reach the nations and call them to worship God, He was sovereignly bringing them to Himself.

5. The commission of missions

I call our fifth point the commission of missions because of the inauguration of the new covenant. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second Adam, came into the world to complete the mission of God to save sinners and restore the right worship of God. He came to create worshippers by raising dead hearts to life and filling His people with His Spirit.

At Jesus' birth, Simeon announced that light had dawned for the Jew and the Gentile. As Jesus' ministry unfolded it initially focused on the Jews. When Jesus commissioned His disciples He told them to only go to the lost sheep of Israel and not the Samaritans.

Finally the unleashing of the gospel came after Jesus' death and resurrection. At this point the mission shifted from centripetal movement to centrifugal movement. After His resurrection, Jesus commissioned His disciples in **John 20:21-22** with a commission that sounded much like what God said to Adam in the Garden. Jesus said to His disciples, *"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."²² And when he had said this, he **breathed** on them and said to them, **"Receive the Holy Spirit."***

Just as God breathed life into Adam and commissioned him in the Garden in **Genesis 2:7** Jesus breathed on His disciples, gave them the Holy Spirit and commissioned them to take the good news to the lost. Jesus renewed the commission given to Adam in the Garden but Jesus did not simply call His followers to follow with physical strength but empowers them with spiritual strength.⁴

6. The intensification of missions

⁴ Greg Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 571-572.

In **Acts 1:8** the mission begins to move outward. Jesus said in **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.*" At Pentecost, Israel was transformed. The disciples, as the new representatives of Israel, begin to boldly proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Now the church goes beyond Jerusalem. First it goes to Judea and then Samaria and then to the ends of the earth.

Christ's church is still on mission today. We are part of the great gospel movement that began back in the Garden. God has called us into His mission to call the nations, people of every tribe and tongue to stop worshipping idols and to worship the One true God through Jesus Christ.

It is here that we find our mission as a church. In their book *What is the Mission of the Church*, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert write, "*The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.*"⁵

There are a lot of things we can be about as a church but this little mission statement sums it up. We are to fulfill the Great Commission by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and in this we make disciples who love and worship God through Christ by the Spirit. This is our task—making disciples who love and worship Jesus!

7. The cessation of missions

Finally one day our task will be completed and the fruit of the Son's mission will be seen when an innumerable multitude from every nation and tribe and people and tongue stand before the throne of grace and cry out in glorious worship, "*Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory.*" (**Revelation 19:6-7**). It will be on that day that missions will be no more and finally true worship will only have just begun. So here we have it.

Application: Our application is going to be seen in the next point but let say two things:

1. God's redemptive mission to redeem His people into *enjoyment of His glory* is a story woven throughout all of Scripture.
2. Our mission efforts must stay anchored in God's redemptive mission to save the lost or we will go off in all kinds of tangents.

II. *What is the church's role in God's redemptive mission?* (1 Peter 2:9-10)

- **Perhaps asking this question in a different way will help us get our minds around the question.** I fear if we simply consider my two points: what is the mission of God and what is the mission of the church we will throw all of this into the storage bin of our minds labeled *interesting information* and it not affect us.
- **Here is the question(s):**
 - How is the spark of mission of God fanned into a flame in our lives so that we, like Latimer and Ridley, have our hearts as a church stoked into a blaze of white-hot worship of God that reflects the marvelous light of the glory of God in our lives?
 - Listen I am not talking about whipping our worship services up into a frenzied gathering or going out on the street corner or gathering on campus at ISU and preaching in front of the Library (nothing wrong with those options).
 - I am talking about living ordinary lives with an extraordinary message on our lips so that we have gospel conversations with other people.
 - I am talking about incarnating the love of Christ in our digital age. We love our neighbors well with the incarnational ministry of presence not with posts, tweets, likes and follows.

⁵ Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*, 62.

- For some of us to have our hearts set on fire by the gospel means packing up and moving and living ordinary lives for an extraordinary Savior some where else in the world and/or we offer up prayers and give our money to support those whom we send out. If we don't move then we press into our neighborhoods on mission with God.
- **1 Peter 2:9-10:** *"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. ¹⁰ 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."*
- 1 Peter 2:9-10 is a nutshell text of God's redemptive mission to save His people for the enjoyment of worship, that overflows in missions and evangelism. Let's conclude our time together by walking through the text.
- **Three things in these two verses: Our Past; Our Present; Our Purpose.**

1. Our Past: We Were Not His People (v. 10)

- You were not God's people (v. 10)
- You had not received His mercy (v. 10)
- **Illst:** The great Christian philosopher Francis Schaffer was once asked if you had only one hour to tell a person about Jesus Christ what would you do? He replied: I would spend 45 minutes telling them about their problem and 15 minutes telling them about the cure.
- **The Apostle Paul said it this way in Ephesians 2:12-13,** *"remember that you were at that time **separated** from Christ, **alienated** from the commonwealth of Israel and **strangers** to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."*
- **Illst:** We were like the Israelites stuck in Egypt as slaves and the children Gohmer who was sex slave who had a child and Hosea named him Lo-ammi, which means *Not My People*. **We were under God's wrath and doomed to pay for our sin in Hell for eternity.**
- **TRANSITION: This is our past! This is who we were but now we are!!**

2. Our Present: We Are Now His People (v. 9)

- **Those who have received God's mercy are:** A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people for God's own possession
- **Verse 9** begins with the fact that God chooses on whom He will be merciful and in His mercy He has chosen to call people who were not His people—and He called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. The amazing truth of the matter is that if He had not called us out of darkness then we would have no hope and would have lived in darkness for eternity.
- Yet God in His grace and mercy chose a people for His own possession. Many people get hung up on the fact that God chooses His people, that He sovereignly raises the spiritually dead hearts of sinners to life.

3. Our Purpose: We find our purpose in our identity—"to proclaim."

- **What many people do is ask:** Well what about my family member or friend or neighbor?
- **To this I reply: exactly! What about them?**
 - **Do you know that God will not save them?** No you don't. Do you know God's timetable? No you don't. Do you think your friend/family member will be saved without hearing the gospel? No of course not. Then here is what you do—proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

- **God will not save them without them hearing the gospel. So our question is: What does a royal priesthood do?**
They stand between them and God and love them with the gospel.
- **We must do** what a royal priesthood does- get on our knees before God in prayer and ask God to save them by calling them out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ for Christ. We must proclaim the excellencies of Christ to them.
- **As a holy nation, we must live lives in light of the marvelous light of the gospel. Verses 11-12 teach us how a holy nation and people who belong to God live,** *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ²² 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."*
- To live life as a holy nation is to live a life of proclamation. This is our purpose.

As we pull it all together we need to keep in mind we are considering the mission of God and how it instructs the mission of the church. Churches that center on making much of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ will kindle a fervent desire and zeal to declare the glory of God among the nations and among their neighborhoods. The most crucial issue for us as becoming a church that is serious about joining God in His redemptive mission is being a church where centrality of God and His gospel is life of the church. How can people who are not stunned by the greatness of God as seen in the person and work of Christ in all of the Bible be sent out with the ringing message of *"Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised"* unless they savor that greatness of God in worship of our Savior Jesus Christ? **Worship is the fuel for missions.**

Conclusion:

- **Friend perhaps you are here this morning** and you are wondering about this God who has been on a redemptive mission to save His people and free them to worship Him. Then this people proclaim the story of how they were delivered in worship of God through Jesus Christ their Savior who was the very God Himself and yet died on the cross for the sins of those whom He created and rose from the dead on the third day. It might be strange to you that somehow these people worship this risen Savior and find their fullness of joy and great delight in Christ.
- **Brother and sister in Christ:** The call to participate in missions and evangelism is not a recruitment project for God's labor force. It is the call to be part of a liberation project achieved through worship whereby we are freed from the heavy burden of the yokes of false gods and freed to make much of Christ (Matthew 11:28-30). In Christ, God has freed us to enjoy making much of the Savior who came not to be served but to give His life to serve you and who gave His life as a ransom for you. It is only this BIG grasp of God's mission and the One whom He sent that gave His life for us that will propel us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him.