
Featuring biblical mission

2Corinthians 5:11-6:2

Dan Turner

Introduction Every person desires. At times it is as simple as desiring dark chocolate or bold coffee or a Friday or a payday. But the desire I have in mind this morning runs much deeper than these types of desires.

You can see this desire expressed in every Continent and in all countries and cultures. I heard it when reading reports from Swaziland, Africa where recently Lisa Moore was serving. I saw it last week through the eyes of one of our missionaries Mark Fehrman as he described the church in China. I see it on TV, in marketing strategies, in the hallways of school. It's quite clear on weekends and holidays.

This desire unsubmitted to King Jesus just about killed me before I was converted and began to follow Jesus. The desire I have in mind goes something like this.

A desire for affiliation due to the sense of alienation runs steady in the human heart. To want to be in relationship, to enjoy family, to become a member of something or merely to sense a connection to a larger movement is common among all – particularly when there is a sense of separation, a “I don't have/fit/belong” kind of awareness. People do strange (i.e. sinful) things to be brought in and belong to a group.

They say things they regret later. They buy things they wish they wouldn't have. They frantically stay busy to secure a certain reputation. They lie. They steal. Their identity is different online than it is offline. They present a false self while the real self remains frightened by the thought of banishment, expulsion, rejection – you know, exiled from the good life.

They laugh at perversion. They change their convictions. They have sex outside of God's moral will. They take drugs. They stay out late. They keep all the rules. They look problem-free. Their attendance at church is 100%. They are never late. They always give.

Their passion ruins people. Their desires go amok. They tear down relationships. They desecrate God's holiness and destroy human happiness. And they are clueless that they are enemies of God and are under the judgment of God. They think they can become someone by belonging to something.

They need what we have.

Beloved, we have at Clearcreek Chapel what this world needs, a need for reconciliation, a way of enjoying peace with God, a way of belonging by becoming. We as a church both possess and portray the good news for all whose rebellion has sent them to fulfill common desires in counterfeit ways.

Today we are featuring biblical mission. And doing this we will see four features of biblical mission. I want us to see what a church on mission looks like. But greater still I pray we sense that we are this church and that we are sent by God into the world carrying the only hope for the world.

Tonight, then, we will look at how that specifically relates to us in personal and practical ways. [pray]

This morning we want to continue our September series titled *Shepherds and Servants*. We have seen biblical leadership (a look at Eldership by the help of Pastor Devon). We have noticed biblical servants (a look at the Diaconate by the help of Pastor Mark). We now want to take a good look at biblical mission (a look at the commissional church). What does a church sent on mission look like? What features are obvious in a church shaped by biblical mission? In what ways do these noticeable characteristics function in ordinary ways? How does the gospel influence these characteristics so that growth in them will occur at the Chapel, in our homes, around our neighborhoods and around the world?

Please open your Bibles and turn with me to 2Corinthians 5:11-6:2. The apostle Paul in this passage is *featuring biblical mission*.

Four Features of Biblical Mission

1st Gospel Motivation

v.11-15

In verses 11-15 we come to the first of four features of biblical mission. In these verses we come to notice gospel motivation. Motivation can be understood in two ways as seen in this passage.

Why we do what we do (think purpose)

v.11-15

The first thing we want to explore together is why we do what we do. Here in v.11-15, gospel motivation is seen in purpose. What is Clearcreek Chapel's purpose in moving out into biblical mission?

We pick up this theme by noticing what Paul is doing in these verses. Throughout the letter, Paul is making plain both himself and his ministry. He wants the church to understand why he does what he does. This largely is due to his critics (false apostles) who charge him with false motives and weak ministry.

(11a) Paul, in the first part v.11, tells the church that he persuades others. Likely this means that the "others" are his critics who advance the idea that Paul is inauthentic. Paul desires his critics to change their mind about him and his ministry because 1) their criticism hurts the church and weakens their faith in the gospel 2) their criticism demonstrates that they do not believe the true gospel. They are false apostles. And for Paul, he yearns for people around him to understand and receive the gospel.

So Paul goes about trying to persuade others that his labor is authentic and his love is genuine. And he does this with an eye toward convincing people of the wonder of the gospel and their need for it. He wants people converted to Jesus Christ.

(11b-13) And so, in the latter part of verse 11 to the end of v.13, Paul talks about why he does what he does. The Lord knows that Paul is genuine. Paul hopes that the church knows his sincerity. The reason for Paul speaking well of himself is to give the church reason to say this: "Paul is our pride and joy. He is truly sent by God as a true apostle with the true message. We love him and believe his message". As a result of this understanding of Paul, the church can answer Paul's critics with the gospel. And this is the purpose for Paul's ministry.

Not serving self but serving others

The apostle Paul did not serve in order to be made much of. The reason for his self-promoting agenda was to clear the record about him. And this was important to him due to the fact that when people thought well of him they thought well of the gospel. Conversely, when people thought poorly of him they rejected the gospel. He did not want people to reject the gospel.

From these vv., his motive for ministry might be summarized as “not serving self but serving others. His activities were “for God” (13b) and “for you” (13c). He wanted to please God (see v.9) and love others.

As we think together over becoming a church on mission, we first need to be clear over our motivation – Key word: Purity.

How we do what we do (think power)

v.11-15

As we continue to think upon biblical mission and to look at gospel motivation we come to a second way to think about motivation. While we’ve seen that gospel motivation answers why we do what we do, now we notice in the same text how we do what we do. What is the engine of biblical mission? Where do we get the conviction and strength and power and energy to carry out faithfully its commission? How is the church to do what it is sent to do? Notice carefully v.11 and v.14.

By the fear of Christ – as Judge

v.11

“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord...” Paul carries out his ministry. Fear is a perspective and an energy that moves forward Paul’s ministry.

So the question is “Fear of what”? The linking word “therefore” takes us back to v.10 to see Jesus as the Judge. All people everywhere in all times will find themselves at the end of history in front of the judgment seat of Christ. Here, it will be revealed what each person trusted in and how they conducted their lives.

Paul isn’t worried about whether he is justified or not. He is not trying to work his way into favor with the Judge through biblical mission. As some wise saint once said, “Justification is by faith alone. But the faith that justifies is never alone”. Faith in Christ produces faithfulness to Christ. At the judgment seat believers will be rewarded for their God-given faith that produced biblical mission. (See Romans 4-5; 2Cor.5:16-21).

The flipside of this truth is that those who did not bow to King Jesus and follow by faith His word will be judged and receive what is due – eternal hell. For Paul, he hated the thought of anyone entering eternity without reconciliation.

Churches on biblical mission are motivated in their present responsibility in light of their future accountability.

By the love of Christ – as Savior

v.14

The second aspect of the motivation looks at present relationship in light of past accomplishment. In verse 14 we see Paul motivated by “the love of Christ”. This love is not primarily our love for Christ. Rather it is Christ’s demonstrated-

through-the-cross type of love (as seen in the following verses). When Paul concluded that Christ's cross work was sufficient for his problem (a problem of sin), his love for Christ welled up and this motivated him in biblical mission.

(Preach the two halves put together = a fear and love at the same time)

2nd Gospel Movement

v.15-17

As the gospel gains ground in our hearts outward behavior changes in our lives.

We've noticed one feature of biblical mission (gospel motivation). Now in v.15 we see another characteristic. Listen for it as I read v.14-15.

As the fear of Christ and the love of Christ mingle in our souls a gospel movement happens in our lives. There are three distinct directions gospel movement takes.

From

First, gospel movement takes us away from selfishness. Becoming a commissional church requires all of us to become selfless (generous, considerate, big hearted, open-handed). This occurs when the gospel gains ground in our hearts. You can see this in v.15. It takes us away from ourselves. We stop living life as though we are the center of our relationships. We began to come to terms with the fact that "it's not about me". Whether it's a relationship or a position or a responsibility or a situation, we recognize due to the gospel that it's not about me. What I now live for is not ME. Notice next where the gospel takes us.

To

Gospel movement carries us to God. This aspect of the second characteristic of biblical mission is about worship. When God saved us by the gospel through His son, he saved us not merely from ourselves. He saved us for himself. We can expect at the Chapel as the gospel influences these characteristics of biblical mission that we will be free to worship God wherever.

For

Finally, gospel movement leads not only away from us and toward God. It also bends us outward to love others. Whether they are believers (cf. v.13) or unbelievers (cf. v.11-12, 19), the gospel movement *sets us in motion* to get involved in people's lives with the gospel.

Due to this radical gospel-influenced movement we now according to v.16-17 look at Christ and others entirely in a different way. We stop judging according to human standards and perspectives. We have now a new attitude and we are now the new creation. While v.16 says it negatively verse 17 says it positively. Christ Jesus' work on the cross brought about the most profound change in human history. The life he lived he lived for us and the death he died he died for us. This restores us from the curse and Fall and makes us the new creation in Him. As Kim Riddelbarger puts it: "Adam belongs to the world that is, Christ to the world to come. Once Jesus burst from the tomb, the age to come dawned, and the new creation commenced. Easter Sunday is the birthday of the new world. The empty tomb is the sign and seal of the new creation".

*God saves us
by the gospel
through His Son
from ourselves
to Himself
for others.*

The final consummation of this climactic inference of the gospel is seen in Revelation 21-22 and occurs in the future. But for now, the gospel recreates us as a new community in which the old opinions, views, affections, relationships, plans pass away. And the new views, affections, relationships, plans and purposes both form and fill the soul. We now look at and respond to people differently. In Christ we are the new creation!

3rd Gospel Message

v.18-19

So far we've seen two features of biblical mission. They are 1) gospel motivation and 2) gospel movement. The gospel stirs up our motivation and steers us away from self and toward God and others. Thus as the new creation we are less self-centered and more Christ-centered. We therefore are concerned about both unbelievers and believers.

Now we want to look at the third feature of biblical mission. This is the gospel message itself. What does a commissional church both possess and proclaim? What propositional truth did God give the church both for its transformation and its communication? Verses 18-19 communicate a 2-fold emphasis from the message. Notice with me as I read v.18-19 what God first did and then what He gave us to do (point out rep. and para. to make the point)

Bringing us together & sending us out together

In verses 18-19 the apostle Paul states the gospel clearly. Here is our message we possess, portray and proclaim. This is the doctrine of reconciliation. He then turns around and tells the church to proclaim the doctrine of reconciliation. Let's first look at reconciliation or "bringing us together".

Recall how the message this morning began. We stated the obvious that all people desire an affiliation due to a sense of alienation. We see this storyline in the headlines. We see this storyline in the Bible. Remember in Gen1-3 how man and God were together in holy happiness. We recall also how man and woman were together the same. In chapter three we see sin and its effects. Now we have God and man separated and man and woman separated. The law banished them from paradise and judged them guilty. Throughout the entire Bible we see this theme of exile, banishment and separation. The only way reconciliation can occur came from God. Romans 5 says it clearly. We are enemies of God. God is angry at our sin. There is total separation between God and man due to our rebellion and His holiness.

God, if there is any hope, had to do something we could not do. He had to remove His wrath against us by spending it all upon His son. God killed Christ on the Cross to do away with his holy indignation toward His people's sin. Christ paid for our sins. He brought us forgiveness of sins. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. All this is summarized in v.18 and then explained further in v.19

- 1) God worked (18a)
- 2) Through the work of His Son (18b)
- 3) To reconcile His people to Himself (18c)
- 4) And send them to proclaim this message throughout the world (18d)

We see this gospel both changing the church (v.16-17) and charging the church (18-19) to pass on what they received.

Consider Luke 24:45-47 to notice this 2-fold summary of the storyline of the Bible

4th Gospel Ministry

v.20-6:2

The last feature of biblical mission should not surprise any of us. We've seen motivation, movement and message. But left there we are still here. We have not gone anywhere. As we come to the end of the passage, we see clearly both the church's identity and its activity.

Its Identity

We notice gospel ministry first through its identity.

Ambassador for Christ

v.20 says we are ambassadors for Christ. We represent Christ the king. We are called to be someone before we are called to say something. This someone is a representative.

A representative knows life is not about him. He commits to being on call 24/7/365. He is aware that when people look at and listen to him they are looking at and listening to who he represents. Therefore, the ambassador learns well the agenda of the far away KING. He knows what the king wants and how to go about advancing his agenda. His sense of the king's character is preserved and promoted. He wants people to think well of his King.

This calling to be His ambassador allows the church to represent the king of the universe to people around her. He sends his representatives into lives of anger, confusion, disappointment, rebellion, depression, bewilderment; into all the ways unbelief manifests itself. And his reps. then take the message of reconciliation and live it and help others learn it so that those exiled due to sin are brought under the riches of the reign of the king. They are reconciled through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The activity of the ambassador is made clear as we read v.20-6:2

Its Activity

Identity steers activity. As an ambassador we learn what to do. Gospel ministry according to this passage is a speaking ministry. Notice how we are to speak.

Speaking urgently

We are to speak urgently as witnessed in the tone of this passage. Don't just hear but feel words used in this passage: appealing, imploring, beseeching, persuading, now, today. For Paul as it must be for Clearcreek Chapel there is something critical about life. We cannot take an indifferent viewpoint with so much at stake.

Also, notice chapter 6:1-2. Paul quotes Isaiah 49 to underscore why we are to speak urgently. The returns from captivity in the Bible are not just about Jews and Babylonians. The prophecy of Isa.49 was immediately fulfilled in the return of the Jewish nation back to the promised land. But the fullness of the fulfilled happened through Jesus death, resurrection, ascension and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In one sense, the time of exile is over. "Come home, come home" is the plea. Don't stay under the rule of the enemy. You are redeemed. You are set free.

You have been reconciled by the death of Jesus to God. Receive the reconciliation (cf. Rom.5:10) and come home (Lk.15).

Speaking personally

The second way we are to speak can be summed up with the word personally. He says, "God appealing through us we implore YOU". For Paul, his motivation, movement, message and ministry had people in view. There was no sense of mere abstract theology. For Paul, reconciliation was personal. He had people in mind and view as he carried out the ministry of reconciliation.

We too, having listen to this message, must have people in mind as we think how we are to apply our lives to this text.

Notice that the people to whom he calls back are in the church. Biblical mission doesn't merely mean evangelism. We are to be ambassadors for each other. So when we see someone in our Flocks going astray we lovingly call out "be reconciled to God". We come along side of brothers and sisters with compassion and hope. We come alongside each other with this message; a message of good news about the gospel and its implications for us daily. When we try to find life outside of Christ and his people we are in danger. When we have an ambassador beseeching us to come back under the rich rule of Christ through repentance and faith, we are loved.

Obviously, we represent Christ not only to His church but also to the world (see v.19). Pray now. Think about. Talk over. Who in your life needs the gospel? How can you love this person, get to know this person and speak to this person? And what are you to eventually say to this person?

Speaking doctrinally

The third way this passage describes our speaking ministry is seen in doctrine. We don't just comfort people with kind words. We represent the king and his message. And the message is not vague. What is needed for those who need reconciliation? Notice v.19 and 21. Can you see both the pardon and perfection needed for God to be reconciled to man? Before it is good news to be brought to a holy God, God must not be angry. Before it is good news to be brought to a just King, He must have perfection.

In the gospel these two needs are met in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. Because of Christ taking our sin upon himself and dying in our place we are fully forgiven. Because of Christ giving us His righteousness we are fully perfected. God in Christ took care of all we could not take care of. He has done it all. We are to receive reconciliation through repentance of sin and faith in Christ. This is how we are to speak!

To bring this message to a close:

Conclusion

Be reconciled to God

1. *As an unbeliever*

Preach the gospel to the present unbelieving listeners.

2. *As a believer to a believer*

Press the gospel upon the present believing listeners for discipleship

3. *As a believer to an unbeliever*

Press the gospel upon the present believing listeners for evangelism.



Title

Text

Speaker

The Chapel Pulpit • <date> Sunday Morning

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