

# **The Glory of God in the Gospel of God, Why Does the Church Exist?** Selected Text, Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008

*"The world needs nothing more than to see the worth of Christ in the work and words of His God-smitten people."  
John Piper*

*"Fear not, for behold, I bring you **"Good News"** (The Gospel) of a **great joy** that will be **for all the people**. For unto you is  
born this day in the city of David a **Savior**, who is **Christ the Lord**."  
Luke 2:10-11*

*"But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image  
from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."  
2 Corinthians 3:18*

## **Intro:**

The gospel forms our identity as a "Child of God," and then we are equipped as the "Family" of God to enter in the mission of God in the world. Subsequently the church exists to **proclaim** Christ and **form** "Gospel Communities" around the word and mission of God. We cannot have one and not the other. The conservative church wants to emphasize the word and proclamation, while much of the "Emerging" church wants to deny authoritative truth, and form small communities, which in turn creates relative "truth" for each individual community.

I pray that this new series helps us begin to understand what it means to be on mission with God, and how His word forms in us His heart for the nations.

## **From the Head...**

The church is not something we go to, but it is our identity, in that it is the body we are baptized into (See **1 Corinthians 12:13-14**). The church is the vehicle for the proclamation of the gospel of God's glory, which is accomplished as the gospel forms the community, and the community embodies the gospel in the midst of the nations. Subsequently any promulgation of the gospel must include both the "Proclamation" and the "Presence" of that gospel. We proclaim the truth of the resurrection power, and then we become witnesses to its power in the life of the church.

## **Proclamation**

The gospel itself is the "*Power of God unto salvation*" (**Romans 1:16**), which not only forms the community of God, but saves those that respond from the wrath of God, granting them a resurrected life of eternity with God. It is clear from the preaching of the early church that they preached Christ "Crucified" and "Lord" (**1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; Acts 5:42**) and the resurrected Christ (**Acts 2:23-24, 31; 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 10:40**). The proclamation of the gospel is not a personal feeling of "Jesus in my heart," but a historical reality of a resurrected Messiah who died for our sins and gave us His righteousness so that we could be made sons and daughters of God! We are called to then be His witnesses (**Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 3:14; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 2:9**).

Subsequently the proclamation of the gospel is not a how to get your life in order sermonette, but the bold proclamation of God's glory, and our need for His Son! The greatest gift that God gives us through His Son is Himself! To this John Piper asks, "*Do you feel more loved because God makes much of you, or because, at the cost of His Son, He enables you to enjoy making much of Him? Does your happiness hang on seeing the cross of Christ as witness to your worth, or as a way to enjoy God's worth forever? Is God's glory in Christ the foundation of your gladness?*"<sup>1</sup> We must keep Christ and the gospel central to our preaching, as it is the power of God, and not our clever ways to minimize God's power by proclaiming how God can fix your life. When we know Christ, and His sufferings, and get in step with His mission on earth, we will begin to heal and fix the hurts that sin has broken in our lives and the lives around us.

## **Presence**

As a result of the truth of the gospel being preached, gospel communities are formed. Churches are "Gospel Communities on mission with Jesus." Community is a huge part of the gospel reality. Jesus Himself said that, "*By this (Love) all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*" (**John 13:35**). The idea that church exists for you, or that you don't need church, because you have Jesus is not a biblical idea. To this theologian John Stott writes if, "*Our static, inflexible, self-centered structures are "heretical structures" because they embody a heretical doctrine of the church. If our structure has become an end in itself, not a means of saving the world, it is a heretical structure.*"<sup>2</sup> Gospel communities love, and take care of one another (See **Acts 4:32-34**). The nurturing and love come from these communities that hang

---

<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *God Is the Gospel*, pg. 11-12

<sup>2</sup> John Stott, *The Living Church*, pg. 58

out with one another and help one another out of love for Christ and His gospel. When we are fully transformed, we are like our master (Jesus), who came to us, to give His life for the many.

### **... to the Heart**

At Harambee we have structured our body life around these concepts of church. We believe that both large group gatherings for instruction, corporate worship, encouragement and equipping will happen on a weekly basis, so that we can be scattered in our regional missional communities (Harambee Groups) for the work of the ministry in our communities. This appears to be close to the early church's strategy too (See **Acts 2:46; 5:42**). It is in these communities where discipleship, fellowship, care and mission can be worked out naturally and organically, creating leaders and functioning as the body, and not as a single structure attempting to be everything for everybody. This type of church looks a bit different from other church strategies:

- Church is an identity instead of another responsibility to juggle.
- "God Talk" around the word becomes a normal way of life.
- Run fewer evangelistic "Events" and spend more times sharing our lives with non-believers.
- Discipling is done in the context of community, not programs.
- Start new congregations instead of growing existing ones.
- Adopt a 24-7 approach to missions and pastoral care instead of creating new programs.
- Every believer transformed by the gospel becomes a missionary as a way of life.
- Doing life together, warts and all.
- Spending more time with the marginalized in our communities.

If this is going to be a reality then we need our body chipping in to insure that we can have a weekly meeting (Children's ministry, music, service coordination, cleanup/setup, etc.), as well as being involved in one another's life throughout the week as we do mission together. This ought not to be a burden on your family as we continue to teach our kids that this is the normal rhythm of life in a gospel community. Loving God and loving others is the norm, and we, like our savior Jesus will sacrifice all for the sake of the kingdom!