**THE MISSION -**

Lesson 6, Part 1

**Review**

Welcome once more to our thinking about Mission. We’ve traveled quite a distance over these sessions that we have spent together. I don’t have the pleasure of seeing you. You have the displeasure of looking at me and listening to my voice. But I do sincerely hope that the material that is presented to you will be something that you can reflect upon and will be something that you can find helpful as you want to equip yourself more and more for service in the Kingdom of Christ; and particularly if you are working in Evangelism Explosion that your desire to find men and women and lead them to Christ will be enhanced. As I was thinking about all this material it occurred to me that one could say, ‘Well I know Matthew 28:19-20. What more do you need? There it is clear. As Jim Kennedy used to say, “Our Lord’s last command, our first concern.”’ And that’s appropriate, but it’s a command that fits within this bigger context that we’ve been thinking about. It’s involved in saying that we do know something about God. That is God by categories, if you like, is certainly far outside us knowing really anything about Him. We can know a bit about him from creation, a bit from conscience, but He is in a category distinct from anything else because He is the Creator and we are the creatures. We can only comprehend with the resources He has given us in terms of our intellectual and moral powers. That is the necessity of revelation and God has revealed Himself to us, graciously, mercifully, and savingly in the history of Israel and in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and in the Gospel, which He carried to us. So we are those who want to say to the world, ‘Yes. God is there and God has spoken and you can know Him.’ Then there will be those who say, ‘You can’t know Him. We live in a chaotic and meaningless universe.’ And there are people who choose to do that, but the evidence is all in the other way really. And that branch of science and understanding that has to do with astrophysics and physics and related issues have prompted many people to the view of just looking at creation as creation. It is clear that it had some purpose in mind. As I said when I quoted Paul Davis in his book The Mind of God, he concludes it by saying, “We are really meant to be here.” The universe appears to have been fine-tuned for the appearance of human beings and when you consider, if you follow the generally held theory of those who work in these fields, that creation began with a Big Bang and within milliseconds, they say, all the values were there which would ultimately allow human beings to be present. So we live in a marvelous universe. We have to deal with a marvelous God who’s beyond human explanation and description. We have, as we have said before, truth about Him, but not absolute knowledge. We know as much as He has revealed to us of Him. And so we want to say that to the world. And as we’re thinking about the mission of God, we’re saying we can speak with authority about God’s purposes about what He’s doing because God himself has revealed those to us in His word.

Then we began to think of the Mission of God himself. Remember? And, again, it’s setting our life story and our commitment to going into all the world and preaching the Gospel to every creature. It sets up within the context of God’s wider mission. Yes, we could just say that and live with Matthew 28:19-20, but to see it as part of this great purpose that God has: to have a created order brought about by His love, that experiences His love, that loves one another in the appropriate orders as God has created, and responds to God in love. So that love, which is said to be the very essence of God “God is love” becomes the experience of all His creatures, all that He’s created. So we thought about the mission of God.

We thought about the Mission of Humanity and its role within the order of creation that God has given. And we saw that humanity was created to be God’s representative and God’s vicegerent, that is those creatures, which represented God to the rest of creation and worked on the process that God had, the program that God had within His world for bringing it on and on in development. It was to cultivate the earth, to people it, and to care for it, to exercise dominion over it in a beneficent and loving and helpful way. We thought about that and we can’t forget about that. We ought not to forget about that if we are to truly be broad-minded. What does that mean? Broad-minded: having a mind, which is as broad as the purposes of God. We want that, so the mission of humanity.

We then thought about the Mission of Israel, as it was called unto God. The purpose for which God called a people, called Abraham in part of His process of bringing His creation to its full end, dealing with the failure of the first man and woman and the fall of humanity and the effect that had. As Paul said, ‘The whole creation was subjected to futility, not of itself, but of the will of Him who did that.’ (Romans 8:20) God took a people (Abraham and his descendents) and made a promise to them. God took them down into Egypt and delivered them from Egypt, which was a sign of God’s deliverance. God brought them up into their own land to be God’s people, to be His priests, so that the surrounding nations might see what it was to live with God and live in relationship with God and to invite them into that relationship as well. Well we followed the story through and realized how they failed and they went off into captivity and finally came back.

And then after the mission of Israel, we came to the Mission of Jesus. We saw that in Him all those things that were, in a sense, the responsibility of humanity had their fulfillment in Jesus. He is the last Adam. He is the true Israelite. He is the one who represents God and is God’s presence with His people. When God promised He would return to His people, He did in the person of Jesus.

**Mission of Church**

**1. GLORIFY GOD**

We looked at all those themes and we’re coming in this session to think about the mission of the Church. What is the mission of the Church? Well, let’s start with the first expression of what the mission of the church is. It is first and foremost to glorify God. We were created as human beings to glorify God. And it’s not as if God is in need and lacks something and wants us to glorify Him and tell Him how great He is. I’ve quoted C.S. Lewis before, but let me quote him again when he said he found it hard at first when he was studying the Psalms to think that God always wanted to be praised. Did God need to be praised? Was there some weakness in His character? And then C.S. Lewis suddenly came to realize that praise in people is a sign of health. When they praise something beautiful, it’s an expression of the fact that they appreciate beauty. And it’s the natural expression of the soul that sees something wonderful. It’s a sign of emotional and spiritual health. And so the call to glorify God is not to boost God’s ego. It is to be truly human, to so appreciate the beauty and the love and the power of God that we do recognize Him as He is and praise Him for who He is. It’s a sign of spiritual health. So initially to think about this mission of the church and what we think of as the church, we are not necessarily thinking of denominations; we are thinking of the people of God. They express themselves in the world at the present time in denominations, in structures, in organizations, in single congregations around the world in different places. They manifest themselves in that way like there was the church in Corinth and the church in Rome, the church in Ephesus. There were local expressions of the one ultimate reality, the people of God as they gather before God.

And we’re going to look at that and see how, in a sense, the picture that we’re given by John in the last book of the Bible, in Revelation chapter 4 talks about what is our true calling as the people of God, as the church of God. Let me read it to you and make comments to you as we think about this particular facet of the mission of the church. Now John has introduced us to what he’s doing and if I could just flip back to the beginning for a moment set the picture for you.

Read Revelation 1:1-20

Verse 3 – Now I don’t know that he was referring to what I’m doing at the moment, just reading it out to you. I think that what he was referring to was having this read in the churches, read aloud because not everybody had a copy of the Bible like we have. Written texts were scarce and they were precious. So a church would have a scroll or parchment with this on it and it would be read. And so he’s saying ‘Blessings on those who make this known by reading it aloud amongst the congregations of God’s people.’ This is what he says.

Verse 4 – Asia, that is western Turkey today. When John said, “was and is and is to come”, that’s a bit like when we looked in Exodus and Moses was confronted by God and God says, ‘I am who I am. I always am. I always will be. When you talk about me you say, “is”. I am the “is-ing” one.’ You don’t say that word in English, but that’s the sense of it. So here it is. “Seven Spirits who are before His throne” is sometimes thought to be the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5 – John expresses the Triune God.

Verse 6 – “priests to His God and Father” is catching up with those ideas we talked about in the Old Testament. It is a matter of spiritual health to give praise. For if we really see God as He is, that is the natural, appropriate expression.

Verse 11 – And so as the next chapters go on what we find are those letters.

Verse 17 – This is Jesus speaking.

Verse 20 – People wonder who the angels were, whether they were specific angels allocated to churches, whether they were the leaders of the church, the bishops of the church. I guess these are two different thoughts. But it is indicative of the fact that Christ holds the churches in His hand and with His eyes He looks over them; and He cares for their welfare for these are the ones for whom He died and rose and again. These are the ones, as we read earlier, for whom He shed His blood and whom He has constituted as a kingdom of priests.

So chapters 2 and 3 are those letters. And you will perhaps be familiar with them. We come onto chapter 4 and I ask you to notice how it begins.

Read Revelation 4

Verse 1 – John’s given a peep, as it were, into what lies beyond our immediate perception. I don’t know how you think about heaven. I think sometimes we think of it as a location somewhere off at the far end of a galaxy somewhere or at the end of the cosmos. But in actual fact, heaven is God’s abode and there’s a sense in which it is no more than a millisecond away. It’s there. It surrounds us. It’s closer than breathing. But it is unseen to us. It’s God’s space, as it were. And John, as he looks, is permitted to see a door open on that other reality beyond ours. And this is what he sees and this is what he reports.

Verse 5 – The “seven Spirits of God” may be the Holy Spirit, seven perhaps represents perfection.

Verse 6 – It is a magnificent vision. What do the twenty-four thrones represent? Perhaps they represent the old and new Israel with the twelve apostles and the twelve sons of Jacob. But here he sees this magnificent vision of a throne. And it’s a good thought to stop and remember where is the throne? The throne is in heaven. There are many thrones on earth and people will strut across the pages of history as if they are invincible kings. But there is only one throne, and that ultimately dictates the history of all. And John sees it in all its magnificence and beauty. This is like the sort of lights and flashes and color that Ezekiel saw in the throne chariot at the beginning of his prophecy when he was called to be a prophet of God.

Verse 8 – See how that theme keeps repeating itself. God is the one and only. God is the eternal reality. The rest are created things, which only have their existence and continuance as long as God sustains them. People have wondered what the living creatures represent. Some have suggested the lion is the prince of animals. The ox is the strongest. The one with the face of a man is the wisest. The flying eagle represents majesty. And all those sorts of things have been suggested. Whatever it is, they represent these heavenly beings. We get a touch of them back in Isaiah 6 that circulate around the throne of God. And they sing like they did back in Isaiah, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty”. And you remember what the word holy meant: separate, distinct, absolutely unique and therefore is the one who sets the standard for everything. There is no one like Him. He was and is and is to come.

This is the vision John sees through this open door. And what does he see? He sees all these creatures, creations of God that exist beyond our sphere of recognition and comprehension. Occasionally, they infringe upon us, but there they are. And what do they do? They glorify God. They glorify Him in their worship. They glorify Him in their life. They glorify Him in their very being. They sing His praises. They sing His deeds. That He is the creator of all things; they praise Him in everything that He is. They, in short, glorify God.

Then it moves on into chapter 5.

Read Revelation 5

Verses 1-3 – What is this scroll? Well, all sorts of suggestions have been made. One is that it is the scroll that contains all that God will do in the world. It is the record of history as it will unfold. Not only as a written history, but also as the effective thing God will do. It speaks of what God will do. And no one is worthy to open it. No one in the whole of creation is worthy to manage what is involved in the purposes of God being fulfilled. And so John weeps since no one is found worthy to open the scroll and to look in it, into the purpose and providence of God as it will unroll.

Verse 5 – The angel is talking about the Lord Jesus here. As you read this book you’ll find the nation of conquering is a very powerful one. The members of the churches are encouraged to conquer in the name of Christ. At the end of the book there is a vision of Jesus, the risen Lord, conquering the powers of evil. He defeated death. He defeated all that was contrary to God in the created order by His death and resurrection. And because He is the conqueror, He is the restorer. And let me encourage you to bear that in mind that when you look around and you see the evidences of evil in the world and you sense it in yourself, know that it has been defeated. It has been beaten. The time will come when it will be eliminated. But Christ is the conqueror through His death, resurrection, and present rule.

Verses 6-9 – As we go back on that and we think the scroll that perhaps is a record of God’s providential dealings in the world and how history will roll out, who can open that scroll? Who can make it effective? It is the Lord Jesus. He is the lion of the root of David who can open the scroll. He is the one who carries the responsibility of implementing what is written in the scroll. And this immediately takes us back to what we read of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 about the Lord Jesus being exalted until He puts every enemy under His feet. And then He surrenders up the kingdom to God. There is this lovely combination between Father, Son, and the operation of the Holy Spirit as Jesus becomes the one who implements the purposes of God and brings about redemption through His death. That is the picture that lies behind it. In verse 6, Jesus took the scroll in His hand. He assumed that responsibility when He accepted the challenge. We’re using human language here for it can hardly be called a challenge. He accepted the role within the Triune God. When the world needed redemption, Jesus gladly assumed that role and took it upon Himself. And here you see Him going and taking the scroll. And as He does it the four living creatures and the elders fell down before Him and worshipped the Lamb each holding a golden bowl full of incense. ‘These are the prayers’, Jesus says (verse 8). I like that. Think of all the prayers that are offered. Think of the prayers that you have offered. They are not wasted. They are held like incense in a bowl being offered up before God. God hears them, knows them, and responds to them as He knows best. The prayers of the saints, of the people of God are never lost. And in verse 9 the creatures sing a new song. Jesus is worthy both by who He is, and by what He has done. That is by being slain and by His blood, ransoming men to God. He has the kingdom given into His hand and He has the responsibility as well as the ability to make these things come to pass. Notice how it is from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Remember how we thought about the fact that Israel had its role there in its land and it would live in obedience to God and the nations would come to it. Now we see here the nations being gathered in. Let me just remind us for a moment that this was written at the end of the first Christian century. It was written to people living with the threat of persecution. They were certainly living with kingdom and rulership under Caesar, who called himself both lord and savior. They are living in that situation under that sort of domination. And here is both the spiritual liberating and politically challenging statement about where true authority lies and who has the capacity and who has the authority to determine the fate of history and the course of history. It does not lie in Rome or, subsequent to that, anywhere else. It lies with God and it lies in the sense with the people of God because God, as it says here, will gather from every tribe, people, tongue, and nations.

Verse 10 – That He establishes them as His kingdom and as priests to our God and they will reign on earth. There are three things there that are worth keeping in mind. They are, first of all that God has formed us, those who believe in Jesus, into His kingdom. We are part of that and we have seen before that we are to express kingdom life. We’ll look at that again in a little while. Because we are God’s kingdom, we are under His rule. We are members of that company of people where He reigns. And we acknowledge Him as God. So we’re a kingdom and, second, we’re priests to our God. We offer worship to God in prayer and praise. And, third, we serve His purposes in the world. We serve in a priestly function. Paul talked about his priestly function in the Gospel and proclaiming it. And we have a role in that also. We are priests to our God and we will reign on the earth. And there is a sense in which we reign now in the same way Jesus reigned from His cross, in weakness, often in suffering, sometimes in death. But we reign because He reigns. And ultimately, we will be with Him in His new heaven and new earth. And we will reign with Him in that new environment. But it’s a statement about where real significance lies even in the end of the first century in light of an environment that was reasonably hostile. And it is worth remembering that where Christians exist today in circumstances where they are oppressed, these are words for them to hold dear to themselves in their heart and mind.

Verse 11- Just think of the vast population of the universe of which we know nothing. And if I can go back again to that space trilogy of C.S. Lewis. If you can get it, read it and you’ll hear something of his imaginative treatment of those realities, which lie beyond the “silent planet” as he calls it.

Verse 12 – We will remember and know in that realm beyond who it was who redeemed us and made us part of it. We’ll be debtors to grace for eternity because there we will see the marks of our redemption and never forget them. Our sins will be forgotten. The past will be gone. The future will be expandingly wonderful. We will always remember that we’re indebted to the lamb that was slain and that we reign only because He reigns.

Verse 13 – So what do we see here in that realm beyond the immediate? We see the heavenly creatures and we’ll hear later of a great company no one can number offering worship and glory to God. For God is the focus of their attention. He is the one who captures their imagination. His beauty ravishes them. His grace and mercy and love fill them with joy and as a response, they respond to glory, by glorifying Him.

What is the mission of the church? It is to represent on earth what takes place in heaven. And as we gathered in our times of public worship together that’s what we’re doing. And features of our earthly worship should be marked with features that we see here: that is praise to God, acknowledging what He has done in Christ, acknowledging His sovereignty, all those sorts of things, proclaiming His beauty, proclaiming His purposes in the world, and acknowledging that by the Lord Jesus and through His Spirit all these things have their application to us. So to glorify God, that is part of the mission of the church. And like ancient Israel, it is not only by our words that we are to glorify God, it is also by our deeds. We are to live like Christians. Years ago when I had interest in reading literature on leadership and those sorts of things. I remember someone telling me about Peter Drucker, who was a leadership teacher, particularly in relationship to non-profit organizations. But someone met him in a corridor at a conference on one occasion and asked him if he was a Christian. Now I have never checked this story, so I hope it’s right. To which Peter Drucker paused and looked at him and said, “That’s not a question you should address to me. It’s a question you should address to the people who know me”, which was a very significant remark. Yes, we should know that we are children of God and be able to say that, but it should be something that is represented in our lives so that people around us say, ‘That man or that woman is different. They follow the Lord Jesus.’ They may despise the different. They may see it as weakness or as something else, but they know that it’s different and they know that it’s driven by love and service and care. So we are to glorify God by our worship in terms of worship as acknowledging Him, by our service, which is another form of worship, and by the task of seeking to bring about the purposes of God in the world, and in particularly winning people to Christ, and by fulfilling our role as the human care-ers for the environment in which God has placed us. All these are ways in which we bring glory to God.

I have listed there the Westminster Confession and its Catechism to remind you that when we looked at that, and I said perhaps very few of would have read it. You might actually go and get yourself a copy and read it. It would be well worthwhile. But the answer to the first question of the Catechism is largely quoted, even among those who perhaps have never read the whole document itself. “What is the chief end of man? It is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” (Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism) And they have captured that and that’s what it is. Glorifying God is knowing Him and enjoying Him, living in fellowship with Him and responding to Him as we were called to do as creatures that He has made. Alright, Revelation 4 and 5, the Westminster Confession and the Larger Catechism.

Would you turn with me now to John’s Gospel and to chapter 17. Now if you’re reading through John’s Gospel, you know that by the time you have gotten to chapter 17 you are in the closing moments in the record of the life of the Lord Jesus that John record. And this is a moving passage. If you’ve got it open there before you, after I have finished saying something about it and this session is finished it is a good passage to spend some time on. I don’t know what you do in your own personal quiet times, but this is one that you might like to dwell upon at some length at some future time.

Read John 17

Verse 1 – See that mutuality of glory, of honoring, of giving worth to, of praising in its appropriate sense.

Verse 2 – This is Jesus’ calling.

Verse 3 – Now we see eternal life rightly as the forgiveness of sins and the pardon and a place in heaven and that’s true. But it’s more than that. It is to know life. And what is life? It is to be in a right relationship with the only true God and with Jesus Christ. Human beings have a passion to live. God has built into us. We have a passion to live. We want to live life. Well to live life to the fullest is to live life in relationship with God and to know Him. This is eternal life. This is life in its fullness. This is life that never ends. This is life of the age to come. This is what it is. It is knowing God and Jesus Christ and living in the relationship that we saw when we looked at the verses recently in Revelation (Revelation 4-5).

Verse 4 – And that’s how we glorify God, by doing what He’s given us to do. That’s what Jesus did.

Verse 5 – Jesus is asking for that return to that wonderful glory that we saw with John as we poked our noses through the door that opened up to heaven. And for Jesus, the path to this restoration to His initial glory was by the cross. And when He, we read later, was agonizing in the garden we know that the passage for Him into that world was not easy. Someone had said, this is perhaps a diversion, that the dying and rising with Christ is a little bit like a baby being born. Perhaps a baby is comfortable and safe in its mother’s womb and feels the environment is safe and warm and protective and sustaining. The time comes when the muscles start to contract and move and the baby is being pushed down the birth canal and it is hard. And the baby may want to cry out and say, “Stop! Stop! I would rather stay where I am. I don’t want to go through this!” But the baby is pushed down the birth canal and comes out into a much wider world that perhaps it could hardly even comprehend. And for us to pass from this world of death into a relationship with God in heaven is a bit like that. The experience of dying, well I don’t think the experience of dying is very pleasant as someone getting old. The process of getting old is a challenge, as I said, ‘Growing old is not for wimps”. And perhaps we resent that process of having to come to that moment, but for the sake of those who are God’s it is perhaps a difficult passage, but it is into life. And for the Lord Jesus it was so dreadfully difficult to take upon Himself the sin of the world, but in His obedience He glorified God He looks forward to being raised through beyond that to the glory that He had before the world was made. And let’s remember that the wonder of God was there and the reality of God in His Triune character and the love that circulated was there before there was anything else and it will be there if there is ever nothing else.

Verse 6 – So there is something playing behind the life of the apostles and ultimately behind our lives that lie in the providence and sovereignty of God.

Verse 8 – Herein lies wisdom, to know this.

Verse 10 – When we’re obedient and loving and believing the Lord Jesus is glorified.

Verse 11 – Jesus prayed for that wonderful unity for those who formed His initial band and that prayer echoes through eternity that we ourselves as the people of God may be one. We have done a lot not to fracture that unity. And efforts for Christians to be together and share together are an expression of this. But there is a depth to it that is beyond what we experience at the present time and one day will be.

Verse 13 – “they” refers to Jesus’ followers. If you’re looking for joy, think of the things Christ has taught and how He has fulfilled them.

Verse 14 – So don’t let that word slip.

Verse 15 – We have a loyalty elsewhere. We offer our loyalty to our countries and forms of government under which we live, but that is not our ultimate loyalty. Our ultimate loyalty is to God and the kingdom of God. We glorify God by our basic loyalty and when the loyalty to God and the loyalty to men clash, then it is clear to whom we owe our first allegiance.

Verse 15 – What a lovely prayer as Jesus prays that for them and for us.

Verse 16 – Being in the world but not of the world is part of the tension we feel as members of Christ’s kingdom. We cannot live anywhere else but in the world and we are all shaped by the cultures in which we live. And perhaps for those of us who live in the very affluent West, we have a particular challenge. That with all its plentitude of things we can easily be taken up with things rather than the things of the kingdom, and with moral values that slide and take us away form the standards of God. We have to live amongst that, but we are not to follow it. We cannot live anywhere else but where we are, but we have to constantly be aware that culture can shape us. We cannot escape culture. We are part of it. We have to live in it to be part of it and be able to relate to others, but we are not to be influenced by it. Jesus said, “They are not of the world” and in that sense we are not even as He was not. Even though He lived within it, lived as a Jewish man, grew up as a Jewish boy, sang the Shema twice a day, dressing like they dressed, but of course He was different.

Verse 17 – To “sanctify” means to set apart in the truth. The truth concerning Jesus and the Gospel story in the things that we have been looking at. So as we have talked before, don’t let it go.

Verse 18 – Jesus has done all that he did so we might stand in the truth of God and live in it and enjoy it. And in sending them, Jesus said, “into the world”, and He sends us into the world emissaries of His kingdom to live it and to speak of it.

Verse 20 –This is where it is interesting for those of us particularly. That means people like us. Me, whose voice you can hear and face you have a look at from time to time, and God’s people everywhere. You and me and all those who are Christians.

Verse 21 – That is a challenge, isn’t it! Jesus’ prayer is that we will be one together in Him as He is with the Father. And that in that spirit, in that reality, in the love that we show to one another the world may have a demonstration of the reality of God. Oh that we would do that! So let me encourage you, in this sort of glorifying God, of your responsibility to love your brothers and sisters in Christ and to do all that you can to see that this prayer is brought about.

Verse 23 – Let me just remind you again that God is love. What are we to do? Love God with our whole hearts, love our neighbors as ourselves, and even love enemies. This is the character. And when this is seen as operating among the brethren in the world it has its own witnessing power.

Verse 24 – We praise that we may see that. What a glorious prospect!

Verses 25-26 – Do ponder over that, won’t you?

How do we glorify God? We glorify God by acknowledging who Jesus is, by accepting the truth that He’s given us, by acknowledging what He did in His death and resurrection, and by displaying the character that is His and the Father’s. That character of love, that as we show it towards Him and to others and particularly to our brethren and to one another we enable the world to see that we are His and who He is. And, again, this wonderful thing that the whole issue of eternal life and glory is summed up in the one word: it is love. It is a magnificent thing. And as our human hearts yearn for love, we love to be loved and we like to love, then we are faintly reaching after the reality that is there.

**THE MISSION -**

Lesson 6, Part 2

Well now, that is marvelous material. And I will encourage you to reflect on that chapter 17 of John, well on that whole of that thing too, to let it permeate your mind and though. It is more than just reading it and knowing it. It is allowing the power of it to try and take hold of us.

So we are thinking about the Mission of the Church. We have thought about its mission to glorify God. We’re going to think of a second element now, and that is to live the life of the kingdom here now as sons and daughters of God by being both salt and light. So let’s go back to Matthew we’ve looked at these words before, but let’s look at them again. As I’ve said, every time we go back to the word we can find new things to stimulate and encourage us. They are all things to remember, and remember that we are not just to know them, but to do them.

**2. SALT & LIGHT**

Read Matthew 5:1-12

And he taught them about the life of the kingdom. What is kingdom life like? It’s the life of the poor in spirit, it’s the life of those who mourn, it’s the life of the meek, it’s the life of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Here in this dimension these are the facets of what life in the kingdom would look like. Be merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted for righteousness’ sake, blessed when you are reviled and persecuted. In that case he says, “Rejoice!” Why? “Because your reward is great in heaven. And that’s the way that men treated the prophets who were before you.” But how do we glorify God? Well, here it is. In that sort of life because it’s an expression of kingdom life.

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Verse 13 – “You are the salt of the earth” means you are that which gives life its flavor and preserves it from decay, that’s what you are. You are to be a witness in the world of the life of the world beyond, the life of the kingdom. Your life and the way you conduct yourself, the things you say and speak about, the vision to which you point, in that you are the salt of the earth. You tell the earth and those that live in it, what it is that makes it healthy and whole. You are witnesses to the life of the kingdom. “But if salt has lost its taste, how shall it be restored?” It’s a challenge not to lose those perspectives and to live by those realities so that we become a nothingness, we don’t, any longer, offer an alternative to the life of the world which lives within itself and knows only the requirements of self-interest and self-love. It is to be different. So, you are to be the salt of the earth in this fashion. When Jesus says, “It’s no longer any good but to be thrown out…”: That’s what people do with salt when it’s of no longer any value. He says, “Don’t be like that. Maintain your saltiness.” Second picture, not only are you the salt of the earth, which preserves it and gives it its flavor,

Verse 14 – “You are the light of the world” means you are the world’s light. If the world wants light, where should it look? To glorify God, it should be possible for the world to look at God’s people and see something there, which is absolutely different and attractive. Sadly, that’s not always the truth. And sometimes because of the opposition that the world sets up, it closes its eyes to the light and mistreats the light. But the light is to shine, that is its purpose, “you are the light of the world.” You are to set the light of God in the environment in which you find yourself. “A city on a hill cannot be hidden.”: People think that he was perhaps referring to Jerusalem, or to the northern city, Cepheras. That in the north near Nazareth, it stood out with its lights at night, whatever the name was—it was a vivid illustration of a city shining with its lights, not, of course, electric illumination, as we know it. But with the lights that were provided by the means that they had.

Verse 15 – That’s not what you have a light for, you put it on the stand.

Now we know, as believers in the Lord Jesus that we’re not saved by our works. We’re saved by the grace of God through the faithfulness in Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection. We are justified before God in His righteousness, in what He did for us. We have that covenant standing before God because of what God has done, He judges us now as he will judge us at the end, that is, acceptable to Him because of what Christ has done. And that’s all without our own works. We are saved by grace as Paul will say, not by works, but by faith. All that is true.

Now, we are certainly saved for works. Because we’re saved to be new people, and new people live differently. And that’s why good works are not an ‘add-on’, they are the natural expression. As the Bible will use a natural expression again, “a good tree will bear good fruit. A bad tree cannot produce good fruit.” And the Christian believer will, if he or she is a true believer, will be producing good works. Now, we know that we struggle with our calling and that our nature is still part of our experience and it’s a struggle sometimes to do what is right. But as John will say in his early letters, “the one who is born of God will not sin.” I take that to mean that the one who is born of God does not delight in sin, that’s not his choice. He or she, they live to please God. And sometimes far because he says at the beginning of his letter, if we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins. But sinning, disobeying God, living independently, is not the desire of the one who is really under the charge of God. The real desire is to glorify God and to do it. So we are called to live differently, and to let that light shine before men so that they may see their good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven. And guess, when I was talking to Peter Drucker, what he was saying is, “it should show.” And when it shows, in your life and mine and in the life of God’s people, it is a witness to the world whether the world sees it or not, but it is there so that God will one day say, “you had salt in the world, you didn’t have to decay. You had light in the world, there was a witness as to where you were to go, all that was there.”

So how do we glorify God? We glorify God by being salt, acting in that way. We glorify God by being light. That our lives, that our conversations, all that we are and do should bring the goodness and preserving power and savor of salt to the world and the illumination of what is good to the light of the world because we are the light of the world. That men might know our God and honor Him.

Turn forward in this chapter to verse 43. And here we pick up again on the theme that we’ve said over and over again, but in a sense it can never be said too often. Because this is the nature of kingdom life. He says, amongst the many things that he says running through this Sermon on the Mount, which we’ve touched on before, at verse 43.

Read Matthew 5:43-48

Verse 43 – That was the current expression, apparently, at the time and people have used that sort of statement to guide their behavior. Jesus said, ‘No, that’s not kingdom life. In Kingdom life’…

Verse 44 – Because God loves them. Now, in the end God will judge those who oppose them but it will not be because he doesn’t love them. God loved the world, he loved us when we were still in rebellion. God loves sinners. He doesn’t love what they do, He hates what they do. But they are His creation and He loves them. If they choose to resist Him, they must abide by those consequences but they can never say that God didn’t love them. He does. I mean, God loved the apostle Paul didn’t he? While Paul was persecuting the Christians. God didn’t love what Paul was doing, but His love drew that man to himself.

Verse 45 – Theologians talk about ‘Common Grace’ by that they don’t mean that it’s just “common”. They mean that it’s bestowed upon everybody and it’s bestowed upon everybody because God loves the world that He’s created and remember as we looked back in Genesis? He loved His creation and He still loves it, and He loves it because He’s going to redeem it. So we are to love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us so that we may be like God.

Verse 46 – If you only love those who love you, well, that’s not very difficult and what reward to you have? The tax collectors, those who have abandoned, virtually, their loyalty to God, do the same.

Verses 47-48 – In other words, you must copy Him. We’ll see that a little later. You must pattern yourself after your heavenly Father who bestows so many good things on those who—well none of us deserve it, but those who resist it. And in His love He longs to see all men come to Him. If they choose to exclude themselves from this love, well that is disastrous. But the love is there.

Now, as you look at that, you might keep your finger in that verse and turn over to Matthew chapter 22 and if repetition means importance, then look at verse 34.

 Read Matthew 22:34-40

Verse 35 – “lawyer”: a student of the law and an exponent of it, who would know it well, asked him a question to test him. You know, “what does this untrained rabbi know?” so he asked him a question to test him.

Verse 36 – Which is the heaviest commandment in the law? The most important one.

Verse 37 – That’s not difficult, and you should know, “love the Lord your God…” Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 4. Jesus would have know this and would have learnt this at his mother’s knee as a boy. And perhaps twice a day he would have repeated that *Shema* the basic creed of Israel. (Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5) He takes that.

Verse 38 – This is it.

Verse 39 – There is a second I would like to remind you, he says, that goes with it. It is of the same character, “You shall love your neighbor”.

Verse 40 – “On these two commandments are built,” they depend on “all that is within the law and the prophets.” All that makes up Old Testament revelation. If you want to know what is the heart of what God is saying, it is simply this: love God, love others. It’s a wonderful distillation of what it is to respond to God it is to love Him and it is to love others. The individual commands that were given in the Old Testament were an expression of what that love should look like under a range of circumstances. And as we read the New Testament, we find a range of circumstances in which the things that are set out are the expression of love. But it’s important, I think, that we don’t have the laws first and we say that’s what we do and we love God. Obedience springs out of love for God and love for others and the written law is a guide for us as to the way that it should express itself. Our loves can get very twisted and turned as fallen human beings and we can love things that God doesn’t love and doesn’t want us to do and that’s why the word of God reminds us of things which are acceptable and not acceptable. So we need to keep that written law in mind as a guide. But remember where it springs from, not law first, and then love. It is love that honors the laws that God has given and, in a sense, goes further than law can ever go. There is a song that says “love finds a way” and it does. Love will find ways of acting and doing that express itself in ways that run far beyond the written law.

So there it is, how do we glorify God? By living the life of the kingdom as the sons and daughters of God and being both salt and light. And how do we do that? We do it by our behavior, our life. And what is the core of that life? It is the command, the *Christian Shema*, if you’d like, “Here oh believers, the Lord our God is one. You shall love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Ok, that’s pretty good, I reckon.

Let’s turn now to Ephesians Chapter 4 as we again hear the apostle Paul taking this message out into the world and encouraging Christians to live in the way that they should live. Now again, a wise saying, chapter 4 follows chapters one, two, and three. And that is to say, that as you perhaps read and know Ephesians, that it sets out a whole set of spiritual truths first and then turns here already at this point to the application of them. It’s not totally without application in the early parts, it is. But here it’s saying ‘Well, because of all this, this is what I want to say to you about how you are to live your life in the kingdom as the sons and daughters of God and bring glory to God.’

 Read Ephesians 4

Verse 1 – Here it is again, it is so constant isn’t it?

Verse 2 – “With all lowliness and meekness”—like the Sermon on the Mount we talked about. “With patience for bearing one another” is a great phrase. Some translations say “putting up with one another”. Well, that’s what it’s like sometimes. That’s what it is to be in unity is to deal graciously with one another even when it’s trying.

Verses 3-4 – We’ve talked about unity. We don’t seek to be abrasive; we seek to be at gracious to one another. Why? Because there is one body. We have learned that already. And one Spirit. We have all thought about that. We all look for the one hope.

Verse 5 – And some do that baptism to children and ask their children to confess later. Some to it to adults when they come to faith, but it is the one baptism into the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Verse 6 – All those things are true of us. We have learned that as he Paul says we have worked through the material in the first three chapters, but there is a difference. Well, there is a distinction drawn now.

Verse 8 – And what are those gifts? He goes on to say.

Verse 10 – And we see that in the first chapter.

Verse 11 – Here are the differing gifts of grace. And what is their role?

Verse 12 – These gifts are given by God for building up, for drawing in new people, by making them disciples as they respond to the message, and by shaping them within the fellowship to bring glory to God by the life that they live.

Verse 13 – That is where Jesus is taking us, and that is where we are to move to. We glorify God by growing up spiritually, moving to spiritual maturity, spiritual manhood, as he calls it here.

Verse 14 – There is plenty of that “cunning craftiness”.

Verse 15-16 – There it is again. We are to grow the maturity. We should not be standing still. By the grace of God, by fellowship with other brothers and sisters, by allowing ourselves to be ministered to by the gifts that God has given to others, and by using the gifts that God might have given to us we are to grow up to spiritual maturity. That we are not influenced by untruth and deception, but rather doing the truth in love. We are to grow up into spiritual fullness. Undoubtedly, Paul was looking at particular congregations but it refers to God’s people everywhere. When we turn to follow on in that passage from Ephesians. This thing that he says “growing to maturity” has consequences. Consequences in the way in which we glorify God as we seek to live kingdom life. Listen to what he says.

Verse 17 – You are not to take your code of conduct, the way of thinking, you value system from those who are around you who don’t know the mind of God.

Verse 18-21 – And we see this “every kind of uncleanness”. These were not the instructions you got.

Verse 22-23 – “Put off”, that is what your baptism represented. You were shedding the old. Put it off. It is corrupt. Let the word of God shape your mind. And I hope this is what you’re doing as you pursue this study. You are seeking to shape your mind by the things that God reveals to us.

Verse 24 – We have this new nature. We are to be God-like. We are to be the children of God. We are to reflect His character. And again my hope is that as you listen to these things and as you study, it will not only be that your intellect will grow, which is important because it provides the fuel for your further growth, but it will be something that is not just an academic pursuit, but it will encourage you and stimulate you and guide you in growing in your capacity to live as a follower of Christ.

Verse 25-26 – Telling lies and acting deceitfully is not part of the Christian character. We belong to each other. There will be things that probably stir your anger, but in that don’t sin. And as the Scripture will say, ‘The wrath of man doesn’t always work the righteousness of God’, but there are things that ought to get us stirred up. But that is the way we are to handle it. And even if inappropriately get angry, that is a guidance for us.

Verse 28 – Paul turns to those who might have taken things that are not their own and lived by that sort of way of life. Why? So that he may be able to show love. He is a new man. She is a new woman. They’ve got a new way of living.

Verse 29-30 – As far as your way of speaking is concerned, “let no evil talk come out of your mouth”…

Be someone who, when you have conversed with someone, people feel better for it.

Remember we have talked about the Spirit sealing us? Well, here is God dwelling in us and our sins certainly don’t make Him happy. They grieve that Spirit of God. He says, ‘Don’t do that. Don’t do that. Do what is right’.

Verse 31-32 – “Let all bitterness”, and we are subject at times to bitterness and there are things in life which are calculated to make us feel bitter. But we are to deal with that.

Here is the reminder: “as God in Christ forgave you”. Remember the parable that Jesus told? The man who was forgiven a huge debt and wouldn’t forgive someone with a small debt, and how critical He was of that in the parable? Well, here we are. We’ve been forgiven much, we are to learn to be able to forgive also. I’m aware that there are some people, maybe hearing this, who have been so deeply offended against. I’m thinking of a friend of mine, and he was badly abused by a minister of the Gospel. How difficult it is to deal with that! And how it keeps coming back and, spoils, spoils life. It’s not always easy. And so it’s a work sometimes that, forgiving is a work that takes time…not just saying the words but saying it, but really feeling it from the heart. But God forgave us, and we have to learn in the appropriate fashion to forgive. And then look at these words that follow…

 Read Ephesians 5:1-2

Verse 1 - “Be imitators of God….and walk in love” See how it circulates round and round.

Verse 2 - You glorify God, he says, by offering up as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God, your loving dealings with other people, with those round about you. How do we glorify God? We glorify God by acting like salt and light.

I’m going to encourage you to read the remainder of those verses because I’ve been speaking quite a bit and we’re moving towards the end of our time, and there are other things I want to do. So do please read them, go over them , something like the way we are going over them now, and just see how they speak to you, about what you ought to do. Particularly notice Revelation 2: 1-7, of a church which is losing its first love. Keep at that. OK.

So we glorify God by giving Him our worship and praise. We glorify God by living the life of the kingdom, as sons and daughters of God here at the present time. And, we glorify God by making disciples. This is part of the way in which we do it. Now, I’m going to say, turn to Matthew 28: 16 – 20, and you say, “Oh I don’t need to do that. I know that off by mind” (meaning, I know that by heart, have it memorized). Good! Well, there we go. But I’m going to turn to it. Matthew 28. As we look at it, verses 16-20 again, to hold it before us as we’ve said, “Our Lord’s command, our first concern,” as an expression of all the material we’ve been looking at. Now let’s look at it again in the light of making disciples. Matthew 28:16.

 Read Matthew 28:16-20

 We glorify God as we fulfill the responsibility laid upon us, to give expression to His sovereignty. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. It is His. And as we carry the message of that authority of Jesus to men, and in the light of it, call, to turn to Him, we are glorifying God, in that work of fulfilling his responsibility. We are doing what in the end Israel failed to do in it’s life. As the renewed people of God, we are undertaking the task that God has given to us, and representing the One who has all authority in heaven and on earth, we go out and speak to people about that authority, and about that kingship, and invite them to repent, to turn back from their own self-directed ways, and come under His loving reign and rule. Jesus said that was the situation, so “Go! And make disciples.”

What does that mean? It means go and persuade people to recognize His kingship, to recognize the way in which this kingship was attained, by death and resurrection, by displaying the love that is there, by expounding the implications of that love that we are all so desperately lost in sin, under judgment and bound for hell, that it is only by His actions that we can be redeemed, Go and tell that story and encourage people to respond to it. And when they respond to it, help them to grow in the ways of what we’ve already said about living life as sons and daughters of the kingdom. Making disciples is not only calling for people to make a decision for Christ, it is calling for them to make a decision for Christ and then to grow as a Christian, and assume all the responsibilities, and privileges and joys, of what it is to be a follower of the Lord Jesus.

He says, “You baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, you give them the mark of the New Covenant relationship, in which the ‘old’ life is in symbol form washed off, and a new life is begun. They are to remember that they are baptized members of the body of Christ, they’ve put off the old man, they’ve put on the new, they are new creations in Christ Jesus. Teach them all this. Teach them what that experience of baptism means. Teach them not only to know it, but to live it. It’s all involved in making disciples. Do this in the name of the triune God, who sends you.

“Teaching to observe all that I have commanded you…”, do this. Help them to live the life of the kingdom. And as you do, as you go with this, “know that I am with you to the close of this present age”, when I close this present age, and usher in in all it’s fullness the age of the age to come, which you have already begun to experience.

If you quickly turn to Ephesians chapter 6. We’ve been there but we’ve come back to it again… Ephesians chapter 6,

He’s been talking about putting on the whole armor of God. It would be nice to have time to think about that but we haven’t. But notice verse 18.

How do we make disciples? Well he says,

 Read Ephesians 6:18-19

Vs 18 - So he says, keep at prayer, seek the Spirit to prompt you in prayer. Keep at it with all perseverance…”make all supplication for all God’s people”…that’s why in our churches we pray for people, for God’s people everywhere, it’s in response to that verse. He says, and particularly I want you to notice…

Vs 19 – For me the apostle. He’s in prison at the moment, but he doesn’t see that as a necessary limitation. He wants to keep doing it, he wants to declare it boldly, because that’s what he ought to do.

I draw your attention to this because part of the disciple-making process is offering up prayer for those who are particularly involved in the process of preaching the Gospel. And you and I, as we pray for men and women who are involved in that ministry, are helping in the disciple-making progress. So we glorify God by the actual work, and part of the work is upholding His ambassadors in prayer. That makes the ministry of prayer so important. It is part of the task of glorifying God.

Moving on, we move to this next thought, that we glorify God as we express ourselves as the renewed and expanded Israel. Remember we talked about this? And we fulfill Israel’s mission in the world. They failed. Please God, that we won’t fail, in the mission that we’ve picked up from them, to be witnesses to the world.

And a major treatment of that is found in the epistle to the Romans. There won’t be an opportunity to go through all of this, but Romans chapter 10 &11. I’ve said before and let me repeat again, that it’s possible that the situation that Paul was addressing in the churches in Rome was one in which some sort of tension had grown up between the non-Jewish believers and the Jewish believers. When the Jewish believers were returning to their homes and their businesses and congregations in the city of Rome, having been earlier abolished from that city, or expelled from it by the Caesar of that day. And it may be that in these tensions, Paul is encouraging the Christians to have the proper relationship to one another. And you can read this through. I’ll just in actual fact turn mainly to chapter 11, but please read through 10, as he relates it to the Old Testament scriptures and comes to the point where he expresses himself in the fact that whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. He says faith comes by hearing, and hearing by what is the preaching of Christ (vs 10), and then he comes down into chapter 11, and he says,

 Read Romans 11: 1 – 10

Verse 11 - So says Paul, with that in mind, I ask you, have they stumbled so as to fall? No! he said. But through their trespass, Let’s look what’s happened. Salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass, their failure, means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean?! And you can hear this bringing around of the congregations in Rome.

Verse 13 – “Now I speak to you Gentiles,” listen to me those of you who have come in from the outside,

 Read Romans 11:13-24

Verse 14 - “make my fellow Jews jealous” so that they might want what we’ve got.

Verse 15 – “as God gather in members from the dead.” As God gathers in members from His ancient people.

Verse 16 – “If the dough offered as first fruits is holy” -, that is, when you took a piece and you offered it, it sanctified the lot (the whole of it)

Verse 17 – “of the olive tree” - you’re put into that long history of the people of God

We bring glory to God by acting appropriately as the renewed people of God. Those which have been grafted into the olive tree and together with the old olive branches and the new ones, the tree which brings glory to God.

I won’t read the rest of it, apart from when we get to the end of it. As he thinks about this work of God carrying His promises to Abraham through and gathering in now the nations, he said,

 Read Romans 11:33

Well, our time is almost to an end, and there’s another slide coming up here. Let me quickly touch on those. I’ve just been a bit loquacious. (wordy, verbous)

You can read if you will please, the passages there that are set for church members who bring glory to God when they use that gifts that God has given them. I’m going to leave those to you for you to read. I’m only going to take up one of them. I’ll take up I Corinthians 12. Let’s just have a look at that. We made reference to, you remember, to the gifts of God in looking at Ephesians 4, but look at I Corinthians 12.

 Read I Corinthians 12:1-11

Verse 3 – They were in touch spiritual influences and forces and practices which were not acceptable.

Verse 9 – “to another faith” – I take that’s not saving faith, but the practice of exceptional faith.

And as you read through the other passages, you will realize that there are a number of gifts spoken of there and I don’t think they are the only gifts that the Spirit gives. The Spirit imparts capacities, aspirations, to those whom He sees and for the purposes which He sees are necessary. It is Spirit dependent. But we glorify God when we use the capacities and the gifts that God has given us. I sometimes ask, how do you know if you have a gift? Well I take it, it comes about in some way. Others may see it in you, you may have a desire to do something and when you do it, you find you have an ability to do it. In the practicalities of life, how do you discover your gift?

Think about that…how do you discover the gift of being an evangelist if it’s not perhaps by trying to do evangelism? But we are to use our gifts, the capacities and abilities that God has given us as an expression of God’s work. As you read on through that chapter, he talks about the fact that gifts are not to divide us. They are to unite us.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-29

Are we all these things? No, no, no. he said. But I want you to earnestly desire the higher gifts. And what is that? Well you know I Corinthians 13. What’s it about? About love.

So do work through those please. Let’s move on just finally towards the end there, as we look at the final 2 brackets of things I want you to consider in the way in which we glorify God.

We glorify God, I’m suggesting, by training witnesses and discovering evangelists in the local church. So how do you discover your gifts? I think it is by an aspiration, a desire, or a capacity to do a thing that becomes obvious.

We have a responsibility in the Church, of training witnesses and that’s what EE does. And so I want to encourage you as you’re doing it, to see it’s part of this task of bringing glory to God, and of training witnesses and, of in that process, helping to discover those who in particular have the gift of the evangelist. We’re all witnesses, I don’t think everybody has the gift of the evangelist that is listed as the particular gift, but we are all witnesses to the saving work of Christ. We all have an obligation and a capacity under the Spirit of God, to bear testimony to what we know about God. So, let me encourage you to think about that role that you have in that particular capacity. So we bring glory to God, I’m suggesting, when we help people find their gifts and particularly helping them to be appropriate, able witnesses to Christ and evangelists in the full sense of that word, as it is used and practiced.

My last slide says, the last way in which we glorify God is by acting once more as God’s vicegerents in His world. Remember when we talked about the mission of humanity? God has not withdrawn from us the responsibility to care for the environment, for the world which He has given us. We have that responsibility, we are His representatives in this world, and we are His appointed persons to care for the creation which He has given for us. That’s not an easy task, it’s not an easy task, and what can one little person like you or me do? Well, you can take it upon yourself to say, that’s what I am and I’ll look for ways in which I can do it. We’ve wreaked havoc on so many parts of our world and we continue to do it, we don’t really act like God’s gracious beneficial representatives in the world, but I encourage you to think that that’s what you ought to be, and that’s what you ought to do.

Again, as we come to an end, let me remind you that there are, for those of you who have the book, pages of the book to read, questions to answer, and for those of you who don’t yet have the book, you see, I’m speaking in hope, there are questions for you to consider and work to be done.

Once more, thank you for sharing this time together. God bless you.