

**THE VISION**  
**“*Missio Dei*”**  
**John 17:13-23**  
**New City Church of LA**  
**August 24, 2008**  
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**I. Introduction**

Welcome to New City Church!

- We are a church in the process of being planted.
- Grand Opening.

We’re in a middle of a series on the vision of New City Church. As we prepare for our Grand Opening, we want to examine who we are seeking to be what we are seeking to do. Let’s read our vision statement together. [Read together]

Today’s title is called *Missio Dei*, which means the Mission of God in Latin. What is God’s mission for us?

Let’s read John 17:13-23.

This is the last prayer of Jesus before he was arrested. He prayed this on Thursday night and he was crucified on Friday. He knew what was coming up. He washed his disciples’ feet. He shared the last supper with them. Then, he prayed. Because he prayed this right before his death, it is extremely instructive of what is really in the heart of Jesus.

[Read from v. 13-23]

This passage tells us four things:

1. The need for mission
2. The purpose of mission
3. The strategies for mission
4. The power for mission

**II. The need for mission.**

This passage tells us that Jesus has something he wants for us. Look at verse 13. He wants us to have the fullness of joy inside of us. Fullness of joy is like a well of water compared to a cup of water.

What does he give us in order to give us this fullness of joy? He gives us a mission; he sends us. Verse 18: “As you have *sent* me into the world, I also *send* them into the world.” To be sent means is be on a mission. The Latin word for mission is *missio* and it literally means being sent. So, Jesus is saying, I want you have the fullness of joy, a well of joy, so I am giving you a mission. This mission of God, what theologians call *missio dei* is at the center of our Christian life.

There is an intimate connection between fullness of joy and being on mission. You’re on mission when your comfort and safety comes second to the cause of the mission. There is something more important than your comfort. There is something more important than what happens in your career. There is something more important than what happens in your life. There is something in your life that’s more important your life! That’s what a mission is.

So, Jesus prays for his disciples that they will experience the fullness of joy through their mission.

I first got a little taste of this joy when I was leading a class called Basic Beliefs (which is now called Starting Point Class at New City) at my last church. I was a lay leader. I shared an outline of the gospel with a small group of people and at the end, I asked them if they want to receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord. One guys said yes. And he did, and I disciplined him and he became one of the key leaders of the church. It just blew me away. His life changed completely. I remember hearing his testimony. He could stop crying that God changed the trajectory of his life. I can’t tell you how exciting this was for me. I can’t tell you how much joy I experienced when someone came back to God. This happened a few more times, and I was addicted to mission of God. I saw the power of the gospel to change people. That’s why I ended up in ministry. It was a passion for the mission of God that came from the joy I experienced.

If you live for your own comfort, you will have a comfortable life. You might get a nice job, get a nice family, but somewhere along the line, you will be asking if there is more to life than this. If you want to do something really big, if you want your life to

matter, if you want to experience the fullness of joy in your life, get into the mission of God.

I think in our parents' culture, they focused a lot on duty. Duty to the country. Duty to the family. Duty to God. And in that way, they focused on something beyond themselves. But, I don't think that's the cultural consensus anymore. People are focused primarily on personal fulfillment. And as a result, so many people in our culture are finding emptiness. **When your needs are the most significant thing in your life, somewhere along the line, it dawns on you, that your life is pretty insignificant.**

Without mission, there is no fullness in life. It's an empty life. It's an insignificant life.

### **III. The purpose of mission.**

What kind of mission did Jesus send us on? What is the purpose of mission?

Some people think that the mission that God gave us is to fight for moral values. For family values? Is that what Jesus is talking about? Is the mission of God to be the standard bearer of morality in this world? I contend to you that it is not. It is the mission of just about every religion in the world, but it is not the primary mission that Jesus gave us. The mission of Islam is to enforce the ethics of Islam on everyone in their society. Is that the mission of God? To create a society where everyone is legislated to live by the rules of Christian ethics? I contend to you that it is not.

Our primary mission is to declare the good news that God sent Jesus to reconcile us with God. Our mission is to declare the mission of Jesus. That he has been sent by God. Verse 18: **“As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them in the world.”** Look at verses 21 and 23: so that the world may believe that you sent me. To show the world God sent Jesus and God loves us.

Why is it so important to declare the mission of Jesus? That he was sent by God? He wasn't just born, he was sent into the world from the Kingdom of Heaven. As prophesized about in the OT, God sent Jesus to rescue us from the broken world that we live in. The Kingdom of God has broken into this world through Jesus Christ.

The purpose of most world religion is to escape and get to heaven. This world is an illusion. That's what most religions say. They are mostly pessimistic about the world

and want to get to the paradise as soon as possible. “God, beam me up!” The gospel is very different than this view.

A lot of secular non-religious people take a different view: they are naively optimistic. We can make the world a better place if we can just get along.

But the gospel takes a very different view from the secular perspective: it says that there is a real problem in this world. The world is broken. There is a lot of evil in this world. We are physically broken. Socially broken. Emotionally messed up. All of us need therapy. There is emptiness in our soul. We can’t solve it ourselves. To think that if we just try to get along and fix it we can actually fix the problems of this world is extremely naïve. Technological advancement is not going to deal with our problems. There is something wrong at all levels of this world.

And the gospel also takes a very different view than the religious escapist view of the world: God loves this world. He loves the world so much that he sent Jesus. This world is messed up and broken, but God is not going to abandon it. Someday, the Lord himself will come the second time. He is going to restore the world. He is going to renew this world. So, he tells us to love, feed, renew, and bring the Kingdom of God here—Thy Kingdom Come! Bring up there down here. Why? So that world may know that God sent Jesus to save this world and that God loves this world. That God is bringing up there down here. He did it through sacrifice. He broke the barrier between up there and down here by dying for our sins. He came and blew away the barrier. The gospel is about the coming of the Kingdom of God down here.

So, that’s the purpose mission.

#### **IV. The strategies for mission.**

Jesus gives us two major strategies for mission.

First, in verses 14ff, he prays: “I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.”

What Jesus says is one of the most important strategic secret to the effectiveness of our mission. He says we are not of the world but not out of this world. Put another way, *we are not of this world, but we are in this world.* What does this mean?

We have a strike a careful balance in our mission.

**We are called not to be of the world:**

- If you are just like everyone in the world, if you are just as dependant on circumstances for joy, then you are of this world.
- If you only want to spend time with people who can help you and make you feel good, you are of this world.
- If you buy into the consumer mentality of this world, you are of this world.
- If you are detached to people who are different from you, you are of this world.
- And if you are, why should anyone believe that Jesus was sent by the Father to save us.

**But, Jesus also prayed that we not be out of the world. That we be in the world.**

Studies have shown that Protestant Bible believing Christians are most unlikely to live in the city. You don't want your children to be exposed to all that messiness.

To be in the world means to forgo the safety and comfort of our familiar environment to engaging in a relationship with people who are different than us.

To be in the world means to entangle yourself in the life of people who are broken. To invest your life into other people. To live your life for other people. To live as a light of Jesus. To be the body of Christ to people who are broken and suffering. To be the bearer of good news to people who are perishing without hope or anchor in life.

To be in the world means to engage the world as Jesus engaged the world. He moved into the messiness.

It is to get our hands dirty and love the world and people in the world, but not conform to the world.

The second strategy of mission that Jesus gives us is in verse 20ff:

20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

I think this is utterly amazing. The night before his death, Jesus prayed for those who will believe in him through the message of the apostles. Who’s that? That’s you and me. The night before his death, Jesus prayed for us. If you know you’re going to die tomorrow, what you pray for is probably at the heart of everything. So, what did he pray for?

He prayed in verse 21 that “all of them may be one” and then in verse 22 that “they may be one as we are one” and then in verse 23 he prays: “May they be brought to complete unity.” He prayed for unity. He prayed that all of us would be one. All means all. He prayed for a unified community of followers of Jesus.

Why is this a strategy for mission? Let’s see why he prays for oneness. In verse 21 he prays: “so that” and then in verse 23, he says it again, so that. In Greek, we call this “hina” clauses. It means that there is a direct relationship of cause and effect. He is saying in verse 21: If you are one, then the world will believe that God sent Jesus. In verse 23, if you have complete unity, then the world will know that God sent Jesus and that God loves them.

Jesus is saying that the most effective strategy for mission is for all of us to be one.

I think there are many sense of oneness that Jesus is talking about.

He is talking about oneness in community. He does not mean one in the sense that we are all the same. That’s impossible. We are all different because he is talking about all of us, not just a segment that’s like you. When people who are different, people who would not otherwise hang out together come together in community, when people who live in skid row come in community with loft dwellers, when blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos, and others come together and become a community, when diverse people become united in Christ, not by getting rid of our differences but by learning to respect

our differences and honoring them, THEN, the world will know that God sent Jesus to save us. THEN, the world will know that God loves the world so much that he sent his only son Jesus that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Becoming a radically inclusive community that loves God and one another is the most effective method of demonstrating God's love to the world.

He is also talking about oneness even in midst of disagreements. Unity does not mean lack of disagreement. It does not mean we cover up disagreements for the sake of fake oneness. It's impossible for human beings to agree on everything. We disagree in and out of church because God has created us differently. So, to be one means to learn to become an authentic community by speaking truth to one another with love. It means to go through the tunnel of chaos so that we can hope for real oneness where we understand one another, where we respect one another, where we love one another. It doesn't mean we have to agree on everything to be one. It means we have to be an authentic community to be one. It means we have to be real to one another to be one.

This week has been an interesting week, a very instructive week, particularly in light of the message I was preparing. After last Sunday, I thought things went reasonably well at this new venue. So, I went home tired but satisfied and sent out some thank you emails congratulating people for their hard work. Then, a few emails expressing strong concern about this venue came in. A couple of us got sick here last Sunday because of the smell and lack of cleanliness. There was a concern because someone came with their child and walked out. Then, a couple of email discussed a disconnect between me and some of the core team members, so much that they did not feel comfortable sharing their concerns about the venue with me. I am not sure but, it may be because they didn't want to discourage me, or didn't want to be a naysayer, or they just felt like I was not going to change the direction anyway.

I felt a sense that we needed to discuss this openly and pray together. So, I called an urgent meeting last Thursday night of the community group leaders and staff members. We discussed the issues late into the night. Our consensus was that Club 740 should be a short-term venue until after the Grand Opening and until we find an alternate venue that works better for us. We also tried to get to the root of why there is a

disconnect between some of the core team members and myself. I am still reflecting on that. I am learning and adjusting. But, we decided that there should be a regular bi-weekly gathering of leaders so that we might better communicate with one another.

New City is not perfect. I lack in many ways. I don't communicate as well as I should. But, I think it was important for us to go through the process of talking to one another and speaking truth to one another with love. The meeting was pretty intense and during and after the meeting, there were some apologies to one another. At the end, I think we came out stronger and more free to be authentic as a community. We have a long way to go, but we made some progress.

I continue to pray that we might be one even in midst of disagreements, SO THAT our unity will demonstrate to the world that God sent Jesus and God loves us. In many ways, showing our common brokenness in midst of conflict and the unity that comes from our common redemption is the "realness" that the world is looking for.

## **V. The power for mission.**

Now, where do we get the power to do this?

If you go back to verse 17, Jesus says: "Sanctify them by your truth; your word is truth." Then he says in verse 19: "For them I sanctify myself, that they too maybe truly sanctified." Why are the comments about sanctification intertwined in mission strategy?

Let's see what he means? This is not a command to make yourself holy by following all the rules. He said, I sanctify myself so that we might be truly sanctified. It says that our sanctification comes from the sanctification of Jesus. There is a hina clause here. IF I sanctify myself (on the cross), THEN you will be sanctified. Most people talk about gospel of our justification and people assume that the sanctification is just about hard work. Jesus is saying that we are sanctified by the word of God, not by our performances, not by our attempted righteousness. We are sanctified because we believe in what God says we are, not how well we perform. This is super important. Let me give you an example.

Unless your identify is based on who God says you are (that you are as righteous as Jesus is), you will not be able to handle the mission of God.

You will constantly be measuring yourself against others based on where they are on the pecking order.

People will always be above you or below you.

But, the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, says:

-You are a sinner. You are lost. You are so much more evil than you think you are. So, you become humble.

-But God loves you more than you can ever imagine. When the father looks at you, he does not see a sinner. You start to stand on his this word of truth. Then you become confident based not on performance but on the word of truth.

As you become more and more humble while becoming more and confident, you can be in the world without being of the world and you and become one with people who are radically different than you.

Ultimately, when we experience the reality of God, God send us out on mission.

When Moses experienced the burning bush, God sent him with a mission.

When Isaiah experienced the holiness of God in the temple, God sent him out with a mission.

When Abraham experienced God, God sent him out.

When we experience the reality of God, his love for us, he sends us out with a mission.

So many of us are drowning in the smallness of our ambition. Take a hold of the mission of God in your life!