

So we are in our final week of the Let Me Tell You About Jesus series. And I wanna just say up the top, this whole series of seven messages now is all available on the website and on the podcast and in book form and in ebook form as well.

And we plan to package these videos from the sermons in a convenient way for you to use as a resource because the point of this series, Let Me Tell You About Jesus, has been to tell you about Jesus, to tell you that there is a God in heaven who is

real and who loves us and who reaches out to us in the Lord Jesus. This series, we have told you that Jesus lived and died and rose again, that we might be set free from sin, that we might be transformed and regenerated and adopted as children of the

Father, and that the invitation calls for response. It's like that wedding. My brother got married yesterday and he said, I do. He said those words.

The invitation requires a response. And once you have responded to Jesus, you can know that you're saved because the Holy Spirit that God sends when you become a Christian, co-testifies with your spirit.

I love that idea from the fourth sermon in this series. The Spirit co-testifies with our spirit, that we are children of God.

And once you've become a Christian, you are suddenly in the land of faith, this foreign world with language and music and songs and practices. And we are invited to carry our cross. There is a cross to carry, a kingdom to come and a course to keep.

And then last week in the sixth message of this series, we looked at three essential practices for every follower of Jesus to sustain themselves in this course that we are to keep, and that is the Word of God, fellowship and prayer.

So this series has been designed to tell you about Jesus and also to equip you to tell your friends and your family about Jesus.

And so we want to package up this content in the most helpful way possible for you to take it and for you to tell your people about Jesus. Which brings us to the final chapter of this series that we've been in. Page 88 in the book Living on Mission.

It's a fitting way, I think, to end this series called Let Me Tell You About Jesus with a focus on mission, because mission is what Christians look forward to as we enter the world.

Page 88, Living on Mission, is this idea that the good news that Jesus died for us, that He rose again, that we might be loved, forgiven and set free, doesn't stop when we accept Jesus, but it propels us into the mission of God.

This idea of the mission is crucial. Mission, mission, mission. Today's sermon, we're going to take that word mission, that funny, weird sounding word, we're going to find it in the Bible.

And then kind of like pulling on a thread, we're going to follow this theme of mission throughout the New Testament. Daniel has read for us Matthew chapter 28. I might read it again for us briefly.

Then the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That's what we just did. I just said those words.

And teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you. And surely I'm with you always to the very end of the age. This passage is called the Great Commission.

When you think about that M-I-S-S-I-O-N, that seven letter word mission, it lands. This is ground zero of mission in the New Testament, the Great Commission. Jesus says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him.

Therefore, go and make disciples. In the Greek, it's, as you are going, make disciples. Jesus says, baptize them into the Trinity.

We just did that. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teach them to obey, to live the way that Jesus said we could live. And then there's number five, the promise that Jesus will be with us always.

So when we talk about living on mission, this is the mission, the great co-mission, go and make disciples.

WITNESS

The question is, how do we do that? With what posture should we make disciples? Now, I'm not a lawyer.

Steph is a lawyer and can correct me. Joel is also a lawyer. Chiara is also a lawyer in training.

Lots of lawyers in the room. But I'm going to use a bit of a courtroom analogy for a second. In the court, there are three roles, I think, prosecution, defense and witness.

Is that fair to say? I'm getting a yes from Steph and a maybe from Joel. We're going to go with it.

So when we think about what it means to make disciples, should we as Christians play the role of the prosecution? So the prosecution is bringing the case against someone.

It's like, yeah, there's probably a place for that, for Christians to have boldness in sharing the gospel. Jesus said, go and make disciples. He didn't say, wait and let them come to you.

And yet, I don't think we're called to condemn the world with a pointing finger.

Jesus says in John 16 verse eight, that when he, and that is the Spirit of God, when the Spirit of God comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.

So as we make disciples, the role of the prosecution, I don't think is the best posture for us to have, of pointing fingers at a broken and fallen world. So what about the defense?

What if Christians were to make disciples with a posture of being the defense in the courtroom? Well, I think there's a place for that. Certainly the world is hostile to Jesus and to his followers.

There is a place to push back with intelligent biblical answers to the tough questions. In fact, there's a whole field of Christian thought called apologetics, which is based on this Greek word, apologia, which means defense.

So when the world comes at us with hard questions, Christians need to be able to defend the faith. That is what apologetics means in 1 Peter 3 verse 15. Peter says, in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer. And those three words, give an answer, is one word in Greek, and that is apologia. Always be prepared to defend, to do apologetics to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect. So I think the posture of the defense is helpful in thinking about how we make disciples. But we don't want to be passive and reactive.

We want to be on the front foot in sharing the good news. So what about the third player in the court system, the witness? I think this is the posture that we are invited to inhabit as we make disciples.

You know what a witness does? I've never been to court before. But the witness is not making a case for or against.

They're not fighting. They're not defending. They're just saying what they saw.

The witness comes up to the stand and says, Hey, I saw this thing happen. I think that is the posture that Jesus invites us to have as we make disciples.

So, jump with me from the last words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew to the last words of Jesus at the start of the sequel to Luke's Gospel, meaning from the end of Matthew to the start of the Book of Acts.

Acts chapter 1 verse 8, Jesus says this, But you, and he's talking about the disciples, you disciples will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my, what does it say?

My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. This Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth thing is expanding concentric circles of geography.

So it's like saying you will be my witness in Hornsby and Sydney and the Central Coast and to the ends of the earth. But this key word is witness. Jesus says you will be my witness.

You will tell the world what I have done for you. So I wonder if we could say it like this. Mission, witness.

The mission of the church is to bear witness to what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Mission, witness. Jesus says you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

WITNESS: RESURRECTION

Mission, witness. As we continue to read through the Book of Acts, we see this idea of witness continues to play out in Peter's Pentecost Sermon, the first post-Pentecost sermon ever given in Acts chapter 2 verse 32.

Peter says God has raised this Jesus to life and we are what? Witnesses of it. Peter in the temple, Acts 3.15.

You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. The apostles before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 5, the God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead, whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.

God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and to forgive their sins. We are what? Witnesses of these things.

Peter at Cornelius House, Acts chapter 10. We are, maybe it was late, but you had to know what the word was. We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead one more time, just to show you how prevalent this idea is. The Apostle Paul in Pasidian Antioch in Acts chapter 13.

But God raised Jesus from the dead and for many days, he was seen by those who traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses. This idea of witness is core to the story of the Book of Acts.

The posture of the disciple is the posture of the witness. The mission of the church is to just say, that's what God did. That's what Chiara just did.

She witnessed to what God did in her life, to her encounter with the saving grace of Jesus. This is the mission of the church, mission witness.

In this series, Let Me Tell You About Jesus, we've tried to take that posture, not the posture of the prosecution, condemning and pointing fingers, and not necessarily the posture of the defense, always on the back foot.

We've just tried to witness, to witness to what God has done in our lives as the preachers, to witness to what God has said in Scripture. And we've been so, I think, blessed to hear six real life stories of people following Jesus.

We've had Cedric, Pat, Grace, Trudy, Tristan and Kathleen share vulnerably their stories of what God did in their life. They witnessed. This is the mission of the church.

So, what does this mean for us? Mission, witness. Well, back in 1 Peter chapter 3, Peter says, In your hearts, revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to apologetics, to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have, but do this with gentleness and respect.

In the past, when we've looked at this passage at church, I don't remember what the sermon was, but we came with two ideas, questionable living and good conversation. That's what Peter is saying.

Live in such a way that people ask questions about you. Why are you so joyful? Why do you not do these things that everyone else is doing?

Why do you do these things that no one else is doing? Live questionable lives that open the doorway to good conversation. And I would put it to you, maybe a good way to have that conversation is to say, let me tell you about Jesus.

So someone says, hey, Stephen, why are you so joyful? Why are you so happy? His response should be or could be, this is one of many response.

Let me tell you about Jesus. He took my sin and my shame and he gives me the joy of the Lord. Let me tell you about Jesus is the mission of the church to witness to what God has done for us.

We used to have a beautiful sign right here, but we had the wedding yesterday and we took it off and have left some tape marks on the wall, which we're gonna get fixed. We're not sure whether we'll put the signage back up.

I'm for putting the signs back up, because in this series, we have been so fortunate that many of you have brought your non-Christian friends to this series and that's part of the point. We wanna tell them about Jesus for the first time.

But Let Me Tell You About Jesus is also for those who have known Jesus their whole life. And so, I think we should put the sign back up.

And what I think is so powerful about that is, imagine in an hour's time, we're having morning tea, and you're talking to someone and they say, man, I've just had such a bad week. I'm just racked with anxiety about the future.

I don't know what tomorrow holds. What if it becomes the language of this community of faith to say, let me tell you about Jesus. He invites us to give our cares to him, and he gives us a peace that surpasses understanding.

Or someone says, oh, I've just, I mean, marriage is so hard right now. We're going through this thing with our kids. You might say, I mean, the first thing you should say is, I'm so sorry.

Can I pray for you? I love you. Tell me more and listen.

But the second thing you might say is, let me tell you about Jesus. He takes all of our, you see what I mean. To keep this language alive, let me tell you about Jesus.

It's not only for the non-Christian, it's for us as well, to keep the gospel on our lips.

Bonhoeffer, the German pastor, once said something which I'm paraphrasing, the words of Christ are truer on the lips of my brother or sister than on my own lips.

And what he means is, I can know that there is a peace that surpasses understanding, but when my brother or sister tells me that, when they quote scripture to me, it sounds truer coming from somebody else.

So can I invite you, when we have morning tea, try and use that phrase, Let Me Tell You About Jesus. Work it into your conversations somehow. Mission, witness.

That was the mission of the early church. When we read all those passages in Acts, did you notice the other common theme? Every single one of those passages mentioned something.

What was that? The resurrection. Mission, witness, witness, resurrection.

As the early church, that is the first followers of Jesus, spread the gospel, every single big public sermon in the Book of Acts, they mention the resurrection. They don't all mention different other aspects.

They don't all mention the parables of Jesus. They don't all mention the kingdom of God. Every single sermon in Acts mentions the resurrection because the apostles know that the resurrection of Jesus is the cornerstone of Christian faith.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, if the dead are not raised, meaning if there is no resurrection, then obviously Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

And then all those who, then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. The resurrection is central to Christian faith.

And so when the apostles were sharing the gospel, they mentioned the resurrection every single time. The witness of the church is always to the resurrection. They witness to the resurrection and we should do the same thing.

Now, I don't think there's anyone in the room who is 2,000 years old, who literally witnessed Jesus rise again the way that the apostles did. But we are called to be witnesses of a different kind, not a literal kind. CS.

Lewis says, I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see that the sun has risen, but because by it I see everything else.

If I might adapt Lewis's quote, we could say that we believe in the resurrection of Jesus, not only because we have looked at the evidence and we believe that it actually happened, but because we see all of the world through the lens of the

resurrection. We live lives in such a way that only makes sense if Jesus rose again from the dead. Mission, witness, witness resurrection. We live differently because Jesus rose again.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. We are called to eat and drink different because there's a resurrection.

1 Thessalonians 4, Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope. We grieve different because there's a resurrection.

Romans 6, if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. We crucify the flesh different because there's a resurrection.

We do justice differently because there's a resurrection. We treat the body different because there's a resurrection. We love work, serve, sacrifice, give hope, pray.

We live different because there's a resurrection. That's what it means for us to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

We didn't see it happen with our eyes of flesh, but we believe, we know that it happened with the eyes of faith, and we live in such a way that only makes sense if Jesus really rose again. So back to this Lewis quote.

What would your life look like if every part of it was reframed around the resurrection of Jesus?

How would you treat money differently if you, I mean, I know if you believe in Jesus, you believe that Jesus rose again, but if the resurrection was allowed to reframe everything in your life, how would that change the way that you live?

RESURRECTION: REIGN

Mission, witness, witness resurrection and resurrection reign. At the start of the Book of Acts, the church is given the mission to witness, and every witness is always to the resurrection.

And as we keep following this thread, see how the thread is winding throughout the New Testament? The thread of the resurrection so frequently in the New Testament leads to the reign of Jesus. The resurrection leads to the reign.

And the reason is because Jesus rose to reign above all things. There's this idea that I, I think John Mark Comber first said it, and I just love it, that Jesus went into the cave of death, but when he rose again, he didn't go backwards.

You know Lazarus? Lazarus died. Lazarus went into the cave of death, but then he went backwards, back to the same kind of life.

We call it resuscitation. Jesus didn't rise again to the same kind of life that he was living before. He didn't continue to teach and do parables and all that stuff.

Jesus rose again and kicked out the back wall of the cave of death, so that he might reign above all things. His resurrection was rising to reign.

Paul says in Ephesians 1, that power is the same as the mighty strength God exerted when God raised Christ from the dead. So that's resurrection. And then in Paul's mind, what is the very first implication of the resurrection?

Where am I up to? God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

When we follow this thread of mission, witness, witness, resurrection, resurrection, reign, we find Jesus rose again in order that he might reign. So what is the reign of Jesus? Probably the best passage in the New Testament is Colossians 1.

It's worth quoting in full. Paul says, the son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

I love that passage because it paints this cosmic picture of the reign of Jesus, the firstborn over all creation, the one who is before all things, the one who holds all things together. This is the cosmic scale of the reign of Jesus.

And yet, as like glorious as that is, it's almost too glorious to have any idea what to do with that in your practical life. So, let me share a way that this idea came home to me. I had this profound moment a couple of months ago.

We, well, this is probably almost a year ago, we found out we were pregnant. And I was just so grateful, so grateful to the Lord, Courtney and I both, because so many people, it just doesn't work like that.

We were so grateful for the gift of God that it seemed too good to be true that we could fall pregnant. And in those first two trimesters, all of the scans were coming back perfect.

The doctor said, oh, she's, we didn't know that she was a she at the time, but we now know that Esther is a she. She's perfect, she's perfect, growth is perfect. And I was so grateful, because it just doesn't work that way for everyone.

But at the same time as my heart was truly grateful, this other part was getting increasingly anxious, just waiting for the tide to turn, feeling like this is too good to be true.

Like, it could not be true that we could fall pregnant and have a baby who's healthy and everything goes fine. And so, gratitude and really deep anxiety were kind of coexisting in my heart.

And two like little small stories, in the third trimester, we were at a doctor's appointment, and pretty quickly the doctor got Courtney on the table and tried to find the heartbeat. And it took them 30 seconds to find the heartbeat of Esther.

And during that time, I'm just like praying, God help, God help, God help. But thinking like, oh, I knew it was too good to be true. Like, you know, our story is one of those stories.

And then, when Esther was born, it took like 10 minutes for them to prove that she could hear out of her right ear. And again, I was like, I'm so grateful that she's alive and healthy. But, well, I knew it was too good to be true.

Like she's not, she can't hear out of both ears. But then she could hear out of both ears.

And so, the reason I say this story is, I came to have a profound experience of the reign of Jesus in realizing that in my heart, in my brain, I know that Jesus reigns over all things. But in my heart, I thought karma reigned over all things.

I thought that chance ruled this universe. That as many good things happen to you, the scales of the universe balance, and there's a whole lot of bad stuff that comes. And I came to realize that blind chance does not rule this universe.

Our king, Jesus, rules this universe, and he is a good king. He reigns above all things. He is the firstborn over all creation.

From him, all things have come through him, and for him, all things are going. Jesus rules this universe, and it doesn't mean that bad stuff doesn't happen. We had some trials in the third trimester, but it doesn't...

The fact of the trials in our life does change... Changes nothing about the reign of Jesus above all things. So I wonder if that story is an...

I share that, that it might be an encouragement to you of realizing that Jesus reigns and trying to make that real in your life.

REIGN: RETURN

Mission, witness. Resurrection, resurrection reign and reign return. If there's one book in the Bible that just shouts this message that Jesus reigns, I would say that would be the Book of Revelation.

It's also probably the most confusing book in the entire Bible. And the confusion is important. It's important to study it and understand it.

But if I had to summarize the Book of Revelation in two words, I think you can't beat these two words. Jesus wins. Amidst the beast and the dragon and the false prophets and the brokenness and the conflict and the violence of this world, Jesus wins.

And in Revelation, it's very clear that the victory that Jesus wins was decided by the victory that He won on the cross. Remember, it's a lamb looking as if it had been slain. The lamb that was slain on the cross is the one who wins the victory.

So we're talking about the idea of the reign of Jesus. Entyright has these words which are helpful, that the reign of God is total, utter and complete. We cannot extend the reign of God.

We can try, but He already reigns over all things. We cannot diminish the reign of God because He reigns over all things.

But Entyright also has these three words that our experience of the total, utter and complete reign of God is fitful, partial and mysterious.

And when I shared that story about Esther, that's what I was experiencing, that Jesus reigns over all things and yet this world is broken and longing to be made new. We wait for Jesus to return.

We know that He reigns over all things, but the reign of Jesus leads us to long for the return of Jesus. The Bible ends with these words in Revelation 22. He who testifies to these things, that is Jesus, says, Yes, I am coming soon.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.

As we think about the reign of Jesus above all things, it naturally leads us, as we pull that thread, to long for the return of Jesus.

That his total, utter and complete reign might sweep away the fitful, partial and mysterious experience of his reign. At Christmas, we remember that Jesus came to us. We remember his advent.

He was born to us as a baby, and we celebrate all that Christmas means in relation to Easter, that Jesus also died for us.

But at Christmas, it's also a chance to not only look back at the first coming of Jesus, but to look forward to the second coming, that amidst the conflict of like family stuff and everything happening in our world right now, we long for Jesus to

return. We say, come Lord Jesus, come. We want to see Jesus return again and bring his reign on earth as it is in heaven.

And when we say, come Lord Jesus, when we long for his return, the final step of the thread is that that propels us into mission.

That propels us to see the name of Christ preached to all nations of the earth, to see every knee bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth at the name of Jesus. And so we've come full circle.

We've followed this thread of mission that the mission of the church is to witness, to bear witness, not to prosecute, not to defend on the back foot, but just to say, hey, I don't have all the answers. I didn't do it. God did it.

He did something in my life to witness to what God has done. And the witness is always to the power of the resurrection. And the resurrection leads us to the reign of God, the reign of Jesus above all things.

And as we embrace and appreciate the reign of Jesus, we see this world in its brokenness and long for his return. And in longing for his return, we are compelled into mission to go and make disciples, to set the captives free, to do justice, to act.

What's Micah 6, 8? Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly. The return of Jesus propels us into the mission of Jesus.

John Piper said, missions exists because worship doesn't. That is, if there were true, genuine, total worship of the triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, over the whole earth, there would be no mission.

There would be no gospel to continue to proclaim to all nations. But the fact that not every person has heard the good news of Jesus means that mission exists. We are propelled into mission again with the power of the Spirit.

And we do that in order that we might worship. And so in a few minutes, we're going to worship again and also have a chance for you to be baptized if you'd like to. But I'd love to read this great commission one more time as a kind of sending for us.

And then we will worship together. Jesus said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the end of the age.

Let me pray. Lord Jesus, as we look back on these past seven weeks, we're so grateful for everything you've done in and through us. We thank you for the good news that brings joy and peace and hope and everything.

And we thank you that you invite us in your mission. You're so gracious, God, that you choose to use us, broken vessels, as we are. And so, Lord, we want to make disciples the way you commanded us to, the way you invite us to.

Help us, Lord, in our spheres of family life and friendship life and work life and study life. Help us to make disciples, Lord. Help us to witness to what you have done in our lives.

I pray you'd show us what it means to live in the light of the resurrection morning, that we would be people who live different, love different, give different, and serve different because the resurrection happened.

Lord Jesus, we acknowledge that you reign above all things, and me saying that doesn't make you reign any more or less, you reign, but I pray that you would transform our hearts to appreciate your reign more, to understand it more, and to be formed

by that more. As we contemplate your good and glorious reign, Jesus, we turn our eyes to this broken world that is desperate to be liberated from its bondage to decay. And we say, come Lord Jesus, come.

For famine and violence and conflict and brokenness across this planet, we pray, come Lord Jesus, would you return and bring your good and perfect reign on earth as it is in heaven.

And Lord, we know that that's a dangerous prayer to pray, because you're probably going to involve us in that mission. And so your return propels us to go and make disciples. We thank you that you don't leave us alone.

You send us with the Holy Spirit. You are with us always. So help us Lord.

And now as we worship, would you receive all the glory? And as we lift up the name of Jesus, would you reform our hearts in your image for the sake of your mission? In Jesus name.

All the people say, Amen.