

*Very little of what I'm going to say today will be original- I'm indebted to both Michael Frost and Tim Keller for helping me form my thoughts on these things- and much of the material today are their words, not mine.*

Today, we talk about the mission of the church-

Let me ask you- you are all seminary students, many of you are moving towards the pastorate, all of you have spent time as part of a church community...

### **What is the mission of the church?**

A question that will help us answer "what is the mission of the church?" is...

### **What is the Gospel?**

You should be able to give me a good statement that captures both the means and the point of the Gospel.

Here's how I define the Gospel-

**The Gospel is the Good News that God Himself has come to rescue and renew all of creation through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.**

(Keller)

Reading thematically versus diachronically/linearly.

The point of all this is not simply our rears in heaven. The point of all of this is **"a redeemed community living in a renewed creation in relationship with the Triune God."** (Grenz)

When we understand the point, the telos, the end of the Gospel as well as the means, we find that our mission broadens out past simply evangelism.

### **What is the major NT metaphor for the church?**

The Body of Christ. What does that metaphor imply? What are the NT writers getting at when they call the church the Body of Christ?

We are His hands and feet. We continue to do what He did. God works through the agency of the church- He's the craftsman, we're the implements. **What**

**Jesus did while He was here, we do now. What did Jesus do?**

Yes- all of that... and we can sum it up by saying...

### **Jesus came to advance God's kingdom**

- He came to preach the kingdom-Mk 1:35f
- He came to invite people into His kingdom
- He came to lay out what life looks like in God's kingdom-Mt 5-7

### **and we are called to do the same**

- the mission of ministry is all about his kingdom
- we are to preach the kingdom, be the presence of the kingdom
- be a foretaste of the kingdom to come

### **(the Amish and forgiveness)**

- pray for God's kingdom to come-advance

-teach people to pray that something of God's future kingdom would take form in the present  
-encourage the community (of which I am a part) to mirror God's kingdom by the way we live

**-recent survey—1000 were asked—why the church exists?  
89%-to take care of my needs, my family  
-11%-to reach lost people**

The mission of the church is much more than meeting the needs of Christians and much more than simply evangelism. The mission of the church is to be Jesus, to represent Christ, to *image* Him to a world looking for saviors. To show Him in all we do, in all we are- to show them the King and point them towards the Kingdom.

**So, over the last 8 or so years, we've begun to hear more and more talk about the "Missional Church."**

Definition: **To be missional is to form the identity of and align all of the program, function and activities of the church around the mission of God in the world.**

*Missio Dei*

**A Missional Church must understand its identity:**

First from the OT-

A missional church understands and lives the biblical metaphor of *Exiles...*  
**Jer 29:4-7**

Then the NT-

A missional church understands its fundamental identity as *sent*  
**John 20:21**

-2 Cor 5:18- God has given us the ministry of reconciliation

**-Matt 5:13-16- Let your good deeds shine out for all to see so that everyone will praise your Father in heaven.**

(We tend to read this individually rather than corporately...\_

**Missional ministry is both proclamation and deeds, words and works...**

-We must not lose either

(classically the liberal church has majored on the works- social justice and the conservative church has majored on the words- the proclamation, even to the point of disdain serving the poor- we're just here to get people saved!)

-Jesus was engaged in both-Jer 22:16; Isa 58:10; Mk 10; Lk 10:25-37; 16:19-31; Jn 1:27; I Jn 3:16-18

### **What will it require?**

-Understanding the church is not here for us. We are here for the church and the church is here for the world- **Bonhoeffer-the church is the church only when it exists for others**

-Acts 1:8 makes it clear that our mission is not about status quo, not about entrenchment, not ever *done*.

-Our mission is **not** to create a Christian subculture- we point people to the Kingdom, we don't *force* its arrival.

-Not to create monuments—but to create movements

-We need to rediscover an ecclesiology that looks a bit more like Jesus- welcoming those on the margins, radical servanthood, proclaiming the kingdom of God in word and deed.

A couple of questions...

**What is the difference between a missional church and a church with a mission program?** □A church with a mission program usually sees mission as one activity alongside many activities of the church – Christian education, worship, acts of service, hospitality and other programs. A missional church focuses all of its activities around its participation in God's mission in the world. That means, it trains people for discipleship and witness; it worships and practices mutual support before the watching world. ***A church with a mission sends others to witness on its behalf. A missional church understands that the congregation itself is sent by God to proclaim and to be a sign of the reign of God.*** Just as God sent Jesus, now Jesus sends the church (Jn..20:21).

### **Keller Interview Movie # 5**

[http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006\\_National/national2006\\_keller\\_interview5.mov](http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006_National/national2006_keller_interview5.mov)

### **What's so new about the missional church? Aren't we already missional?**

□No. Many churches conceive of themselves primarily as a refuge from culture- a lifeboat, a sanctuary, a fortress with high walls intended to keep the culture *out*. Others church communities lose themselves in the world and their identity is subsumed completely in the culture. They become so much like the culture that they lose the ability to witness to God's redemptive purpose in the world.

**Many churches simply focus on making themselves as attractive as possible and hope that the world will wander in.**

Not "every member a minister," but rather," every member a missionary"

**Somewhere between those two extremes of a fortress and being subsumed and very different than simply trying to be attractational and get the details right so that the world will like us and want what we offer lies *the missional church***

## **TIM KELLER -The Need for a 'Missional' Church**

In the West for nearly 1,000 years, the relationship of (Anglo-European) Christian churches to the broader culture was a relationship known as "Christendom." The institutions of society "Christianized" people, and stigmatized non-Christian belief and behavior. Though people were "Christianized" by the culture, they were not regenerated or converted with the Gospel. The church's job was then to challenge persons into a vital, living relation with Christ.

There were great advantages and yet great disadvantages to 'Christendom.' The advantage was that there was a common language for public moral discourse with which society could discuss what was 'the good.' The disadvantage was that Christian morality without gospel-changed hearts often led to cruelty and hypocrisy. Think of how the small town in "Christendom" treated the unwed mother or the gay person.

Also, under "Christendom" the church often was silent against abuses of power of the ruling classes over the weak. For these reasons and others, the church in Europe and North America has been losing its privileged place as the arbiter of public morality since at least the mid 19th century. The decline of Christendom has accelerated greatly since the end of WWII.

The British missionary Lesslie Newbigin went to India around 1950. There he was involved with a church living 'in mission' in a very non-Christian culture. When he returned to England some 30 years later, he discovered that now the Western church too existed in a non-Christian society, but it had not adapted to its new situation. Though public institutions and popular culture of Europe and North America no longer 'Christianized' people, the church still ran its ministries assuming that a stream of 'Christianized', traditional/moral people would simply show up in services. Some churches certainly did 'evangelism' as one ministry among many. But the church in the West had not become completely '*missional*'--adapting and reformulating absolutely everything it did in worship, discipleship, community, and service--so as to be engaged with the non-Christian society around it. It had not developed a 'missiology of western culture' the way it had done so for other non-believing cultures.

One of the reasons much of the American evangelical church has not experienced the same precipitous decline as the Protestant churches of Europe and Canada is because in the U.S. there is still a 'heartland' with the remnants of the old 'Christendom' society. There the informal public culture (though not the formal public institutions) still stigmatizes non-Christian beliefs and behavior. *"There is a fundamental schism in American cultural, political, and economic life. There's the quicker-growing, economically vibrant...morally relativist, urban-oriented, culturally adventuresome, sexually polymorphous, and ethnically diverse nation...and there's the small town, nuclear-family, religiously-oriented, white-centric other America, [with]...its diminishing cultural and economic force....[T]wo nations..."* Michael Wolff, *New York*, Feb 26 2001, p. 19. In conservative regions, it is still possible to see people profess faith and

the church grow without becoming 'missional.' Most traditional evangelical churches still can only win people to Christ who are temperamentally traditional and conservative. But, as Wolff notes, this is a 'shrinking market.' And eventually evangelical churches ensconced in the declining, remaining enclaves of "Christendom" will have to learn how to become 'missional'. If it does not do that it will decline or die.

**Key to the identity of a missional church is being an alternative society within the dominant culture.** When the church proclaims and is a sign of the reign of God – whether by loving enemies or welcoming those on the margins – it will be a contrast community in the eyes of the world. Most Christian traditions that had previously enjoyed a privileged status in the dominant North American culture no longer do. The missional church perspective offers important clues on how to be the church when not at the center of things.

## **What the missional church is**

A missional church is externally focused.

A missional church is culturally engaged without being absorbed.  
(Four diagrams)

A missional church is incarnationally not institutionally driven.

A missional church is patterned after God's redemptive purpose in the world.

**It is Incarnational:** Missional churches are deeply connected to the community. They look like the communities they are serving. The church is not focused on its facility, but is focused on living, demonstrating, and offering biblical community to a lost world.

**It is Indigenous:** Missional churches are indigenous. Churches that are indigenous have taken root in the soil and reflect, to some degree, the culture of their community. An indigenous church looks different from Seattle to Senegal to Singapore. We would expect and rejoice at an African church worshipping to African music, in African dress, with African enthusiasm. So shouldn't we rejoice at churches of different missional expressions across Georgia, North America, and the world?

**It is Intentional.** Missional churches are intentional about their methodologies. There are scripturally commanded requirements about church, preaching, discipline, baptism and many other biblical practices. Church and worship can't take just any form. In missional churches, those biblical forms are central, but things like worship style, evangelism methods, attire, service times, locations,

and many other man-made customs are not chosen simply based on the preference of the members. Instead, the forms are best determined by their effectiveness in a specific cultural context.

### **Driscoll interview movie #6**

[http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006\\_National/national2006\\_driscoll\\_interview6.mov](http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006_National/national2006_driscoll_interview6.mov)

## **What the missional church does**

**Points Toward the Kingdom, the Rule and Reign of God.** The missional church understands its calling as witness to the gospel of the in-breaking reign of God, and strives to be an instrument, agent, and sign of that reign. As it makes its witness through its identity, activity, and communication, it is keenly aware of the provisional character of all that it is and does. It points towards the reign of God that God will certainly bring about, but knows that its own response is incomplete, and that its own conversion is a continuing necessity.

**The missional church structures itself accordingly-** all structure submits to mission, not the other way around.

**A missional church seeks to partner with the community to "seek the *shalom*" of the community. Its Practices Demonstrate God's Intent for the World.** The pattern of the church's life as community is a demonstration of what God intends for the life of the whole world. The practices of the church embody mutual care, reconciliation, loving accountability, and hospitality. A missional church is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another and how they behave towards their host community.

### **Create Christian community which is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive.**

- In Christendom, 'fellowship' is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support and accountability. That is necessary, of course.
- □ **In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a 'counter-culture,' showing the world how radically different the Kingdom of God is with regard to sex, money, and power.**
- □ In sex. We avoid both the secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life- patterns are different.
- □ In money. We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, the economically and physically weak.
- □ In power. We are committed to power-sharing and relationship-building between races and classes that are alienated outside of the Body of Christ.
- □ In general, a church must be more deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice than traditional liberal churches and more deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion than traditional

fundamentalist churches. **This kind of church is profoundly 'counter-intuitive' to American observers. It breaks their ability to categorize (and dismiss) it as liberal or conservative. Only this kind of church has any chance in the non-Christian west.**

**A missional church highlights character, virtue, and compassionate deeds as the most effective witness to God's Kingdom.** In other words, a recovery of an ecclesiology and apologetic of servanthood. We serve not simply as a means towards preaching the Gospel (that is with the hope of getting to present our argument to someone) but we see serving as preaching the Gospel- as representing Christ, glorifying God and bearing witness to the change God has brought in our lives and the change God wants to bring in this world.

**A missional church seeks to plant, grow, and multiply** missionary communities.

#### **Discourses in the vernacular.**

- In 'Christendom' there is little difference between the language inside and outside of the church. Biblical technical terms are well-known inside and outside. In a missional church, however, terms must be explained. (This is different than in a seeker-model where these things might simply be avoided.)
- The missional church avoids 'tribal' language, stylized prayer language, unnecessary evangelical pious 'jargon', and archaic language that seeks to set a 'spiritual tone.'
- The missional church avoids 'we-them' language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs, and dismissive, disrespectful comments about those who differ with us
- **The missional church avoids ever talking as if non-believing people are not present.** If you speak and discourse *as if* your whole neighborhood is present and as much a part of your community as you are of theirs, eventually more and more of your neighborhood will find their way in or be invited.
- Unless all of the above is the outflow of a truly humble yet bold gospel-changed heart, it is all just 'marketing' and 'spin.'

#### **Enters and re-tell the *culture's* stories with the gospel**

- In "Christendom" it is possible to simply exhort Christianized people to "do what they know they should." There is little or no real engagement, listening, or persuasion. It is more a matter of exhortation (and often, heavy reliance on guilt.) In a missional church preaching and communication should always assume the presence of skeptical people, and should engage *their* stories, not simply talk about "the good old days."
- To "enter" means to show sympathy toward and deep acquaintance with the literature, music, theater, etc. of the existing culture's hopes, dreams, 'heroic' narratives, fears.
- The older culture's story was--to be a good person, a good father/mother, son/daughter, to live a decent, merciful, good life.
- Now the culture's story is-- a) to be *free* and self-created and authentic (theme

of freedom from oppression), and b) to make the world safe for everyone else to be the same (theme of inclusion of the 'other'; justice).

·□ To "re-tell" means to show how only in Christ can we have freedom without slavery and embracing of the 'other' without injustice.

### **Keller interview movie # 6**

[http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006\\_National/national2006\\_keller\\_interview6.mov](http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006_National/national2006_keller_interview6.mov)

### **Theologically train lay people for *public life and vocation***

·□ In 'Christendom' you can afford to train people just in prayer, Bible study, evangelism-- private world skills--because they are not facing radically non-Christian values in their public life--where they work, in their neighborhood, etc.

·□ In a 'missional' church, the laity needs theological education to 'think Christianly' about everything and work with Christian distinctiveness. They need to know: a) what cultural practices are common grace and to be embraced, b) what practices are antithetical to the gospel and must be rejected, c) what practices can be adapted/revised.

·□ In a 'missional' situation, lay people renewing and transforming the culture through distinctively Christian vocations must be lifted up as real 'kingdom work' and ministry along with the traditional ministry of the Word.

·□ Finally, Christians will have to use the gospel to demonstrate true, Biblical love and 'tolerance' in "the public square" toward those with whom we deeply differ. This tolerance should equal or exceed that which opposing views show toward Christians. The charge of intolerance is perhaps the main 'defeater' of the gospel in the non-Christian west.

### **Positions itself as “for” and not “against”**

#### **Other Churches**

·□ In Christendom, when 'everyone was a Christian' it was necessary (perhaps) for a church to define itself over against other churches. That is, to get an identity you had to say, "we are not like that church over there, or those Christians over here." It is very important that we not spend our time bashing and criticizing other kinds of churches. That simply plays in to the common 'defeater' that Christians are all intolerant, and internecine. Even denominational churches should, at the local level, cooperate and reach out to and support the other congregations and churches in their local area. This is hard, of course, but our bias should be in the direction of cooperation.

#### **The Community**

Be careful that even as you hold up the counter-cultural nature of the Kingdom, and the changes the Kingdom calls for in society, that you don't position yourself against people. People are not the enemy- the city is not the enemy... the Enemy is that enemy.

**A missional church assembles to worship God, and to be realigned with God's missionary purpose.**

**A missional church takes Risks as a Contrast Community.** The missional church is learning to take risks for the sake of the gospel. It understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death and resurrection of its Lord. It is raising questions, often threatening ones, about the church's cultural captivity, and it is grappling with the ethical and structural implications of its missional vocation. It is learning to deal with internal and external resistance. In many ways it is too pagan for Christians and too Christian for pagans.

**A missional Church depends on the Holy Spirit.** The missional community confesses its dependence upon the Holy Spirit, shown in particular in its practices of corporate prayer. It's safer to stay behind the walls of the "church." Venturing out as missionary servants is a radical and dangerous thing and every community should cry out to God for their city, and for wisdom in how to serve and bless and reach and challenge that city.

**A missional Church seeks God's particular Missional Vocation for that community.** The congregation is discovering together the missional vocation of the community. It is beginning to redefine "success" and "vitality" in terms of faithfulness to God's calling and sending. It is seeking to discern God's specific missional vocation ("charisms" - gifts) for the entire community and for all of its members.

## **What the missional church is not**

**A technique to help our congregation grow:** □ Many missional congregations are growing in numbers. But the missional church vision is not a technique or a way of increasing market share; it is a way of understanding the true calling of the church. It is a way of life for the church. Rather than merely focusing on a congregation's size, the missional church vision calls us to focus on the reign of God. For a congregation, that means to be a living sign and foretaste of God's new creation. It also means inviting people to become a part of God's new community.

**Contemporary, young, or hip.** A church is not missional because it is contemporary *or* traditional. A church becomes missional when it remains faithful to the Gospel message while simultaneously contextualizing its ministry (to the degree it can) so that the Gospel can engage the worldview of the hearers. Traditional churches that are engaging communities that are receptive to traditional methods are just as missional ... as are contemporary, blended, ethnic, emerging, etc. The key is biblical fidelity and missional engagement with the community.

**A missional church is not a dispenser of religious goods and services or a**

### **place where people come for their weekly spiritual fix.**

A missional church is not a place where mature Christians come to be fed and have their needs met. A missional church is not a place where "professionals" are hired to do all the work of the church. In other words, it is not a place where dependency is created by the pastors doing for the people the ministry they should be doing for themselves.

## **What the missional church does not do**

**Does not start a lot of new activities.** People in our congregations are already so busy. □ A missional church does not necessarily do more outreach activities. In fact, a missional church may do fewer things better. It may simply point its people to what certain members of the congregation are doing and encourage them to join in.

Releases people to be involved in the life of their city and the lives of their neighbors.

The 50/50 rule

### **Driscoll interview movie # 8**

[http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006\\_National/national2006\\_driscoll\\_interview8.mov](http://www.desiringgod.org/media/video/2006_National/national2006_driscoll_interview8.mov)

Isn't this risky? □

## **What are the risks?**

## **How do we avoid them?**

Churches that are in the world, but not of the world, take a lot of risks – physical, financial, social. They are not universally liked. The giving is not the same because their people become involved in and passionate about other good things besides just church.

But, these churches are able to take risks for the sake of the reign of God because they depend on the Holy Spirit for power to witness. These congregations spend a lot of time in prayer. They also know that, even if they experience rejection in the short run, the final victory belongs to God. □

### **Case Study**

Let me show you how this goes beyond any 'program.' These are elements that have to be present in every area of the church. So, for example, what makes a small group 'missional'? A 'missional' small group is not necessarily one which is doing some kind of specific 'evangelism' program (though that is to be recommended)

Rather, 1) if its members love and talk positively about the city/neighborhood, 2) if they speak in language that is not filled with pious tribal or technical terms and phrases, nor disdainful and embattled language, 3) if in their Bible study they apply the gospel to the core concerns and stories of the people of the culture, 4)

if they are obviously interested in and engaged with the literature and art and thought of the surrounding culture and can discuss it both appreciatively and yet critically, 5) if they exhibit deep concern for the poor and generosity with their money and purity and respect with regard to opposite sex, and show humility toward people of other races and cultures, 6) they do not bash other Christians and churches—

*then* seekers and non-believing people from the city A) will be invited and B) will come and will stay as they explore spiritual issues. If these marks are not there it will only be able to include believers or traditional, "Christianized" people.