



## BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

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# We are on a mission

**John 1:1-18**

**~ Brent Russell ~**

- Being mission awareness Sunday - I want to talk about...surprise surprise MISSION!
- There is a story about a missionary who went into deepest darkest Africa
- And as he is creeping through the bush trying to find people to convert he is confronted by the biggest lion he has ever seen
- I mean this thing has teeth like daggers a mane like a parachute
- And it has claws that could tear a car in half
- In great fear he falls to his knees and cries please Lord let this lion be a Christian
- And the Lion falls to it's knees and says for what are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful!
- There is a concept that mission means men in pith helmets heading to deepest Africa
- Going to strange and foreign lands
- Men who are a little different
- Perhaps a little to radical for us
- Maybe a little "touched" even!
- But mission lies even closer to home than that
- We have for many years used Matthew 28 as the mission battle cry
- Go out then and disciple and baptize in the name of the father, son and spirit

- We tend to start at the end of the Gospels when it comes to mission
- It was Jesus final command
- It was his last will and testament if you like
- Go - I am not here anymore - you need to go and make disciples of all nations
- Sadly what we are left with is this idea that mission is something for later
- Something to be tacked on at the end
- Something almost as an after-thought
  
- After we have a pastoral team in place
- after we have youth ministry up and running
- After Sunday School is working well
- After our home groups are functioning optimally
- Then only can we think of mission
- Does this sound familiar...
- It is an area of ministry that the overwhelming majority of mainline reformed churches are weak in
- We are shocking at evangelism and missions
- Mission and evangelism always seems to be our Achilles' heel
  
- It is an area that makes us uncomfortable because it means confronting others with the Gospel
- It means (GASP) having to talk about Jesus
- It means being stretched out of your comfort zone
- Well mission and evangelism should not be a tack onto the end of our Christian theology
- I want to show you today that mission is at the very centre of the Gospel
- I want to share with you that unless you understand the core of the gospel is mission - you may well have misunderstood the message of the Gospel yourself

***Let us read together John 1:1-18***

- Mission is not a human invention
- It is not something new brainwave or inspiration that mankind has come up with
- Mission is not something that Christian theologians have contemplated and designed over the centuries
- It is not even something that God thought up and told us to do
- Not some divine instruction or command
- Rather - mission is something that God has begun
- It is an act of Grace from God first
  
- It is something divinely inspired
- It is something that God himself has done
  
- Jesus himself is God's mission to us
  
- God could have tried to reach us over the divide between him and us
- He could have given us all sorts of things to lead us to him
- Instead God sent a missionary
- His Son Jesus

***The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

## ***The Word became Flesh***

- The word of God became flesh
  
- God instead of reaching out to us sent his son to become one of us
- Instead of practicing what some call cheque-book evangelism
- Evangelism from a distance
- evangelism that costs money but nothing else
- evangelism that makes us feel a little better, but does not connect us to others
- God did something all together different
- God came and became Human so that he could reach out to us
- Paul too understood that for him to bridge the borders to others
- For him to really be effective in spreading the Gospel he would have to step out of His world even temporarily and make contact in a different context
- Listen to what he says about His own ministry...
- Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law, so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.
  
- Both Paul and Jesus became what they where not in order to bring people to God
- Let me share that I am concerned with the lives of many Christians these days
- There are deep separations and divides between us and others
- For many the "church" is so central to all that we are that we have no friends outside - we've become isolated

- We have become so comfortable in our lives that we have forgotten that we need to echo the actions of Jesus
- We have so inaccessible ourselves in our holy huddles that we clean forget about those outside the faith
- We are so caught up in our own lives that we have forgotten about reaching into the lives of others
- We are sometimes compelled to give money
- But rarely do we step out in faith
- Becoming like others to win them over
- Listening to their stories, understanding where they are coming from
- There are plenty of ways to do what Paul and Jesus did
- We have soup kitchens at our church twice a week
- We have the mission trip you have just heard about that we will be running next year again
- There are communities in and around your home and place of work
- People that are different to you
- But people who still need to hear the Gospel message
- People who's only chance of hearing of God's grace may be YOU

### ***Made his dwelling with us***

- But Jesus did not stop and merely touch sides briefly with us
- Jesus could have come to earth and have been a wealthy King
- He could have stood on his palace towers and watched his people from a distance
- Seeing how they lived their lives
- But remaining distant and aloof
- Perhaps shouting instructions from above
- No vs 14 of John tells us that he made his dwelling with us
- He lived with us
- He experienced life with us
  - He knew what friendship was like

- He knew anger
- He knew loss and pain
- He knew betrayal
- It is one thing to go into a place and to see people in their lives
- It is one thing to act like a Jew to win Jews
- It is one thing to act like others to win them over
- It is another to share with them in their lives
  
- Jesus knew that for Him to reach us he would have to not only become a human
- But he would have to live with us
- He would have to see the world from alongside us
- Not as a wealthy man who has an easy life
- But from the perspective of the poor, the downtrodden - the outcast
  
- He reached into our world
- He came and sat with us - experienced as we experience
- Our Job as Christians is to be like Jesus
- We need to win others over not by self righteous preaching
- Not by moralizing
- We need to connect with the lives of those out there who are lost
- We need to listen, understand and come alongside people
- Make our dwelling with them
- We need to reach out and understand the lives of others if we are to win them over
- If we are to share with them God's gospel
- Jesus came INTO our lives so that we might be able to get INTO the lives of others to lead them to Him
- We need to become part of the lives of others not to stand at a distance and claim we have found the truth
- But rather from alongside them show them that we have found the truth

## ***We have seen His glory***

- Mission and evangelism is about leading people to *God* through *Jesus*
- It is about us allowing people to glimpse *God's* glory
- And even a glimpse is enough to seize their attention
- And to draw them to Him
- John realized that even though *Jesus* was as human as you and I
- He carried the fullness of *God* within him
- The people that *Jesus* came to save glimpsed the *Glory* of *God* in him
  
- Not a *God* who lived far away in heaven
- Isolated and secluded from us
  
- Not a *God* who came to earth but never really shared in the fullness of human life
- A *God* who remained detached and unapproachable
  
- But people glimpsed the *Glory* of a *God* who in his infinite wisdom and compassion came to earth
- Not as an affluent leader, but rather as a simple artisan
- A *God* who reached in to the lives of humanity
- A *God* who became flesh
- A *God* who made his dwelling with
- A *God* who shared his *Glory* with us
- Have you ever seen a stage show where the curtain comes down
- And the poor performer in the harsh glare of the lights is trying to find his way through the curtain
- And the audience laughs and he gets more frantic
- And he searches harder and harder to find the exit
- The world is struggling to find their way through the curtain
- They are caught in the limelight and are trying to find *God*

- Trying to push there way through this curtain but are unable to find the gap
- Because we have seen Jesus we have seen the father
- We have found the gap
- We need to show them the fathers glory
  
- We need to become like Jesus
- We need to in all places in all times become like others
- We need to reach into their world
- To touch their lives
  
- We need to pull back the curtain and give them a glimpse of the *Glory* of our *God!*