

# The Mission of the Church

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 November 2015

Preacher: Jonathan Gemmell

[ 0 : 00 ] Hopefully as you came in you would have got a piece of paper looking a bit like that. If you didn't get a piece of paper looking a bit like that, please would you put your hand in the air and somebody will come and give you one.

That would be particularly useful today, our usual practice at Brunsfield as we anchor our sermon in a passage of scripture so we can all follow along together. Today we're going a bit off plot as we do a topical sermon on the mission of the church.

We started this series two weeks ago with Graham and in week one Graham was talking about the foundation of the church. The unparalleled good news that God saw humanity in its lostness, hopelessness and helplessness and sent the Lord Jesus incarnated, born in a stable, we call that Christmas, lived a perfect life.

Died a substitutionary death for our sins, dying our death for us and then raised to life. And we looked at Acts chapter 1 and 2 and saw how the church was birthed through the gospel, how it unites us in the gospel, how it sustains us through the grace of the Lord Jesus.

And then last week Paul talked about the participation in the church, what it means to be a member of a local church, to participate together in God's goodness to us.

[ 1 : 24 ] That God hasn't just given us his son that unites us with him, but he's given us each other. And what a great means of grace that is in our lives to live this Christian life together.

And so today I want to look at the mission of the church. I want to start to look at. This is a massive topic. People have written huge books on this. So I just want to give us an outline that will maybe help us think further on this subject.

What does it mean? Why are we here? What are we supposed to be doing? Why has God given us local church? What is the point?

It's quite a big question. It's a really important question. Or else we can just kind of go through the motions Sunday after Sunday with no real purpose or no real goal.

So let me read 1 Peter 2 verses 9 and 10. I'll put it on the screen for you. And then we'll pray and then we'll have a look at this together. Peter writes, Dear friends, Let me pray.

[ 3 : 07 ] Father God, thank you so much for each other. Thank you for the joy it is to be your church. And so Lord, we come asking that you would clarify our thinking.

You would enlarge our hearts. You would fix our eyes on your son Jesus. We pray that what we know not you would teach us. What we have not you would give us.

And what we are not, both individually and corporately. You would make us for your glory alone. Amen. Companies love mission statements.

All the great companies of the world have a mission statement. They have a purpose for which they exist. An eloquent, concise paragraph. Full of meaning and impact that sums up what they're all about.

Here are some of my favourite companies. Apple. Apple says, We design the best personal computers in the world. We develop the best professional software.

[ 4 : 06 ] We lead the digital music revolution. And we continue to reinvent the mobile phone. And divine the future of portable media. Amen. Or Google.

Quite ambitious. Our mission is to organise the world's information. And make it universally accessible and useful. Facebook.

My least favourite company if you read this morning's newsletter. Give Facebook. We aim to give people the power to share. And make the world more open and connected.

Whilst making a fortune advertising to you. And corrupting your mind. Coca-Cola. To refresh the world. Nice and simple.

To refresh the world. Amazon. To be the earth's most customer-centric company. It's amazing, isn't it? That they know everything that I've ever looked at.

[ 5 : 04 ] And send me emails all the time saying, You might think about this. You might like this. It's a real test in self-control. And I love this one. VW. Our goal is to offer attractive, safe and environmentally sound vehicles.

Which can compete in an increasingly tough market. And set world standards in their respective class. Nice. But what about the church?

What is our mission? What is our mission statement? If we boiled it down, why are we here? Have you ever thought why we're here? Some of us, I dare say, have been coming to church since we were born.

Do we ever think, why do I come? What are we meant to be doing together? What is this? For why has God so gifted us with and to Bruntsfield Evangelical Church?

Well, I've only just started my thinking on this. This is a work in progress. But I think it's all to do with the letter S. And it is one headline, overarching big S, which is the purpose for which we're created.

[ 6 : 17 ] And then five little S's, which are how we're to do that better and brighter and more deliberately in and through our lives. So here's the headline.

Why does Bruntsfield Evangelical Church exist? Well, the answer I would give is shining. Our purpose as a church is to shine.

To shine in a very specific way. I'm not talking about lumens. I'm not talking about getting even more lights in here. I'm talking about shining.

And by shining, I mean reflecting the glory of God back to God and out to the world. That our purpose as a church is to reflect God's infinite glory back to God and out to the world.

Putting God's infinite beauty, manifold perfections and matchless worth on full display for everyone to see. People wasting their lives. People wasting their lives, seeing beauty in other places, searching for meaning in other places.

[ 7 : 21 ] And for us to say, no. You are missing the all satisfying, all beautiful, all powerful, all knowing, all benevolent God.

And let us reflect what he's like to you. That you might see him for yourself. So Psalm 34, David says, I will extol the Lord at all times.

His praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord. Let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together.

That word glorify is literally the word magnify. And we use the word magnify in two different ways. We use the word magnify speaking about a microscope.

We've got a lot of scientists in here where you take something really small and you magnify it so that you can see it with your eyes. It's one way we use the word magnify.

[ 8 : 18 ] Taking something really small and making it visible. But we use it in another way. The way of the telescope. Taking something really big that we couldn't see otherwise and making it visible to us.

When it comes to God, we are taking something so big, so massive and making it visible to others. So this is the IC1101 galaxy.

It's got a hundred trillion stars. It's 60 times bigger than our solar system. It's the biggest galaxy that we know of. But it's a long way away.

That when you look up on a dark night in Fife, of which there are many, you can't see it, really. Until you invite our friend Mr. Hubble and then it becomes big and beautiful and it's reflected into our eyes.

And that's what we're doing. We're taking God's infinite beauty that is imperceptible to the world and we're reflecting its bigness, its greatness. His glory to others.

[ 9 : 26 ] This is what the heavens have been doing since creation. Psalm 19 verse 1. The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky the works of his hands. It's amazing.

I went to a faith and cosmology seminar last Saturday. And the one thing that they were puzzling over is why the galaxy, why the universe is so massive. Well, if it's for that, then the universe is just the right size to reflect God's infinite power, his glory and his beauty.

It's why you and I were created. Isaiah writes, Your whole purpose, our whole purpose for living is for the glory of God.

But because of sin, our ability to reflect that is marred and tainted and lost. Like when you were doing your makeup this morning as I was.

If you move the mirror, you can't reflect as well anymore. And so that's what we did. God was shining his glory into us, but we rebelled and we always turn away from him.

[10:47] Again, we're constantly turning from God and that impedes our ability to both witness and reflect God's glory. But as we saw in week one, he sent his son to bring us back to reorientate our lives once again, not around ourselves, but around the God who created us, who made us for his glory.

And so 1 Corinthians 6, 19 to 20, talking to a church, you are not your own. You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body.

There was a corporate nature as we saw in 1 Peter. You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood. Or Ephesians 3, now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church.

Our whole purpose is to shine. Our mission as a church is to reflect God's glory, his infinite beauty, manifold perfections and matchless worth, back to God and out to the world.

That's why we're here. We even have it at the beginning of our vision statements. Brunnsfield Evangelical Church exists to glorify God.

[12:03] I'm pleased that we all know that really well and got it tattooed between our shoulder blades so we can never see it. So if you're not a Christian here today, that's why life doesn't really make sense.

That's why it is so dissatisfying, so seemingly futile, like you're not getting anywhere. Because your whole existence is meant to witness and reflect the glory of God.

And because of all of our sinful nature, we cannot do that. That you're separated from a God, you're separated from God, blind to his glory and unable to enjoy life in all its fullness.

Because of a severed relationship, because of sin. And that's why Jesus came to bring us back. So once again, we might witness that glory and reflect it to the world.

That's why life is so futile. That's why life, apart from Christ, is so meaningless. So the Westminster Shorter Catechism for our Presbyterian friends.

[13:12] What is the chief end of man? To glorify God by enjoying him forever. And without Jesus, you are unable to do that. Our mission as individuals and as a church is to shine.

To reflect God's glory. And so, the big headline, if you remember nothing else from this morning, we are here, you are here to shine.

To reflect God's glory back to God and out to the world. But how are we going to do that? That's quite a big thing. That's quite a lifetime goal.

So how are we going to help each other do that better? Well, it's five little S's. And here's the first.

Spurring. Not talking about your cowboy in Westonville. I'm talking about spurring each other on.

Hebrews 10. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess. For he who promised is faithful. And let us, as a church, consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

[14:20] Not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing. But encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching. How are we going to shine brighter for the Lord Jesus?

How are we going to reflect God's glory better, clearer, brighter and more intensely? By spurring one another on. By hanging out together. By sharing life together.

The minute we leave this place. We're told to glory in a million other things other than God. Glory in this relationship.

In this Apple product. In this motor car. Glory in yourself. Make it much of yourself. As we go out into a world addicted to sin and deceived by the lies of sin.

We're told to glory in a million things. To make your life about this and that and the next thing. And so we meet together to spur each other on. To say, no God, you're worth it.

[15:21] No Jesus, you're worth it. No Jesus, you are the reason that I live. You are the one in whom all my hope and identity and worth and security and future is bound up. That's why we need each other.

Because as we go out into the world. Singing our gospel song and the pressure comes in. We start to shrink down. And so we meet together to spur one another on.

That we're a team. This is like our HQ. This is like our Louis van Hul team talk. Where we get together and then we go out onto the field that God has given us to reflect his glory. And we're spurring one another on. How are we doing that? We're reading God's word. We're learning more about this God of infinite beauty and matchless worth. So we might love him more. As we learn more of him, we love him.

As we love him, we live for him. And it's this most virtuous circle. We sing together declaring his praises. How great is our God. Sing with me.

[16:25] How great. How great is our God. We do what they say in Colossians 3. Teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

Singing to God with gratitude in our hearts. We pray together. Declaring our reliance on God. Our thankfulness to God. Our asking him that he would be even kinder to us.

And give us all that we need that we might shine for his glory. And we do it as we meet over coffee and tea and in a pew. That we ask, how are you doing?

And not just fine. How are you doing in your ability to reflect God's glory to the world? Well, shall we pray together? Our overall purpose is shining.

And we do it by spurring one other up. By this being a hotbed of encouragement. That we might go out into a hostile world to live differently.

[17:30] Secondly, sharing. Sharing that as those that have witnessed God's glory. And the meaning and purpose. And satisfaction we get from him that we can't find anywhere else.

We tell others about him. We seek to share this message. That has a complete monopoly on eternal life. No one else has got this.

Except Jesus. And the gospel. There are hundreds of thousands of people in this city. Without God and without hope in the world. Because they're without Christ.

They know nothing of this gospel. These people would have spent longer deciding what they were going to have for breakfast. Than their eternal standing before our holy gods. And so God has appointed us to be those that share this message.

That as we reflect that glory. We invite them to witness that glory through the good news of Jesus. And as more people gather together.

[18:31] Do you see how more intensely God's glory is reflected to the world. And so that most classic verse in Matthew 28. 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 very end of the age.

The God ordained means of people being made into disciples. Is you and me sharing that great news. That glorious message. With others.

As we share and they believe. There are more people to shine and reflect God's infinite glory. Back to him. And out to the world. Thirdly.

It's not just spurring. It's not just sharing. But it's also sending. We must always remember. We must always lift our eyes. And stretch our field of vision.

[19:29] That our God is not some tribal deity. He is not just the God of Edinburgh. He is the God of the entire world. Who sent his son. That the entire world might have hope and life.

Through his son Jesus. He is the creator. Who flung stars into space. Who sits enthroned over the circle of the earth. Who desires that news of his son.

Reach every tribe and tongue and nation of the world. That they too might witness. And be fully satisfied by his glory. So Matthew 24 talks about a glacier of coldness.

Because of the increase of wickedness. The love of most will grow cold. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world.

As a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come. See what's going on in that verse. That there is. As time goes on. There's a coldness. A glacier of hostility towards God growing.

[20:33] But not everywhere. Because the second half says. And the gospel will be preached. There will be people going to torch that glacier. Going to share that good news.

To bring them into the burning presence of God. Through the Lord Jesus. That it will be preached to all nations. It's not just sharing with our friends.

And those in our lives. But it's about being committed to God's global mission. And being prepared to go where he sends. To say what he wants. To do what he desires amongst whomever he

chooses.

John Piper talks about three types of people. There are goers. There are senders. And there are those that are disobedient. It's not an option. Mission is not for the elite crack team of Christians. It's for his church. That his glory might shine out into all the world. And the fame of his son might be broadcast from east to west. Just imagine what it would look like.

[ 21 : 39 ] For God's glory to be reflected back to him. And out to the world in Sudan. And Yemen. And Pakistan. And North Korea. And Laos. And Tajikistan. And France.

And Belgium. In greater intensity. With greater clarity. So that God might be glorified fully. There is spurring and sharing and sending.

And then fourthly there is subverting. Subverting. Living differently. Living alternatively to the drumbeat of the world. Living as those that have been saved from ourself.

To worship the true and living God. Who are freed. We don't need to make much of ourselves. Because Jesus has saved us. We don't need to try and be a success. Because Jesus is a success. We don't need to try and prolong our own lives. Because Jesus holds our lives in his hands. And therefore we're free to subvert the way of the world.

[ 22 : 37 ] That says it's all about me. We can actually say it's all about him. We can live life differently. Loving the unlovable. Loving the unlovable. Giving sacrificially.

Knowing that he who gives. Gives in abundance. It's what Peter was talking about in our opening reading. Live such good lives.

But in your hearts. Revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you. To give a reason for the hope that you have. As you live with Christ Jesus as Lord. You look different. You look different. And people are provoked to ask. Where does your hope come from? Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable.

So that when they speak against you as evil do. As they may see your good deeds. And glorify God on the day he visits. Living differently. Subverting the way of the world.

[ 23 : 35 ] As those that are not their own. As those that are bought at a price. Shining. Through spurring one another on. Sharing this good news with others.

Sending people to the far corners of the earth. And subverting the way the world does life. As those that have been saved to live a better way. And then lastly. Suffering.

Reflecting. Reflecting. And living for God's glory in a dark world. Is a difficult costly task. It's not popular.

I think we're all aware that the air is turning more toxic. And to love and live for and speak up for the Lord Jesus. Is becoming ever more unpopular. As social norms.

Shifts in popular opinion. Pluralistic leanings. As the remnants of our cultural Christianity. Disappear over the horizon of history. In this country.

[ 24 : 31 ] It's growing increasingly difficult. To reflect God's glory. Back to him. And out to the world. Because the world would have us sit down. And stay quiet.

But do you see. That even when it's tough. Even when suffering comes. If we cling to Jesus. If we cling to him. It only shows him to be more valuable. That when it really costs us.

And say no. We will not let go. Then that only proves. To make him look even better. And even more glorious. To seek to shine brightly for Jesus.

In every area of our lives. Is increasingly to paint a target on our backs. But as we go out. Knowing. That Jesus wins in the end.

Knowing that. And paying the cost. And clinging to him anyway. We show that actually. He's of the greatest value in our lives. It just causes us to shine brighter.

[ 25 : 31 ] And so Paul can write to the Romans. Who were facing severe persecution. Therefore since we have been justified through faith. We have peace with God. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through whom we have gained access by faith. Into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so. But we also glory.

In our sufferings. Because we know that suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance character. And character hope. And hope. Does not put us to shame.

Because God's love has been poured out into our hearts. Through the Holy Spirit. Who has been given to us. So we cling to Jesus. And say no. We'll suffer for him.

We'll pay the cost. Whatever it is. Even our own lives. It only goes to show that he is more glorious. Than people could ever imagine. And the intensity with which we reflect that glory to the world.

[ 26 : 27 ] Goes out even more brightly from our lives. Just to recap. Our mission is to shine. Why does Bruntsfield Evangelical Church exist? Why are we here this morning? Well to shine.

To shine God's glory back to him. And out to the world. To testify to his infinite beauty. His manifold perfections. And matchless worth. How are we to accomplish this?

Well five things. By spurring one another on. By saying yes it's tough. But Jesus is worth it. By sharing together. By saying you need this news.

You are lost. And without hope. And without Jesus. It will not get any better. And therefore we say for God's glory. I'll tell you. About his son. Who brings you into a relationship with him.

It's about sending. And having a global vision of our global God. Whose glory wants to be spread from east to west. It's about subverting.

[ 27 : 24 ] Living life differently. Because of the one who loved us and gave himself for us. And it's about suffering. That even when people would want to say Jesus is not worth it.

We would say he certainly is. And we cling to him no matter what. No matter what the cost. So let me finish with these words from Philippians.

Therefore my dear friends. As you have always obeyed. Not only in my presence. But now much more in my absence. Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act.

In order to fulfill his good purposes. Do everything without grumbling or arguing. So that you may become blameless and pure children of God. Without fault in a warped and crooked generation.

Then you will shine among them. Like the stars in the sky. Let me pray. Father God thank you that you alone are glorious.

[ 28 : 34 ] Father thank you that you are infinitely beautiful. That you are manifoldly perfect in every way. Father that your worth cannot be declared.

And yet Lord because of your grace and your kindness to us. You sent your son that we might once again witness and live for that glory. And so Lord I pray that we as individuals might be caught up with fresh visions.

Of just how glorious you are. That we would spur one another on. That we would share honestly and openly about Jesus. Who's captivated all of our hearts.

Father that we would be willing to go where you call to do what you do. In order that you would receive the glory that you alone are worthy of. Father that we would live differently. As those that have been captivated by your glory.

Who are living for your glory alone. And Father that we would be those. Lord who would be willing to suffer. Willing to suffer for you.

[ 29 : 40 ] Saying that it doesn't matter what it costs. Jesus is worth it. Every time. Father I pray for our church here. That Bruntsfield would be a real beacon of your glory.

Shining out ever brighter. Into this lost city. In order that others might be attracted to your glory. And live for you. Father we cannot do this by ourselves.

So would your spirit come. And make Jesus big. And your glory big in our lives. Father we pray this in his name. Amen. For what? Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.