

UPCSA Month of Mission  
i. Seeing God's Heart for the World

The New Testament scholar Stephen Neill once quipped "If everything is mission, then nothing is mission", to which the Old Testament scholar Christopher Wright responded "If everything is mission, then everything is mission". Little wonder that the missiologist David Bosch retorted, "Ultimately mission remains undefinable". Since the 1950's there has been a remarkable broadening of the term. Caring for the environment is mission. Community renewal is mission. Blessing our neighbours is mission.

However, at least in its traditional sense, mission is not beyond a common definition. At its most basic it involves two things viz. i. being sent, ii. being given a task. Mission comes from the Latin word *mittere* "to send". We are sent to do something, not everything, a particular assignment. Even Tom Cruise in 'Mission Impossible' for all his antics and impossible stunts, had a particular assignment. Companies spend a great deal of money and effort honing their mission statement reflecting their core business. There are essential things they must do lest they go bankrupt. In short mission is the specific task or purpose which a person or group seeks to accomplish. The same is true of the church.

What then is the mission of the church? I would suggest it lies in the Great Commission of Matt 28:16-20 viz disciples making disciples. Mark's account (18:44-49) sees the authority for mission vested in the very words of Jesus, viz "Jesus said to them". Luke (24:44-49) underscores the authority of Scripture "This is what is written" and "clothed with power from on high": John's account is the shortest and most striking (20:21): "Jesus said to them 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you'".

Reflecting on John's account, in the words of one astute commentator, 'We are sent into the world like Jesus to serve'. This begs the question, how did Jesus serve? Granted he was moved by deep compassion to meet people's needs. However, Matt 20:28 and Mark 10:45 remind us, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, *and to give his life as a ransom for many*". We cannot understand the Mission of the Church apart from the work of Christ which is the essence of the gospel viz "... of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve" (1 Cor 15:3-5). In short Mission flows from the Gospel. Get the Gospel right, you get Mission right. Get the Gospel wrong, you get Mission wrong. Accordingly, John Stott's observation "Jesus' mission is to meet human need, whether spiritual or physical" needs to be more nuanced and specific.

Gospel Mission is all about:

Who?	Disciples to the end of the age
Why?	We are sent because Jesus was sent
What?	Declaring the Gospel
Where?	Into the world: go and tell not come and see.
How?	In submission to Jesus, empowered by the Spirit
When?	From Pentecost to the end of the age
To Whom?	All nations, every people group.

In short: "Let the earth hear His voice till the end of time".

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