



“We seek to bring people to Jesus, and together grow in our relationship with God and each other as we serve the community.”

Bible Reading: Matt 28v 16-20

I heard a story recently about a man was in a row with his wife when she picked up a kitchen knife and slashed his arm. He was bleeding deeply and so she wrapped it up in a towel and said he ought to go to hospital. So she put him in the car and made him drive himself.

When he arrived at the hospital entrance there were two doors marked “Male” and “Female” – He went through male door. He was then faced by two more doors marked “Life threatening” & “Non-life threatening”. As tempted as he was he went through non-life threatening. He was then faced by two more doors marked “Upper body” and “lower body” It all depended on where he held his arm but he went through the upper body door. This led to two more doors marked “Internal injury” or “External injury”. He chose external. The other side of this door was two more doors marked “Bleeding” and “Not bleeding”. So long has passed by now that his arm had actually stopped bleeding so he went through the not bleeding door.

This door came out into the hospital patient the car park, so he got into his car and drove home. When he got home his wife was there waiting for him, and she asked how he got on. “Oh” he replied “I didn’t actually get to see anyone but boy were they organised!”

The first time I heard that story I found it quite funny. But the more I reflect on it, the more and more I wonder if that story is a description of how many churches operate. Because wouldn’t it be sad if people come to us as a church; hurting, needing love and care, wanting support, NEEDING TO FIND God; Just to discover that all they find is a church that is well organised but in reality is of no help to them at all.

I wonder how many people in the last five, ten or fifteen years have been into churches... but have just been led from the front door and allowed to pass out through the back door without ever being acknowledged or valued as a person?

How many people have come to CPBC in the last five years and have ventured into our church, but have simply over a period of time found their way out of another door to never come back? They came wanting and needing God, and they left still wanting and needing God!

My friends – we need to ensure that the church is never a place where people come in and leave without encountering God without us getting along side them, and without us responding to their needs. Wouldn’t it be sad if people left saying that CPBC is a great church, its well organized – but it did nothing for me?

In Matthews’s gospel we just read the last words to Jesus to his disciples. We call these words the great commission because they commission every follower of Jesus to go and to share the gospel- to make Jesus known to others.

For us here at Clarence Park we have taken those words and put them together to help us defined our sense of purpose as a church in our mission statement

“We seek to bring people to Jesus, and together grow in our relationship with God and each other as we serve the community.”

This defines why we are here and what we are doing. This statement isn't something that should just be words on a page of a screen because this is a statement about people

And so what I want to emphasize as we move forward in our vision together isn't just that he have great programmes in place. I know we need Programmes and organization in order to achieve things – but the hospital was organized – **Just being organizes isn't enough!**

Instead our purpose statement ought to ensure that we are driven not by programmes but by people. This statement is people based. These are words that we need to ensure we live so that when people are involved in our church they don't just pass through doors and get find their way out through another exit.

So let's expand a little as we remind ourselves what our purpose statement means

Mission We seek to bring people to Jesus....

John 1v 41-42

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

The great commission and our primary calling is to introduce people to Jesus. **William Temple** (one archbishop of Canterbury) once said *"the church is the only club that exists for the benefit of its non-members."* In other words our churches main role isn't to exist so that we have something to do on a Sunday, so that we can hug and pat one another on the back every week and have a nice warm feeling when we get together. We exist because we have a message of good news about Jesus that we want others to hear and to respond to.

Bringing people to Jesus....

In John 1v 32-42 - The first thing Andrew did when he met Jesus was to go and find someone (his brother) and tell him the good news. This Easter I have set you a challenge who can you bring to church NEXT week. I want to you focus on people for next Sunday.

I'm not asking you to invite your whole street, or a whole community. But I am asking you to think people.. To think of just one person who can you can invite and bring with you. What's more this week having invited them you need to be praying for them that God might use next week to change their minds.

Likewise who are you going to invite to bring on Friday night to the showing of the film "The passion"?

Andrew reminds us that mission is about people. That it's a simple thing to do – to say to someone – look what I have found let me tell you about it.

Nest our purpose statement is about..

Discipleship and Worship ...and together grow in our relationship with God...

Colossians 3v15 -16

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

This part of our purpose reminds us of that what we bring people to grow in a relationship with God is two fold.

Firstly in worship:

We bring people to the point where they meet Jesus and where we and they can celebrate Gods presence with us. That's what worship is all about- that we recognize who God is. That we have a right perspective on who we are in relation to God

Do you ever reflect on the words that we sing in church? Have you ever thought about the fact that music in itself is mission? Its part of our life shaping us – music influences us. In a restaurant when they want you to eat quicker- they play faster music. In a shop to make you buy they play happy life is wonderful music. Music in church – enables us to encounter God – to be touched by him and changed by him.

The second way to Grow with God is discipleship:

A definition of a discipleship is someone who places themselves under the teaching of someone else to learn and to live according to the teaching they hear. As Christians we are disciples of Jesus, our aim is to understand the bible his word and to live it. To read it to discover more of whom God is. To read it and discover more and more just how much God loves you.

Discipleship then is about people growing in their faith in their knowledge of God. And living out our faith means that we will be talking about Jesus to others. That we will be discovering our gifts and abilities and place within the church where we will all be serving. That you and I will be fulfilling in God – the purpose for why we were created.

Thirdly...

Fellowship/ unityand each other ...

Hebrews 10v25

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Why are we told to not give up meeting together in Heb 10v25? Because Paul knows the importance of living and sharing our lives as a community together. You know the biggest problem in society today is that people want to know that they can belong. Everyone yearns to be accepted and know that they belong- that they fit in. The church is about belonging and accepting

There are some Christians today who because they don't go to church will tell you that "**you don't have to go to church to be a Christian**". True in a sense that going to church doesn't make you a Christian- its calling on the name of Jesus in faith that does that! But can you be a Christian and not be involved or linked to a church?

The answer is no! The bible tells us that the church isn't the building... the Church is people – its about being the family of God. And so to not go to church is a daft as trying to play cricket on your own – it just don't work

Instead – being with others- is important for your survival! A number of years ago a minister was talking to a group of people in his front lounge about the importance of being involved in a church. As he was speaking a piece of burning coal fell from the fire onto the hearth. Gradually the piece of burning coal turned cold and went out. To not be involved in a fellowship is to be like that piece of coal out of the fire- eventually you will burn out. But to be in fellowship with others is like placing the piece of coal back into the fire and watching it ignite again.

Our fellowship is important

- For growth
- For encouragement
- For accountability
- For pastoral care
- For using the different and varied gifts and skills among us.

Belonging to a groups of Gods people and growing with them as we discover more of God together . That's the adventure- learning and supporting one another.

Finally

Social actionAs we serve the community.”

Matt 25 v 34-36, 40 [NIV]

‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’..... ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Actions they say speak louder than words. And our mission isn't just about what we say. It's also about what we do!

God loves you- but he also loves the people who as yet do not worship him. And just as it is both the responsibility of both you and me to share the message of Jesus with others. Equally Gods wants to use you and me as instruments to share his Grace with others.

- For some that means serving in the Build group – as Gods love is shared with our friends in Charlton house.
- For some that is getting involved in winter warmth as sharing Gods grace to the homeless. For some that is asking the local school how you can help to go in and sit with children who struggle to read to help them gain in their confidence and literacy!
 - For some its to call on a neighbour who is housebound and offer to do the shopping
 - For some it may mean standing in the council elections
 - For some it might mean becoming a school governor
 - For some it might mean taking the time to listen to local residents and helping them stand up for their cause, concerns and needs.
 - For us as a church it might mean that we need to think about helping the over 50's retrain for work

But overall... It means sharing the lives of others finding where people “itch” and getting alongside them and getting involved with them!

Over the coming months I want us as a church to continue to think about or way forward as a church. And so I want to invite you to an Open meeting 10th April – Sunday 3pm. Because we need to remember being a church isn't just about structures. We do need good ones to help us work efficiently and effectively. But we are to be about people.

So what does this mean for you? Well as an individual- it means you need to be finding your place, following your calling (whatever age – no one retires from serving God). It means taking up your place in Gods church – that through you and I we will see Gods kingdom come.

Now I've not touched on the topic of Palm Sunday this morning. But the story of the passion narrative reminds us that Jesus' own purpose led him to enter Jerusalem and it took him to the cross.

Jesus didn't die because it would provide a nice structure for forgiveness. HE DIED BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU! And He calls on you to love others and to serve in the same self-giving way that his love might be known to others.