Part 1: The Church is God's Missional People

Tonight we're moving from God's mission to God's people on mission.
Last week we saw that mission didn't start with the church, it starts all the way back at the beginning of creation with God Himself.

Tonight we ask:
What is the church, and why does it exist?

Jesus Defines the Church (Matthew 16)

Matthew 16:18

18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Two things matter immediately:

1. The church belongs to Jesus

2. Death will not overcome it

This is not a human institution that happens to have Jesus attached to it.
The church exists because Jesus created it, sustains it, and leads it.

And notice the phrase:

"The gates of Hades will not overcome it."

This is not about the church attacking hell.
While the church's mission is to fight against hell, and keep people from going there, that's not what this verse is saying

This is about death having no power over the people of God. Hades was the resting place of the dead prior to judgment.

From this foundational verse, we see that the church is an eternal people, not a temporary organization.

What "Church" Actually Means (Ekklesia)

The Greek word Jesus uses is ekklesia, meaning *assembly*.

But this word already had history.

In the Greek Old Testament, **ekklesia** referred to the **people of God**, Israel.

So when Jesus says "my church," He is doing something bold:
He is redefining God's people **around Himself**.

This is not a rejection of Israel's mission.
It is the **continuation and fulfillment** of it.

The Church Inherits Israel's Identity

1 Peter 2:9–10

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession,
that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful
light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not
received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Peter says the church is:

- A chosen people
- A royal priesthood
- A holy nation
- God's special possession

Those phrases are lifted directly from Israel's calling in the Old Testament.

Go check out Deuteronomy 7:6-8 and Exodus 19:5-6 on your own time.

Peter is saying:

"The mission God gave Israel now continues through the church."

This was always God's plan.

Romans 9 confirms this by quoting Hosea:

25 As he says in Hosea:

"I will call them 'my people' who are not my people;
and I will call her 'my loved one' who is not my loved one,"

The church is not Plan B.
The church is the **expansion** of God's covenant people.

What Makes Someone Part of God's People?

Romans 2 reminds us:

28 A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. 29 No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.

This is a reference to Deuteronomy 10:16 & 30:6, where God called the Israelites to circumcise their hearts.

Circumcision was always meant to point to a **changed heart**.

Being part of God's people was never about outward markers alone.

In Christ, belonging to God is not about bloodline…it is about **faithful allegiance to Jesus**.

So if the church **inherits Israel's identity**,
we now need to ask:

What is the church actually sent to do?

Part 2: The Church is Sent to Bless the World

The Mission Given by Jesus (Matthew 28)

Matthew 29:18-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 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 Great Commission shows us five things clearly:

1. Jesus is the authority of the church

2. The church is sent by Jesus to make disciples of all nations

3. Disciples are trained to be obedient

4. Baptism marks belonging

5. Jesus accompanies the church in its mission

This is not "as you go to church."
It is "as you go through life."

Mission is not for professionals. It is for every follower of Jesus.

The Church Is Empowered by the Spirit (Acts 1:8)

Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus tells them:

"Do not go yet. Wait."

Mission without the Spirit is not God's mission…It's human ambition.

The church is not powered by:

- Strategy
- Personality
- Systems

The church is powered by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 gives the roadmap:

- Jerusalem
- Judea

- Samaria
- The ends of the earth

Mission always moves **outward**, from the closest proximity to the ends of the earth.

The Church's Message and Role

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of
reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's
sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are
therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore
you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

The church has been given:

- The **ministry of reconciliation - our mission to see people reconciled to God**
- The **message of reconciliation - our Gospel message**

We are not the saviors.
We are the **ambassadors**.

An ambassador represents:

- A different kingdom
- A different king
- A different way of life

Wherever the church exists, it is meant to be an **outpost of heaven**.

Blessing, Good Works, and Holiness

Galatians and James make this clear:

- The church blesses all people (Gal 6:10)

- The church cares for the vulnerable (James 1:27)
- The church pursues holiness (James 1:27)

Holiness is contrast, not withdrawal.

In a polluted world, the church is meant to be **clean air**.

Why Church Planting Matters

The book of Acts shows one clear pattern:

God blesses the world by **planting churches**.

- Jerusalem births Antioch
- Antioch sends Paul
- Paul plants churches
- Churches send more missionaries

Church planting is God's strategy to bless the world, one local church at a time.

Leader Discussion Guide

The Church: God's People Sent to Bless the World

Purpose of the Discussion:
Help participants understand that the church is not a building or program, but **God's covenant people**, formed around Jesus and sent into the world to represent Him.

Discussion Questions (5 Total)

1. What Is the Church?

When you hear the word **"church,"** what do you instinctively think of—a place, a service, an organization, or a people?
How does Jesus' definition in Matthew 16 reshape that understanding?

---

2. Identity Before Activity

1 Peter 2 describes the church as a *chosen people, royal priesthood, and holy nation.*
Which of those identity statements stands out to you most, and why?

---

3. Belonging to God's People

The teaching emphasized that belonging to God's people is not about background or outward markers, but faithful allegiance to Jesus.
How does this impact the way you see yourself—or others—inside the church?

---

4. Sent, Not Spectators

Jesus sends the church to make disciples *as we go through life*, not just through church programs.
What does discipleship look like in ordinary, everyday rhythms for you?

---

5. Ambassadors of Reconciliation

Scripture describes the church as ambassadors of Christ, representing a different kingdom.
If your life is an outpost of heaven, what might God be inviting you to reflect more clearly this week?