

## WHY DOES THE CHURCH EXIST

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Series: ReFocus  
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Palm Sunday, Praise,  
Matthew 28:19-20

Hey, I want us to spend a few weeks refocusing as a community as we begin our vision series. What are you being invited to at Trinity? Why does Trinity exist? And even think about how we get to live that out in a world as it evolves in response to the ongoing public health challenges.

But where I want us to start is answering the question, 'why church?'. Not just TVCN but the church in general. Every generation and every season the church has to ask itself this question or run the risk of becoming a dwindling church or inefficient or not impactful in a changing world.

A few things have happened in the last few decades. One of them being the secularisation of our cultures. Some countries are described as post-Christian even though they were the centres of some great movements of faith.

I would not go so far as to say Kenya was ever a Christian nation but we were certainly a very religious and spiritual nation. Yet in just a few years secularisation has gained steam and acceptance. Refocusing on Why the church will make it effective in ministering in this new place.

Even here in our country especially in our urban centres, people who say they are part of a church probably show up once a month or in the days of online celebrations tune in for the online celebrations once a month and watch for 5 minutes, and there is a lot to that that I cannot unpack today.

Then of course there have been the pandemic years. There was a spike in people connecting with the church, watching online followed by a dip and levelling out. In our news cycles as people debate on the new covid measures put on the one zone which we are part of. And the church is again at the centre of the conversation with others suggesting that church gatherings should not have been prohibited alongside others.

So I think we are again ripe for the conversation of what the church is, especially if we are going to be effective in this season and in this generation. And even better, if we are going to set ourselves up as the church of the future not just the status quo or a dwindling church.

Now, even as I say that I need to say that God builds his church. There is always revival even when it seems there is a decline. The question is whether we will join God in what He is doing? Whether we will see where the Spirit is moving and join in or will we stick to our guns?

So who did the church start? After the death and resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the early apostles then started sharing the Good News of Jesus. Making disciples and these communities soon become the church.

We just came from such a powerful season, the season of Lent. The celebration of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. And Jesus then stayed around for 40 days, showing up to people, having meals with people and restoring people. And the guys who encountered him were never the same again. This is what then springs up the birth of the church.

You see even some scholars who doubt resurrection say that something must have happened to these followers of Jesus because there was a change in them that made them ready to even give up their lives. And many of them did.

And for them it was very simple: They had walked with Jesus and found that he was the fulfilment of Scripture, He was the promised messiah. He had loved them, they had seen him die and rise again further reinforcing that he was the fulfilment of God's promise. And they were then totally captivated by his way of life, his teaching. So much so that they gave their very lives for it.

I think the best place to start is with those who were first in the church. Why were they even part of it? Why did they start? What was the church about? What is the church about? Because the answer to that question should probably be the same for us today.

If you are wondering what the church is for, or you are part of a church and are wondering if it even matters. We go again back to the first church people and they point us back to Jesus as the fulfilment of scripture. And scripture is simply about God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Now how we do church may change, but not why. And so the 'why' for those who were in the first church is this, they were convinced that he is the fulfilment of the scriptures and all of God's promises to humanity. They had been with Jesus, seen how he lived, loved, taught, died and resurrected and this was their conviction. And it was such good news worth inviting everyone to.

See the Bible tells the story of God and people. One story from beginning to end. Though it is many books, many authors, different genres, different contexts and quite ancient it is one story and the church is only in God's will if it fits into that story... Otherwise, we are doing our own thing.

We all live in a narrative. Even though sometimes we are not aware of the narrative we living in and living out. There is a story about a big fish who met a small fish one morning and asked, "How is the water today?" And the small fish said, "What is water?"

And that is used mostly to describe culture. You are never aware of your culture sometimes but you live in one. And that is the same thing, you may not be aware of the narrative that shapes your life but there is one.

And what Jesus did was invite us to a different narrative, the big narrative, the narrative that matters, the narrative of the Kingdom of God. This is the narrative of the Bible. And it should be the narrative of the church.

So I want to invite you to one thing about the narrative of the Bible. To do that I wanna start at the beginning. In the book of beginnings or Genesis. What is God up to?

So whether you read the story of Genesis literally, metaphorically or a mix of the 2 this is a story that Jesus took seriously. Because it captures the story of God's bringing everything to a beginning. So God has just stepped into chaos and darkness and nothingness and took his time to beautifully and lovingly bring creation into order.

And N.T. Wright one of the biblical scholars I listen to talks about this as God creating a temple a place for heaven and earth to kiss. A place for God to pour out affection and for us to pour out worship.

He creates humanity, the pinnacle of it all. One of the things that are happening here is God is setting humanity as a priest over his creation. And what does God say?

*So God did just that. He created humanity in His image, created them male and female. Then God blessed them and gave them this directive: "Be fruitful and multiply. Populate the earth. I make you trustees of My estate, so care for My creation and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that roams across the earth."*

#### **Genesis 1:27-28**

So from the beginning, God seems to be on a move to bring something to all of creation... He is pouring out love to it to his creation. Creates humanity and the charge he makes is: "you are blessed, now enjoy each other, enjoy all I have created and then take care of it and make it flourish". Or, you are blessed, now bless each other and creation. Or, you are like me, now bring my Kingdom to creation.

So if you are familiar with the Bible story things go south pretty soon. Sin comes in, death comes in, we simply do not hold too well.

But God's heart for creation does not change, it is still about His Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. So God again is on the move now to heal, restore and even renew creation. Bringing the Kingdom to creation. Because this was always the idea: that the created will be in harmony with the creator.

So God then chooses a family, the descendants of this man called Abraham for the same purpose. The purpose he had from the beginning. This is the family from which we get the scriptures that Jesus is a fulfilment of.

So what was Abraham chosen for? His descendants are called the children of the covenant and the scripture was all about this covenant. So what was it?

*I will reaffirm My covenant of blessing to you and your family. I will make sure your descendants are as many as the stars of the heavens and the grains of sand on the shores. I reaffirm My earlier promises that your descendants will possess the lands and sit in the gates of their enemies, and from your descendants, all the*

*peoples of the earth will discover true blessing. All this is because you have obeyed My voice.*

### **Genesis 22:17-19**

The covenant is that they are blessed. They are going to be many an established nation, they are going to be kings and gatekeepers, but for what reason? So that the whole world can discover true blessing.

The story has always been about blessing the world. Israel was not chosen for Israel's sake but for the sake of the world. And I am just going to preempt that the church too is there for the sake of the world, not for itself. If this is the story of the Bible, then the church is here so that it can bring true blessing to the world.

So we start with God creating and picking human beings to be Kings and priests for creation. Why? To bless the world just as they are blessed.

We have Abraham and his family chosen, then they are made Kings and priests? Why? To bless the world just as they have been blessed?

It seems to me that we are invited into a narrative of God who is on a mission to bless the world. And every time he invites people along it is for the same reason, join me to bring the Kingdom to creation so that they may experience true blessing.

So then again Israel does not quite accomplish the mission and so God sends his own son. But the mission is the same, bring God's Kingdom to creation so that they may experience true blessing.

And Jesus is the fulfilment of scripture. He is the fulfilment of the 2 stories we have read from Genesis. He is God's Kingdom come and the true blessing to all of creation.

And what Jesus declared and demonstrated is that the Kingdom of God, true blessing, has come. In the very person of Jesus, in His way of life and in His words were true life and blessing that would heal and restore creation. This is true blessing, this is God's Kingdom come

So then what does Jesus do after he is resurrected? He restates the same narrative and invites his believers, the church, to it.

Here it is

*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.”*

**Matthew 28:19-20**

The invitation is to join in this mission that has been the same from the beginning. To bring Join God in his mission of bringing His Kingdom to all people and all creation. And we do this by ourselves learning to do what Jesus did and speak like Jesus did and inviting others too.

Why? Because this is the mission of God from the beginning, that we would be full of His Kingdom and enter into the true blessing, true rest, true life.

That is the story we are called to tell. That is the narrative we are stepping into. You're part of the church, not even just Trinity Vineyard but the church? This is the narrative. You are considering the church, you are disillusioned by the church and wondering why it exists? This is the narrative: When we say the Good news or Gospel of Jesus we mean behold the fulfilment of the story of God. In Him, his words and actions God's Kingdom has come and through Him, all nations are to experience true blessing.

The primary calling of the church is to join in God's mission. And the mission of God, is God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, it is God's Kingdom come in Kenya as it is in heaven. God's Kingdom come in Nakuru as it is in heaven.

The church does not exist for itself. The church is not an end to itself. Sometimes we get so happy when more people come to church even if that means they have simply church hopped from the other church. But the church is not an end to itself.

We exist for the sake of the world. The church does not need a building if the building is not part of it fulfilling the mission of God. The church needs to be joining God in this mission not just Sunday morning, but throughout the week, wherever we followers of Jesus are.

In this country and in the world really, you have church people who nothing in their lives could hint that they even follow Jesus. You do not see it anywhere else. It is so incognito. They come to church gatherings in church buildings but live totally different lives when they go to their university campuses, to their neighbourhood, on Facebook and Twitter and in the market place.

Then you have another group of people that act as if the church is the end all and be all. They act as if the church is the Kingdom of God. Free the church. All laws in the land should be Christian, kick Muslims and atheists out of our country, it is their fault we are where we are.

Yet I see the vision of God for the church very differently. It is a vision of joining Him in his mission to bring the Kingdom to earth as it is in heaven.

It is not about world domination but renewing the world. It is not about the world catering to the church, instead, it is about the church, quite like Jesus, taking up the cross for the sake of the world. And even in death, there will spring new life.

And we do this by as we follow Jesus invite others to follow him As we take on ourselves his life, we invite others to the same saying, “Guys, there is Good news here, Jesus is the fulfilment of scripture and now the whole world can experience the Kingdom of God, true blessing.”

That is the vision I have for trinity. So simple, so generic yet I think it is what we are called to be part of. That we will follow Jesus and invite others to follow him and in so doing see our God’s Kingdom come in Nakuru as it is in Heaven.

What every resident of Nakuru is looking for is life, true life. Regardless of race, gender, age, tribe, sexual preference, we are all looking for true life. And this is what the Kingdom of God brings.

And you find this life by living life the Jesus way. So we have often shortened it as bringing life to the city of Nakuru. We want to live life the Jesus way and invite others to live life in the same way and just like a mustard seed grows we will see all our connections, our relationships and our workplaces, our city come under the Kingdom of God.

And there are places and times we have done better and there are places and times we have not done so well. But we are recommitting to that and we will be unpacking that in a few weeks.

Let’s pray