

 The logo for Waiuku Assembly of God features a stylized sun with rays in yellow and orange, with the word "Waiuku" written in a blue script font across it. Below the sun are three wavy blue lines representing water. At the bottom, the words "ASSEMBLY OF GOD" are written in a grey, sans-serif font.	<p>Chris Woodham Senior Pastor PO Box 196 Waiuku 1852 PH: (09) 235 7341 MOB: (021) 187 1928 Email: waiukuag@wag.org.nz Web: www.wag.org.nz</p>
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Sermon Title	: The Mission of the Kingdom
Series	: <i>LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD</i>
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Introduction

In this series on “Living in the Kingdom of God” we’ve focused mainly on the benefits that God’s rule brings to our lives.

Today we’re going to shift tack slightly and look at the Kingdom of God in a broader sense.

In the first message in this series we saw that the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Darkness both had purposes.

The purpose of the Kingdom of God is abundant life, the purpose of the Kingdom of darkness is destruction and death.

The purposes are quite general, so we need to look closer and ask “what is the mission of the Kingdom of God?”

Every Kingdom has a mission; it is a goal or plan laid out by its ruler and which all the subjects of the Kingdom must work towards. Being a part of a kingdom means to accept its mission and work towards its fulfilment.

If we want to be a part of the Kingdom of God and experience the benefits it brings, then we need to know the mission of the Kingdom and understand how to work towards fulfilling that mission.

Scripture

The mission for us, as Kingdom People, is found in several places in the New Testament, but the best example for the context we're coming from is found in Acts 1.

[READ ACTS 1:1-11]

Now, I'd like us to read part of that together, this is our mission as Kingdom People, Acts 1:8

NIV Acts 1:8 *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."*

The Mission of the Kingdom is that all the follower's of Jesus will bear witness to what He has done. First in our town, then in our district, then in surrounding areas, and then to the ends of the earth.

For those who call themselves Christians then this is our mission, direct from the mouth of God.

Whose Mission?

We're going to look at this verse in detail because in it Jesus give us a complete outline for outreach. But before we do so, I just want to spend a minute clarifying whose responsibility fulfilling this mission belongs to.

Often we talk about those who are *called* to missions, those who are *called* to spread the news about what Jesus has done and the relationship we can have with God.

At the risk of treading on some toes I want to categorically state that there is no such unique 'call', this is a *command* that every follower of Jesus has been given.

Our *call* is clear in the Bible:

NIV Mark 1:16-20 *As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

The call of Jesus is optional – it's a choice. The call of Jesus to follow Him is an opportunity. We're His disciples if we answer the call.

But the mission is not a *call*, it is a *command*.

NIV Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."*

Calling's are optional, we choose to respond or we choose not to respond. The Kingdom Mission is a command that is not optional for those who wish to belong to the Kingdom; the only choice is to obey or disobey.

Pastor Jack Hanes, President of the Australian Assemblies of God World Missions says:

"Once we answer the *call* we are commanded; He *calls* us to come and *commands* us to go."

NIV John 15:14 *You are my friends if you do what I command.*

The famous passage we read a minute ago in Matthew 28 is not called the "Great Opportunity", it's not the "Great Missions Elective", it's not the "Great Christian Adventure"; it is the "Great Commission."

Jesus is speaking with the authority of the Kingdom, He proclaims His authority from God and then says *therefore*, or 'in response to the authority I have from God' "go and make disciples of all nations..."

There is no choice offered here, the command is to "go".

It doesn't matter whether or not you want to be a missionary, an evangelist, a pastor, whatever – the command for all follower's of Jesus is to tell others about Him.

During our *40 Days of Purpose* campaign we looked at this. I told this story. God is in heaven and an angel comes up and God says, "My plan is to give the Good News to my children on earth and ask them to share it." And the angel says, "What if they don't? What is plan B?" And God says, "There is no plan B."

If we claim to be Christians then we have responded to the *call* of God, what we now need to do is to pick up our mission.

Jesus' Guidelines for Outreach

Let's go back to our verse in Acts, Acts 1:8.

I want you to notice three things about this verse. Here Jesus outlines our guidelines for outreach. In this verse we are given three keys for fulfilling the Mission of the Kingdom

1. We are given the PERSON of the mission. Jesus is the reason for the mission, the authority behind the mission, and the object of the mission's witness.
2. We are given the POWER of the mission. The Holy Spirit gives the enabling for the mission. When we have received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit then we can have faith that we have received everything from God that is necessary for the fulfilment of the mission of His Kingdom.
3. We are given the PROGRAM for practical fulfilment of the mission. Jesus clearly outlines the progression of our witness mission which is required to effectively reach all those that we can.

We're going to look at these three keys for fulfilling the Kingdom Mission one by one.

The Person

The PERSON of the mission is Jesus Christ. Without Jesus there could be no mission.

Jesus is the object of the mission, the message of the mission and the fulfilment of the mission.

Our Kingdom Mission is to share with others the life-changing truth that we ourselves have experienced because of Jesus.

Not only has Jesus given us the mission, but His life *demonstrated* to us how that mission was to be completed.

NIV Matthew 4:23 *Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.*

NIV Luke 8:1 *After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,*

We find that in the Book of Acts the Apostles continued the mission:

NIV Acts 5:42 *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*

Not only is the PERSON of Jesus essential to the mission because of the method He reveals for fulfilling it; but the PERSON of Jesus is the authority behind the commissioning of the mission.

We read earlier in Matthew:

NIV Matthew 28:18-20 *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go...*

Jesus proclaimed that He has the authority from God, "therefore," He commands, "go!" Our mission would be futile were it not for the fact that we have the authority and commissioning of Jesus Christ behind us.

Have you ever thought about that? When we go out and share what Jesus has done in our lives then we're actually going with the authority and backing and commission of the Lord Jesus Christ!!!

This isn't something for those special people who travel to other countries to share the Gospel; it's not something restricted to those we call 'evangelists'. When we accept Jesus we accept His mission. We cannot separate the mission from Jesus.

If we've accepted Jesus then we've accepted the mission He has given us.

There's a tendency by the Church to delegate this task of sharing the Gospel to those who are charismatic, to those people that appear to have the 'gift of evangelism'; those people who are confident and outgoing.

Did you know that the gift of evangelism is not given by God primarily to preach and see people come to know Jesus? That's one thing evangelists do, and it's evidence that they have the gift of evangelism; but that's not what the gift is primarily given to do.

NIV Ephesians 4:11 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

This verse is often misinterpreted to mean that only certain people have to do these things, that only some men & women are called to fulfil these functions.

It is absolutely true that these gifts are only given to some people, in a church our size we can not expect to see them all functioning naturally.

But look at the reason these gifts are given, verse 12: *“to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”* Somewhere this idea crept into the Church that only those people that God gives these gifts to were *called* to minister.

The Bible says that these gifts were given to equip who? To equip others, to equip the *Church* for “works of service.”

Our mission is to impact this town, this nation, this world; we need to grasp this and realize that we can only be effective if as a whole body we minister. The Church does not exist for the Church's sake; the Church – that's every single one of us – exists as a body to minister to our community, to our nation, to our world.

Did you know that the average-sized church in the world today is around 120 people? It's true.

Did you know that the average-sized church also functions under what's called the “Pastoral Model” of church structure? What that means is you've got a pastor who essentially *does* the ministry in the church; the praying for people, the visiting, the comforting, all these things we call pastoral care. It's way we've operated for most of our church life until a few years ago when Ray recognised that he needed to adapt His leadership approach and began the transition that we're continuing today.

Did you also know that a individual's “personal contact limit” is between 120-125 people. That's the number of relationships an average person can sustain. That's around 8 really close friendships and the rest conversational relationships.

Interesting, the average-sized church is 120 people, the average church operates under the “pastoral model”, and the average person's personal contact limit is 120 people. Churches that use this “Pastoral Model” are restricted in their growth by the personal contact limit of the Pastor.

Every single church that is experiencing growth beyond 120 people in the world today has recognised this and has realised that the application of this verse in Ephesians means that the church as a whole needs to stand up and be counted for God; the whole church exists for ministry.

Now, I want you to hear my heart on this; as a pastor I would be doing you, the Church, and my call from God, a disservice if I were to visit everyone or try to call everyone. Why? Because I can only sustain around 120 relationships and it would stifle this church's growth.

That's why Small Groups are essential, that's why the New Testament devotes so much space to stressing the importance of fellowship and relationships in the church – we've just done a whole series on that.

I can demonstrate my love for this church, my love for you, by devoting time to praying and seeking God for the vision, for the plan He has for this church and the means by which He has uniquely gifted us to fulfil it.

KJV Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

NIV Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.

The call of God to pastor is to receive the revelation from God for His Church and to lead God's People towards it's fulfilment. This has been God's method right throughout history – time and time again in the Bible we see men and women called to hear God's vision and to impart it to His People.

I can demonstrate my love for you by studying the Word of God and receiving the revelation of the Holy Spirit to share with you the heart of God when we meet.

I can demonstrate my love for you by taking the gifts God has given me and imparting them to others, raising up and releasing other leaders to continue and expand the work of the Gospel.

I can demonstrate my love for you by preaching the Word and doing everything I can to equip and empower you for ministry. As the Apostle Paul writes: *"to prepare God's people for works of service..."*

This doesn't exclude me from "works of service", but it means that *on top* of my personal time that I give up to serve and minister to others, my primary function with the gifts God has given me is to ensure that this church is prepared for ministry.

I'm a minister, not because God has called me to lead this Church, not because God has supernaturally gifted me to teach and lead, not because I have the title of "Pastor", but because I'm a Christian.

I know that God has been called me to lead this Church, and I know that He has given me everything I need to fulfil His plans for my life, but these things do not make me a minister. I am a minister because I love Jesus, I have responded to His call on my life and as such my life isn't mine any more but belongs to God for the fulfilment of His Kingdom Mission.

NIV Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

To belong to the Kingdom of God is to live a life of Kingdom priorities.

NIV Romans 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Every single one of you who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of your life are minister's not because of any qualification or gift you may have, not because of any function you may be fulfilling in this body – but because you have been called by Jesus, have accepted the call of Jesus and as such have been given a mission.

That mission is ministry; it's to share your relationship with Jesus with others so that they might come to know Him too.

Isn't that an amazing thing? God has called every single one of you to be His minister in the situations He has placed you. You are God's minister to those in your workplace; you are God's minister to those in your child's kindy; you are God's minister to your classmates; you are God's minister to your sports club; you are God's minister to your friends and family.

Isn't that an incredible thing? That just blows me away! God has called you to Himself and has appointed you, every single one of you, to be His representative to those in your life.

Every single one of you are minister's. Do you find that exciting? Do you find that scary? Do you think that is too big a call for your life?

You know what, and I'm being open and honest with you, it's too big a call for me. It terrifies me; what if I mess up? What if I make mistakes?

I know that I have weaknesses and failings; I know that I do not have all the skills or experience for the task God has given me or to fulfil the call that God has placed on my life. I know that I do not have the courage or the emotional capacity to deal with strong opposition or discouragement or criticism. I know I do make and will continue to make mistakes.

But I know without a shadow of doubt that God has called me to be here and to lead His Church to fulfil His purposes for us, I know that God never calls anyone without giving the enabling to complete the task, and I know that if my God has called me then He is for me and that "If God is for [me], who can be against [me]?" That's in Romans 8:31

Let me share this with you, you're here this morning because God has called you. If you've responded to that call then let me assure you that God is for you, that He will equip you with everything you need to fulfil His Kingdom's Mission

So how does God equip you?

The Power

The POWER of the mission is the Holy Spirit.

NIV Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses..."*

When Jesus says "you" who is he talking to? His disciples, His followers, you and me. Once we've accepted the call of Jesus and acknowledged the command to fulfil the Kingdom's Mission, we then need to accept the empowering of the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Do you know what the greatest evidence of Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven is? It's the gift of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit could not come until He had returned to the Father in heaven; if we're speaking in tongues then we're proclaiming that Jesus has risen from the dead and is seated with the Father in heaven! Just thought I'd throw that in there...

If you're a Christian but lack the power to live and witness as you feel Jesus would have you, then you need to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts and special ministries of the Holy Spirit will equip you with power for witnessing and for living a life that accomplishes God's purposes. Once we have received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit then we are given strength to live more godly lives and to become effective witnesses.

To fulfil the mission of the Kingdom we need the empowerment of the Kingdom.

This empowerment, or enabling comes through the Holy Spirit. If you haven't received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; if you do not yet speak in tongues then I want to pray with you after the meeting, so start preparing your heart.

God has called you, every single one of you – let that sink into your heart – embrace that. God has called you, and you and you...

He's called you and has commissioned you to be His minister in the places He has placed you. But He hasn't just given you a job and expected you to do it by yourself. He doesn't expect any of us to fulfil His mission by ourselves.

God has called us, He's given us a mission, and He's offered us everything we need to fulfil that mission; the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit brings supernatural enabling to us so that we can fulfil God's purposes. The Holy Spirit is the means through which we can come to God with all our weaknesses and failings and inadequacies and be supernaturally transformed and empowered to accomplish the impossible for God.

The Holy Spirit, though supernatural, is not to be feared.

NIV John 14:16 *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

Some translations call Him the "Comforter", or "Helper".

The Holy Spirit is sent to us by God who loves us, He is a source of comfort, enabling, empowerment, and strength – not fear.

The Program

We're only going to touch on this last key briefly, we'll probably look at it in more depth some time in the future.

But for now, the PROGRAM of the Mission of the Kingdom is one of PROGRESSIVE OUTREACH.

NIV Acts 1:8 *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."*

I want you to notice this progression; first in Jerusalem – their city or town, the place where they are based, then in Judea, the province, or district in which their city is located, then in Samaria, the neighbouring province, and finally, "to the ends of the earth."

Let's put this into our context; first to Waiuku, then to Otaua, Aka Aka, Awhitu, Pukeoware – the Franklin District, then to neighbouring areas – in our case New Zealand as a whole – even Australia, then "to the ends of the earth."

There's no way we can be effective in reaching anyone beyond our present environment unless we first learn to reach our community. We cannot hope to reach our "Judea" unless we first learn to reach our "Jerusalem" and establish a base to work from.

These are the guidelines for outreach that Jesus Himself set. It's easy to think of Jesus as a Holy Man and the Messiah – but here we see Jesus as a strategic planner who understands the program that will be effective for reaching others with the Gospel.

Summary

The Church's primary purpose is to spread. We're here to see people come to know God, to secure their eternity with their Creator.

But in order to spread we first need to establish a base to work from, to support the work. Otherwise the work will be unsustainable and will not bear fruit.

This does not mean we can neglect missionary work, it means we need to be wise stewards of the resources and gifts God has given us and use them as effectively as we can. We can do this by extending our reach through the missionaries we support until we're in a position to raise up, send out and support our own missionaries, I tell you – I look forward to the day when we are raising up men and women to go into other countries and proclaim God's Word – but we cannot neglect our primary responsibility to the mission field that God has given us here in Waiuku.

If you have responded to the call of Jesus to follow Him, then you've agreed to become His disciple. If you're His disciple then you've been given a mission, THE mission, the Mission of the Kingdom of God to share your relationship with Jesus with those around you.

We choose to respond to the call, but once we've responded to the call of God then our only option is to obey His command to fulfil the mission, anything else is disobedience.

We need the empowerment and enabling of the Holy Spirit in order to successfully undertake the Kingdom's Mission.

We need the Kingdom's empowerment. With the enabling that the Holy Spirit brings we need to follow the pattern Jesus laid out and go first to the community God has placed us in.

How do we fulfil Kingdom Mission? With Kingdom Vision – that's what we'll be looking at next week...