

The Incarnation and the Great Commission

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] John 17, verse 1. Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.

! For you granted him authority over all people, that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours. You gave them to me, and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you, for I gave them the words you gave me, and they accepted them.

They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I'm not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours.

[1:12] All I have is yours, and all you have is mine, and glory has come to me through them. I will remember, I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me.

None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

[2:28] For them, I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. Well, the Bible tells us things that we otherwise would never know.

The most important things. About our everlasting salvation. How to live here, and how to enjoy God forever and ever.

And one of the things it tells us is that the eternal Son of God, without ceasing to be God, became a man. So that He, the God-man, two natures in one person, the immortal God, might become a mortal man that He might die for His chosen people.

Those given to Him by the Father, even as this passage refers to them. That they, though they deserve eternal damnations, might be forgiven and enjoy eternal life.

Well, having studied the Bible doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, we have been seeing that it's the expectation of God that this doctrine will change the way we live.

[3:42] And among other things, God expects those of us who have been saved by this incarnate God to be imitating the incarnation.

Now, nothing is more natural than for children to imitate their parents, for a young son to imitate his father, a young girl to imitate her mother.

And even so, it's the normal thing for disciples of Christ to imitate their master, to copy his attitude that stooped to serve at great cost to himself.

Now, so far, we've been looking at imitating the incarnation with regard to our relationships here in the body of Christ. And we saw in 2 Corinthians 8 that when our brothers and sisters in Christ are in

financial need, it's the incarnation of Christ that is to move us to become poorer, to enrich them, even as Christ impoverished himself to enrich us eternally.

And then we went to Philippians 2 and we saw there that we are to humbly esteem others in the body as better than ourselves, their interest more important than mine, seeking their interest to the point of forgetfulness of mine, and sacrificing of mine, just as Jesus did for us.

[5:12] So those have been the applications of imitating the incarnation. But imitating the incarnation also has to do with our relationship toward this world of sinners in which we live.

We must never forget that the incarnation is the greatest rescue operation of lost sinners. That it was a mission to seek and to save that which was lost.

That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That's why he became man. That's why he entered our world. That's why the incarnation took place.

So imitating the incarnation must ever be moving us to go into the world seeking the salvation of lost men and women, boys and girls.

It means having the same attitude toward the lost that brought Christ down out of heaven into this world to save us sinners. It was in order to bring many sons to glory that he willingly sacrificed his prerogatives of glory in heaven.

[6:27] He counted our salvation more important than his own rights and comforts and ease there in glory. He was humbly forgetful of self in the all-absorbing interest of our salvation.

Now let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus. Imitate your Savior then. Imitate his zeal for the salvation of sinners. Please turn to John 17 if you've not opened your Bible there. Have it open there as we want to see the connection between the incarnation and the great commission. I believe we find them both in this one verse John 17, 18. Jesus is praying for his disciples on the night of his arrest and he says as you sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world. referring to his disciples. I want you to notice how we have in this little verse both the incarnation and the great commission side by side.

[7:33] And I want you to see how these two are related to each other. first of all as you father sent me into the world that's biblical shorthand for the incarnation.

God the father sending his own son into the world as a man to accomplish his saving plan as you sent me into the world. That's the incarnation.

Now notice the second half of the verse so I have sent them into the world. That's the great commission isn't it? These disciples of mine those you have given me out of the world those I revealed you to I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them they obeyed them they believe that you sent me they believe the incarnation and now father I'm coming back to you but I'm leaving them here and I'm not asking you to take them out of the world no I have sent them into the world that's the great commission going into the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ to see sinners saved baptized into local churches and taught to obey everything that Christ has commanded them.

so we have in this one short verse both the incarnation and the great commission we see the same thing a couple chapters later in John chapter 20 because what Jesus prays here to the father in chapter 17 he says to his disciples three days later in John chapter 20 and verse 21 it's Jesus first appearance to the 12 after his resurrection it's resurrection day it's Easter Sunday Christ is risen and on the evening of that first day of the week that Lord's day when the disciples were gathered with the doors locked for fear of the Jews Jesus came and stood among them and said peace be with you and the disciples were overjoyed to see that it was their Lord and he said it again peace be with you and then he says this verse 21 as the father has sent me so have

I sent you again we have this short sentence but both the incarnation and the great commission but I want you to see now how these two relate together what is the relationship of the two well it's this Jesus makes his incarnation the pattern for our great commission as just as the father has sent me so I have sent you the incarnation mission of Christ is to be imitated in our great commission to the world now there's differences to be sure between his mission to the world and our mission to the world but it's not the differences that are spoken of here it's the similarities kathos the Greek word just as the father has sent me so in the same way I am sending you he's he's pointing out the comparisons the likenesses of his mission and our mission

[11:01] David Brown says their mission the disciples mission was designed for no other end than to carry into effect the purpose of his own mission into the world so having finished his mission he now commissions them to theirs their mission is linked to his it proceeds from his you see it's only

because he has completed his mission that they have a mission!

if Jesus has finished the work he was sent to do we have no message to give to this world but we do have a story to tell to the nations why because Jesus has finished the work that the father gave him to do our mission is now to take the message of the finished work of Jesus Christ to lost sinners and to announce that God is willing to be at peace with men through the finished work of Christ on behalf of sinners if they will but repent and believe the gospel so our mission to the world is the continuation of Christ search and rescue mission you know Jesus is still seeking and saving sinners don't you but his physical body is in heaven so he is seeking and saving sinners through his church body the body of Christ here on earth so

Christ's mission is the pattern for our mission as the father has sent me so I have sent you well what will it look like what will it look like as if we as a church if we as individuals are imitating the incarnation in our ministry to this world three things at least number one we will live with a sense of our sentness into this world we'll live with a sense of being sent as the father has sent me so send I you at least 33 times in John's gospel the Lord Jesus refers to himself as being sent from above from the father from heaven the father who sent me and that's how he viewed himself Jesus does not think of himself apart from his mission he's the sent one I'm here on mission that's how he thinks and talks about himself that's who

I am furthermore this sense of mission controlled how he spent his life so on just another ordinary day in the life and ministry of our savior we hear him saying to his disciples who are urging him to take some nourishment and eat something oh he says my food is to do the will of my father who sent me to finish his work that's my meat and drink to do the will of him who sent me you see how his life controlled his living that's why he's sitting on a well at noon and instead of eating lunch with the disciples in town he is giving the bread of life and the living water to this poor woman that's the mission he was sent on and it was his food it was his sustenance it's what gave him joy and strength in his life another time he's up early to pray alone and when

Peter and the others find him they say everybody is looking for you come on do some more miracles do some more teaching and Jesus replied no let us go somewhere else to the nearby villages so I can preach there also that is why I have come the mission it's never far from him I've come and I've come with a purpose you know the expression he's a man on a mission those words were never truer than of our Lord Jesus he knows why he's here he's on a mission to glorify God by completing the work he gave him to do whether talking to one man Nicodemus at night or preaching to 5,000 the next day whether battling Satan's temptation alone or teaching the disciples whether living or dying he was on a mission and he lived with a sense of that mission and that mission shaped his life there was no aimless drifting for

[15:35] Jesus life there was no pointless providences no meaningless moments no he was here for a purpose and he pursued it every day of his earthly life and he says as the father has sent me so I have sent you you too are a sent one you too are on a mission do you live each day with that same sense of sentness that I'm on a mission from heaven a sense that I'm here in this world for a purpose does that wake you up does it jar your thoughts as you rise each day the mission the reason I'm here the reason I've been sent into this world is it a controlling influence in your life as it was in his you know if your business sends you to California in January to represent them at a trade show what do you do when you get there you don't grab a towel at the hotel and head to the beach for a week why not because you've been sent to do something and the one who sent you his authority his power stands behind that mission and determines what you do while you're there and that's the way it was with

Jesus and that's the way it must be with us the one who was sent into the world in the incarnation has finished his work and gone back into heaven but not until he has likewise sent us his disciples into the world to carry on the saving mission that means no aimless living for Christ disciples no wasted days that means no wandering around no trivial pursuits preoccupying his servants were sent ones were on a divine mission for him to see sinners saved becoming baptized disciples of Christ who obey all that he has commanded is that mission controlling how I live how did it influence my day yesterday how did it influence my life last week what will it do for me tomorrow and the next day does the mission set priorities priorities in my life does the mission set priorities for my time my money my energies let us confess the things that have blurred the mission in our lives the things that have crowded it out and pushed it out to the fringes when it's meant to be front and center if we're in imitating the incarnation we will live with a sense of being sent even as

Jesus was and secondly if we imitate the incarnation we will get close to sinners we'll get close to sinners Jesus came near us in the incarnation the word was made flesh and dwelt where among us among us right here among us he didn't stay at home and send a messenger for him he didn't stay at home and write the message on the clouds no he came into the world himself he became one of us a man among men and he came close enough to sinners so that they could hear him see him touch him and not just the sinners that came along to synagogue worship no he met sinners on their turf in their homes on their streets by their wells he attended their weddings their funerals he was close enough for that immoral

Samaritan woman to see the respect in his eye for her and to close enough to hear in the tone of his voice this man treats me as no other man could it be the Messiah is her conclusion at the end of their conversation he was close enough for people to see his tears to hear his sobs as he wept over stubborn hearted sinners in Jerusalem he got close to sinners he dwelt among us there was nothing standoffish about the God man he didn't win us from a distance he drew near he intentionally moved towards sinners pursuing them with gospel love and truth he called them down out of their sycamore trees he welcomed them and sat down and ate and drank with them he engaged them in conversation when few others would he showed kindness courtesy respect he fed them he led them with his teachings he taught them he healed them he ministered to them he offered the living water of life

I wonder if we're getting that close to sinners outside the church that we might reach them with the gospel the son of God was sent into the world to seek and save the lost and so are we just as the father sent him into the world so I have sent you into the world and we abandoned the mission when we retreat into our homes and we retreat into the walls of our church and we retreat into our little Christian ghetto and we forget that we're sent into the world not so went the incarnate one they nicknamed him the friend of sinners didn't they and it's time to venture out to those who may not be my kind of people sinners sin did you know we need to just expect that that's what sinners do they sin and sin is ugly sin stinks and it stinks far more in God's nostrils than ours but that's the kind of people

[21:59] Jesus came to save and that's the very same kind of people he sends us into the world to point to our savior to bring to him in our families in our factories in our offices in our schools our neighborhoods wherever we engage them as you sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world do you see how our mission is intentionally world targeted there's the target and there's the bullseye what are we shooting for the world we're sent into the world that's where we're going the world that is anti God the world that was made by Christ but that did not know him the same world that crucified your savior you're sent into that world the world that tries to ignore God that despises his law that laughs at his gospel that suppresses his truth the world that goes its own way that's the world

Jesus was sent into and that's the same world he's sending you and me into I think it's significant that in this prayer of Jesus he does not pray for us to be taken out of the world now if he doesn't pray it why does he say that in his prayer have you thought about that if you're not going to pray something why even bring it up in your prayer to God father I'm like the fact that that world hates them like the fact that that world exposes them to the temptations of the evil one and Jesus has felt his powerful temptations no father I don't pray that you take them out of the world I pray that you protect them from the evil one I pray that you sanctify them keep them holy by the truth of your word they're not of the world any more than

I am of the world now keep them holy you see as soon as we become like the world we have nothing to say to the world as soon as we want to be like the world as soon as you're like the world you have no Christ like beautiful distinctiveness to offer to the you have no gospel to give to the world the world needs something different than what it has don't try to be like the world try to be like Christ and offer them the gospel he prays for our sanctification even as he sends us into the world a world that is antagonistic to the life of faith that's ever saying live for the things of sight live for the things of time forget eternity forget tomorrow forget your soul a world where sin is the order of the day every day all day a world where man's word trumps

God's word where holiness is belittled and sin is glorified and where Christians are constantly bombarded by temptations this world is a dangerous place for disciples of Jesus and yet Jesus says I'm not praying that you draw them up out of here rather I'm sending them into the world why is that do you see does that not say something about the importance of the mission to Christ I'm

willing to expose my precious disciples for whom I've spilt my blood to the troubles and hatred of this world it's temptation in pursuit of the great mission because I want the light that is shining in them to be brought into contact with the darkness of the world I want the saltiness of their life to be rubbed into the decaying rot of society in this world I want my disciples to get close enough to sinners that they might not only hear from their lips the gospel but see that hope that they have in all the troubles of life that they're not undone but that they have a solid hope in

Jesus Christ I want them to see that! so I'm sending them even though it's a dangerous place father keep them protect them he wants us in the world even though it's a dangerous place and that's true of you mothers as much as it is of us ministers wherever we go whoever we are it's the mission I'm sent I'm being pushed into this world whatever people that God has around me I'm here on a mission how we live that out will look different for moms and ministers but we share the same mission of Christ into the world so imitating the incarnation will be rejecting all aloofness and stand backness from sinners and I ask you what sinners will you intentionally get close to in order to win to the

[27 : 28] Lord Jesus Christ do you know God has intentionally put them all around you for that purpose he sent you right into the midst he wants your light to reach their darkness!

thirdly if we're imitating the incarnation we will need a whole lot more of Christ's self sacrificing unselfishness we'll need need need a lot more of Christ's self sacrificing unselfishness if we're imitating the incarnation now we have a significant problem here and that is that none of us like self sacrifice in fact we loathe it we have a backwardness to us that makes us take a step back every time we even think about it or we might talk about it but to actually do it is loathsome to us but the incarnation of Christ would never have taken place without it and the mission of Christ will not go forward without it you see the mission of Christ was built on this spirit of the incarnation of self sacrificial love for others the mission of Christ in coming that's why it came from heaven it was for love that sacrificed itself for needy sinners that's what the mission of Christ was built on and it will only be carried forward with the same spirit in us who are now sent into the world voluntary impoverishment of self for the eternal enriching of others

I wonder how many ways the grand mission of the church sputters and stalls out due to just this a lack of Christ like self sacrificing unselfishness becoming poor to enrich others you see the mission of Christ requires the mind and attitude of Christ that dying to self interest so I have some questions what is it then with regard to the mission that we're sent on what will prepare the next wave of missionaries do you know that missionaries are becoming a rare breed an endangered species at least from the United States other nations are increasing but what's going to prepare the next wave of missionaries to leave the comforts of home and to go minister in difficult circumstances well when sinners lostness is counted more important than my own ease and rest and when our homes and lands and friends and things are not considered something to be grasped but something rather to be let go of and sacrificed for the sake of the salvation of sinners just as

Jesus did and where will we find the wives of such ministers who are willing to stand by their man in the far east in Turkey in Africa and to go without all the amenities of life in the United States who will give of their sons and daughters to bear the message glorious only those drinking deeply of the incarnational spirit of Christ that self sacrifice love that sets our own interests aside to make others rich and where will we find families willing to leave the comforts and the fellowship and the full range of children's ministries of the mother church to venture out with a few others and to plant a new church in some needy place in this nation becoming poor you see in these ways poor in fellowship and children's ministries and all the rest to enrich others and how will we finance these missionaries and church planters who will give sacrificially to send them who but followers of him who impoverished himself to enrich us that's what makes

Christians like you to excel in the grace of giving even in a sluggish economy and we rejoiced at our member meeting last week to see that was true again of this past year but we must drink more deeply of that self sacrificial spirit of him who impoverished himself to enrich others who will open their mouths to witness of Christ and so risk run the risk of being thought a bit weird a fool a religious nut well I'll tell you those who are walking intimately with him who is willing to become a nobody in order to save us a fool an idiot a demon possessed madman that's what they called him and who will and what will get us out of our easy chairs in the evening and pry the remote out of our hands or the computer off of our laps and take us out into the world to get next to some poor sinner and tell them about the love of God in Jesus

[32:49] Christ or take us to the prayer meeting to plead together that God would save sinners it will be the same attitude that brought the eternal son of God down out of heaven into our world to save sinners but there's something in me that resists that would stay in the comfortable confines of my home at a safe distance from the inconvenient uncomfortable world of sinners there's something in me that refuses to die but the incarnation and the example of the incarnate savior won't let me go he won't let me go without dying there is a self love that must die if the great commission of love is to thrive life and that mission was begun in the spirit of willing self sacrifice and it will be carried forward in the same spirit so and then

Jesus will come again and no one will regret any sacrifice made in the mission and all of our puny sacrifices that look so big will be forgotten as we look upon the living lamb that was slaughtered in self sacrificial love for us a man there is a real man with wounds still gaping wide from which rich streams of blood once ran in hands and feet and side does no wild fancy of our brains no metaphor we speak the same dear man in heaven now reigns that suffered for our sake this wondrous man of whom we tell is true almighty God he bought our souls from death and hell the price his own heart's blood let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ as the father has sent me so send I you so we come to the end of this study on the incarnation may it be but a new beginning in our lives to live more under the impulse of Jesus self-sacrificing love and taking his gospel to sinners young people imitate the incarnation in your schools men and women imitate the incarnation in your homes in your workplace in your places you shop and recreate and rest may that animating spirit of Jesus live in us you know it is only by the spirit that we're able to do this as Jesus said to them as the father has sent me so send I you he then breathed upon them and said receive the holy spirit you see Jesus Christ equips his people to do what he calls us to do to imitate him how does a sinner like you and me imitate the holy

Jesus I'll tell you how it's by his own spirit living in our hearts there's the equipment that we need all that Jesus sends into the world to imitate him he equips to do the same oh this is his gift to every believer the holy spirit given to every believer let us then cry for greater infillings greater likeness to him who loved us unto the death and just a word for you who are still outside of Christ I want to ask you as we conclude this study on the incarnation does it not move you does it not do something in here to think that the eternal son of God would become a man that he might die in the place of sinners that deserved hell and save them from endless torments does that not stop you does it not seem strange that you would reject such a savior who comes laden with life and forgiveness to enrich you the poor sinner and do you not see your folly and wickedness to hold such a savior at arm's length as if he's undeserving of your life this savior is so humble that he is willing to set aside his prerogatives of God you know one of his great prerogatives is to judge and he has the right to damn people in hell for their offenses against

God he has that right against you sinner who have been pushing him away and he is so humble that he is willing to not take that judgment upon you but to step in himself and say I'll take it in your place I'll forgive all your rejections you've rejected me every day of your life up to this point and I'll forgive all of that if you'll just come now and fall into my arms and say Jesus have mercy upon me what a savior what self sacrificial love cast yourself upon his mercy even now let's pray as we need this word pressed to our hearts Lord you did not halt in that great work of the incarnation but presented yourself willingly voluntarily to come and be damned in our place we worship you for such self sacrificing love and we hear a word such as this from your lips that in the same way that the father sent you so you have sent us would you help us to go home as sent people to wake up tomorrow morning as sent people who have a sense of mission about our lives and would you please forgive us for all the things that have moved the major thing into minor things and have elevated minor things into major things such that we have no longer thought of ourselves even as men and women and young people on the mission bless our fellowship together that we might spur each other on to love and good deeds and please draw into your arms some sinner this morning we ask it for the eternal praise of

[40:21] Jesus and the eternal good of the sinner amen we take these words and we hear them in the song from the overhead so send I you let's stand as we sing Thank you.