

Who Are We And Why Are We Here?

I. Intro

- a. This morning we are going to look at the issue of our core identity as the body of Jesus Christ
 - i. When I say that many of our minds go immediately to our individual identity as believers in Christ. That is not what we are going to consider.
 - ii. Instead, we want to take some time to grasp our core identity as the corporate, global people of God, bound together in unity through the death and resurrection of Christ.
- b. As many of you know, our primary ministry as GMMI revolves around the focused ministry of mission mobilization – what does that mean exactly?
 - i. At a holistic level, mission mobilization is calling the Church to embrace her core corporate identity.
 - ii. As a result, mission mobilization deals with foundational theological facts of helping the Church return to “who we are and why we are here?”
- c. Every believer and local church around the world are part of a grand storyline laid out in the Bible from beginning to end.
 - i. That Biblical storyline reveals the central mission and purpose of God to redeem all humanity, reconciling all creation back to God as intended before the fall into sin.
 - ii. The Biblical storyline also reveals the only vehicle God has set up to accomplish this grand mission and purpose.
 - a. The blood-bought, redeemed, born again, people of God – the corporate Church of Jesus Christ made up of every individual believer and local church around the entire world.
 - iv. Every one of us together are part of God’s grand storyline – whether we know it or not.
- d. So, what then is the core corporate identity of the global, universal body of Jesus Christ? What is the answer to the two questions “Who Are We?” and “Why Are We here?”

- i. I submit to you that our core corporate identity is that we are God’s multiplying, reproducing, missionary type people.
 - a. That is who we are as a corporate people and that is why we are here on the earth as God’s ambassadors.
 - b. Meant to multiply and reproduce disciples, churches, the fruit of the Spirit, the power of the Kingdom of God over and over again.
 - c. Not merely a few of us, but every single disciple of Jesus Christ bears this identity as part of God’s corporate people.
- e. By carefully studying God’s Word we grasp a clear Biblical view of the identity of the Global Church as God’s reproducing, missionary community.
 - i. David Bosch, a South African scholar suggests, “Global mission is not merely an activity of the global Church, but an attribute of God Himself. God is a missionary God, Jesus a missionary Messiah and the Spirit a missionary Spirit.”
 - ii. Therefore, mission mobilization starts with God Himself, who is on a global redemptive mission, aligning His corporate people with the priority purpose on His heart.
 - iii. One of my professors from Fuller Seminary, Chuck Van Engen, adds, “Global mission is the Church’s primary task, not merely one of many.”
- f. To help us see this firsthand I want to provide a fast-paced panorama, glimpse of our core corporate identity in Scripture.

II. Old Testament Overview of the Core Corporate Identity of the People of God

- a. From the very beginning, before sin and the subsequent need of redemption even entered the picture, God told Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28, *“Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.”*
 - i. God’s eternal purpose was that His people would reproduce and multiply – obviously through procreation yet also through spiritual reproduction.
- b. We know that Adam and Eve then fell into sin, plunging the whole human race into evil and wickedness along with it.
- c. Yet God had a plan, raising up Abraham as one of the most important figures in God’s Biblical narrative of mission.

- i. Abraham is God's starting point for creating a people (the Israelites), reversing the curse, bearing this core corporate identity as God's multiplying, reproducing, missionary type people to the whole ancient world.
- ii. In Genesis 12:3, God gives Abraham an all-encompassing covenant, enduring throughout history, forever marking the people of God with their core corporate identity

Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

- iii. Many call this passage the first Great Commission mandate of the Bible.
- iv. God revealed to Abraham His far-reaching agenda for redeeming the whole world, marred in sin, extending the scope of impact to all ethnic peoples.
- v. This covenant promise is not complete yet. As about a third of the global population is still part of unreached people groups.

d. Jump ahead now 400 plus years to the time of Moses.

- i. Israel grew from about 70 people in Egypt in Joseph's day to millions when Pharaoh enslaved them.
- ii. God then raised up Moses, guiding him to confront Pharaoh, telling him in Exodus 9:1, *"Go to Pharaoh and tell him, "Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: let my people go, that they may serve me."*
 - ii. This command implies a strong relationship between God and His people.
 - iii. He is seeking to form them as His own people, set them apart in wholehearted worship, while understanding their core identity as serving Him as His multiplying, reproducing, missionary type people.
- iv. In Exodus 19: 4-6 we see God interpreting His purpose of bringing Israel out of Egypt.

- v. *“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”*
- vi. Here God is establishing His covenant with Israel and setting them apart in three distinct areas.
- vii. They are to be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation
- viii. In this way, God intended that they actively represent Him to the surrounding nations, something we know in hindsight they grievously failed to do.
- e. This core identity continued to unfold through the life of David and particularly Psalms 67, 96 and 117 with their universal call to know and worship Yahweh.
 - i. Let’s consider Psalm 67 for a moment
 - ii. This passage provides a direct correlation between God’s mercy and blessing being extended to the people of God and subsequently God’s intent that we represent Him before all the peoples.
 - iii. If our desire for blessing and mercy, or God’s face to shine upon us, is self-centered, we have missed God’s intent. The cause and effect is evident in the passage.
 - iv. God’s purpose in blessing the people of God is that they may in turn walk out her core corporate identity as God’s multiplying, reproducing, missionary-type people.

III. New Testament Overview of the Core Corporate Identity of the People of God

- i. To Biblically grasp our core identity it is necessary to consider the Church’s birthing.
- ii. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2 was for the distinct purpose of enabling the people of God to walk in a profoundly new era, aligning us with our core corporate identity.
 - i. A simple definition of the filling of the Holy Spirit is that it is for the purpose of revealing and manifesting God to others.

- ii. Using this definition, we can conclude the primary purpose of the Spirit's coming at Pentecost is empowering a corporate people globally whose core identity is to reveal God, in and through Jesus Christ, to the world.
- iii. Paul himself gives us his own life purpose statement in Romans 1:5 & 6 where he states, *"Through Him we (corporate) have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name."*
 - i. His life mission was to tirelessly work toward *"obedience to the faith among all nations"*
 - ii. In verse 6 Paul specifies this calling is not only for him as an apostle by stating, *"among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ."*
- f. Lastly, 1 Peter 2:9 provides us a summary verse encapsulating "who we are and why we are here."
 - i. *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."*
 - ii. Peter describes "who we are" highlighted in the four descriptions. These four are prefaced by the words *"you are..."*
 - iii. Then Peter proceeds with a clear statement of "why are we here" prefaced by the words *"that you may..."*
 - iv. Peter is teaching that *"you are...."* something for the specific purpose *"that you may"* do something.
 - v. Notice the similarity of these four descriptions with the earlier Exodus 19:4-6 description? This is purposeful.
 - a. Peter is evidently combining the core corporate identity of the Old Covenant people of Israel (detailed in the Exodus 19 passage) and the New Covenant body of Jesus Christ.
 - b. He is confirming that God's purpose has always been the same for His corporate people – we are His multiplying, reproducing, missionary type people.

- c. We are meant to be a light to the nations, aligning ourselves wholeheartedly with His global, redemptive purpose among all humanity.