

DAILY STUDY

Missio Dei: Finding Your Place in God's Story

INTRODUCTION:

Most of us have heard the word “mission” and felt one of two things: a quiet guilt that we’re not doing enough of it, or a vague sense that it’s something other people do. The particularly bold, the cross-culturally gifted, the ones who pack up and move overseas. Either way, mission tends to feel like something outside our ordinary lives rather than something woven into the fabric of them. If that’s where you’re starting, you’re in good company. And you’re in the right place.

Missio Dei is a Latin phrase that simply means “the Mission of God.” It’s a theological term with a deceptively simple idea at its center: the mission doesn’t belong to us first. It belongs to God. It has been moving through history since before any of us arrived, since before the church existed, before the Great Commission was spoken, before Pentecost, before Bethlehem. God is a sending God. He sent his Son. He sent his Spirit. And in his extraordinary grace, he invites us into the story he has been telling since the beginning of everything.

These five weeks are not designed to make you feel more obligated. They are designed to make you feel more found. To show you that the God who has been pursuing this broken, beautiful world for thousands of years has also been pursuing you, and that your ordinary life is not outside his mission but right in the middle of it. We will look at why God sends at all, at the world he is sending us into, at Jesus as the shape and pattern of the whole mission, at the church as a community formed by sending rather than gathering, and finally at what it means to live with faithfulness while we wait for the King to return.

You don’t need a passport for this. You don’t need a particular personality type, a platform, or a theology degree. What you need is what you already have: a life that is somewhere, a neighborhood that is somewhere, relationships that are somewhere. The mission of God is not looking for specialists. It is looking for people willing to be present, to show up, stay near, cross the occasional uncomfortable line, and trust that the God who has been doing this work since long before you arrived is still, faithfully, going ahead of you.

Our hope for you over the next five weeks is simple: that you would begin to see your life as God sees it. Not as a private story running parallel to his purposes, but as a thread he has woven deliberately into the largest story ever told. The mission of God is already underway. Welcome to the journey.

Pastor Andreas Beccai

WEEK 1 - GOD IS A SENDING GOD

WEEK 1 - DAY 1

THE MISSION THAT STARTED BEFORE YOU

John 3:16-17 (NLT) "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him."

We had been visiting the Crosswalk community in Jakarta and were heading home via Singapore when we got a call from the airline on the way to the airport. Our flight was delayed. We were not going to make the connection. They had tried to get us on an earlier departure but we were too far out. There was nothing to be done. By the time we landed in Singapore, the LAX flight had already left, and we stepped off the plane already running through the calculations in our heads: the queue at the transfer desk, the wait, the negotiation, the overnight hotel arranged on someone else's timeline in a city we hadn't planned to sleep in.

Two airline employees were standing at the gate as we walked off the jet bridge, holding a packet with our names on it. Inside was everything: a new routing, a hotel voucher for the night, a meal voucher, a taxi card, a printed card with instructions for every step from that moment until we boarded the next morning. The driver at the rank already had our destination. The hotel was expecting us. The room was ready. Every detail of the situation we had been dreading had already been worked through by people we had never met, before we had even landed. We walked off that plane steeling ourselves for a problem that had, without our knowledge, already been solved.

That is what you find when you actually step into mission. You arrive with your plans and your contingencies, ready to bring God somewhere, and you discover he was already there, already working, already further into the situation than you had imagined. You sit with someone far from faith and realize, somewhere in the middle of the conversation, that he has been pursuing them for years. The work was in progress before you showed up.

This is what John 3:16 is actually saying beneath its familiarity. Before any church existed, before any of us decided to follow Jesus, God was already sending. The mission originates in his nature and flows from his love. Missio Dei, the Mission of God, is the theological name for this reality: the mission belongs to God before it belongs to us. We do not launch it. We join something already underway, invited into a story that was moving long before we arrived, by a God who, for reasons that ought to stagger us, wanted us in it.

1. **Where have you experienced God already at work before you arrived?**
 2. **What would change if you truly believed the mission belongs to God before it belongs to you?**
 3. **Who in your life might God already be pursuing right now?**
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WEEK 1 - DAY 2

THE GOD WHO TALKS TO HIMSELF

John 17:20-23 (NLT) "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one, as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me."

Before there was a world, there was a conversation. This is one of the strangest and most beautiful ideas in all of Christian theology. The God of Scripture is not a solitary being sitting alone in eternity. He is, from before the beginning, a community: Father, Son, and Spirit in a relationship of such complete self-giving love that creation itself was an overflow of it, not a necessity.

There is a story in one of the Chicken Soup for the Soul books, and yes, it is a little cheesy, and it may not even be true, but it points at something real. A young boy's sister is gravely ill. The doctors determine that a blood transfusion from her brother, who has survived the same disease, offers her best chance of recovery. They explain the situation to him and ask if he is willing. He agrees without much hesitation. As the transfusion proceeds, the boy lies quietly beside his sister, watching the color return to her face. Then his own face goes pale. He looks up at the doctor and asks, in a small voice: will I start to die right away? He had misunderstood. He thought giving his blood meant giving all of it. He had said yes anyway.

That is the shape of the love inside the Trinity. Total. Not calculating. The Father loves the Son. The Son loves the Father. The Spirit flows from and toward both. Mission, the reaching outward, the going, the sending, flows directly from that interior life. It does not originate in a plan. It originates in a nature.

When Jesus prays in John 17 in his final hours before the cross, what he asks for is unity among his followers. He doesn't ask for strategy or numbers, rather he desires unity. A community that loves the way the Trinity loves confronts the watching world with something it cannot explain or replicate on its own terms. The mission that flows outward from the church has its source in the life that flows between the persons of God. We don't manufacture it, we receive it, and let it overflow.

1. **How does understanding God as a community of love reshape the way you think about mission?**
2. **Where are you tempted to make mission more about activity than relationship?**
3. **What would unity in your church or relationships communicate to the watching world?**

WEEK 1 - DAY 3

THE FIRST GREAT COMMISSION

Genesis 12:1-3 (NLT) "The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great

nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others... All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser argues that Genesis 12 is not just the beginning of Israel’s story. It is the first Great Commission, issued four thousand years before Jesus stood on a hillside in Galilee. The mission did not begin at the end of Matthew. It began here, in Mesopotamia, with a man named Abram who had no idea where he was going.

I was in Seattle for a pastoral matter, sitting outside the courthouse waiting on a hearing involving one of our church members. His family was there with him, and during the introductions it came out that I was about to become the senior pastor of the church that one of them attended. He looked me up and down slowly, raised an eyebrow, and said: you? I said: yes. Just as surprised as you are, honestly. God had called. I had said no at first. I spoke with mentors. I entered the process. And found myself, almost without quite knowing how, somewhere I never imagined I would belong.

That is something of how Abram’s call reads. No explanation for why him specifically. No credentials listed. Just a command, a promise, and a horizon he could not yet see. And the heart of the promise is this: the blessing was never for Abram alone. Election is never for privilege. It is always for service. God chose one family to reach every other family. The particular thread was always meant to hold the whole cloth together.

Paul calls Genesis 12:3 the gospel announced in advance. Not a preview. The gospel itself, preached ahead of time. What Jesus commissioned at the end of Matthew was the fulfillment of something ancient, the same mission, the same God, the same desire to bless every family on earth. Abram departed before he saw the destination. That is still the shape of the call.

- 1. What “unknown territory” might God be asking you to trust him with right now?**
- 2. In what ways have you treated blessing as personal comfort instead of something meant to overflow to others?**
- 3. What helps you keep moving when you cannot yet see the destination clearly?**

WEEK 1 - DAY 4

THE MOMENT BEFORE THE SENDING

Isaiah 6:1, 8 (NLT) “It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple... Then I heard the Lord asking, ‘Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?’ I said, ‘Here I am. Send me.’”

Isaiah’s commissioning is one of the most dramatic scenes in all of Scripture. A throne room. Seraphim calling out in voices that shake the foundations. Smoke. A man undone by the sight of holiness, certain he is finished. Then a coal, a touch, forgiveness declared. And a question: Whom shall I send? Isaiah says: here I am. Send me. Not because he feels ready. Because he has been met by something so much larger than his inadequacy that his objections have nowhere left to stand.

Rosa Parks is usually told as a story about a single courageous act: a woman on a bus who refused to move. But that framing flattens something important. She was a seamstress who spent years doing quiet, unglamorous civil rights work long before that December evening in 1955. She had attended the Highlander Folk School, where she had been trained and had sat in rooms with other organizers thinking seriously about how change happens. She had watched others resist and had carried those moments inside her. By the time she took that seat and kept it, she was not acting on impulse. She was acting out of everything she had accumulated over years of slow, patient formation. What changed on that bus was not that her courage suddenly appeared. It was that the weight of everything she believed finally tipped past the weight of what she feared. That is a different thing entirely from boldness. It is something more durable.

That is what the throne room does to a person. It does not remove the fear. It just makes something else more important. Isaiah does not volunteer from confidence. He volunteers from encounter. The sequence matters: holiness, then undoing, then forgiveness, then commissioning.

Unfortunately most of us approach mission the wrong way around. We ask whether we are qualified. We wait for a feeling of readiness that never quite solidifies. But Isaiah does not volunteer from confidence. He volunteers from encounter. The coal that touched his lips was God's grace. God is not asking you if you are ready. He is asking whom he should send. The question is already echoing in the room where you are sitting.

1. **What fears or feelings of inadequacy keep you from saying "Here I am, send me"?**
2. **How has grace shaped your willingness to serve others?**
3. **What might God be asking you to step toward, even before you feel ready?**

WEEK 1 - DAY 5

SENT THE SAME WAY

John 20:21 (NLT) "Again he said, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.'"

About ten years ago, a close friend of mine lost her husband very suddenly. He left behind two young children and as you can imagine, his wife was in pieces. Her sister, who lived on the other side of the world, got on a plane as quickly as she could. She came for the funeral with suitcases of clothes and grief for the loss her sister and nephews had suffered. Somewhere in the tumult of loss, she made a decision to do whatever she needed to do to help her nephews and her sister. So she stayed after the funeral, and a few weeks turned into months and then two years. She put her own life on hold, found remote work, moved into a spare room, and helped hold the family together through the worst of it. She didn't try, and manage the situation from a distance instead she moved in.

That is the shape of John 20:21. Jesus does not just say go, no! He says go the same way I came. And the way he came was an incarnation. When we needed it the most, God did not address the our brokenness with an email, or text from a safe distance. He entered our world in

very specific ways. At a specific time, in specific place, wearing a specific body. Jesus played, prayed, and ate. He got tired, he wept at a grave, he moved into the neighborhood. He was near.

And God sent Jesus among the poor and the sick and the disreputable. Jesus could have chosen to be in a position of authority but instead he chose a posture of service. He rejected the allure to demonstrate power over the world and instead demonstrated love for it. He ate at the wrong tables and touched people who had not been touched in years. That is the pattern he left for us in his life, and it is now ours to follow.

Crosswalk as you follow Jesus remember, we are not sent to manage people toward faith from a safe remove. We are sent to be present in people's lives, to be close enough to be changed by them and not just helpful. The sister who stayed two years was changed by those two years. That is what incarnational presence costs. It is also what it looks like when the sending of God takes human form.

- 1. Who in your life needs presence more than advice right now?**
 - 2. What does it look like for you to "move in" relationally rather than remain at a safe distance?**
 - 3. How might serving others change you personally?**
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WEEK 2 - THE BROKEN WORLD GOD LOVES

WEEK 2 - DAY 1

WHAT GOODNESS LOOKED LIKE BEFORE WE BROKE IT

Genesis 1:31, 3:6-7 (NLT) "Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!... The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it... At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness."

To understand why the mission matters, you need to hold two images at once. The first is God at the end of the sixth day, looking over everything he has made and calling it very good. The Hebrew word carries the sense of beautiful, right, exactly as it should be. The world in its original design was a place of unbroken relationship: humans with God, with each other, with the creation they were given to tend.

One day in university, my roommates decided to throw a small party, and another friend of ours who lived nearby was there when we were planning it. We were working through what we needed: food, drinks, music. He volunteered to handle the food order, said he knew a good place, took down what everyone wanted. We gave him the money. The night of the party, we waited. And waited. Someone eventually asked where he was. He shrugged off the question. That was when the penny dropped. He had been nursing a grievance about something, and he had decided, quietly and deliberately, never to place the order at all. He had taken the money and the responsibility and had simply chosen not to use either. There was no food. The party dissolved. What made it so difficult to shake was not the inconvenience but the intentionality of it: someone had taken something that was supposed to be for others and turned it into an instrument of harm.

That is the second image. It's not a catastrophe from outside but it's a choice from within. We see a hand extended toward a fruit, and a decision to trust their own judgment over God's. As soon as that happened everything that was whole slowly became fractured, and the first pair hid naked and ashamed behind some leaves. The whole architecture of relationship shifted into something complicated and painful.

Both images are required for mission. The goodness of creation keeps us from abandoning the world but the reality of the fall keeps us from being naive about it. God doesn't love a theoretical humanity, he loves this one, with its scar tissue and its grief and its persistent, irrational capacity for both cruelty and kindness.

1. **Where do you still see traces of God's original goodness in the world?**
 2. **How have you personally experienced the fractures caused by sin and brokenness?**
 3. **How can holding both beauty and brokenness together deepen your compassion for others?**
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WEEK 2 - DAY 2

THE WHOLE CREATION IS GROANING

Romans 8:19-22 (NLT) "For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."

One afternoon during a trip to Australia, a group of us piled into a coach and drove down to the docks, where we boarded a boat and sailed out to a small island. It was one of those days that feels like a gift. We swam, we snorkeled, we ate well, we sat in the sun. Later in the afternoon, one of the chaperons told me that if we had gone just a little further out, we would have been at the edge of the Great Barrier Reef. I hadn't been close enough to see it clearly, but the remark stayed with me.

On the way back a marine biologist who had spent the better part of his career diving the reef pulled me aside. He talked about what he had watched happen to it over the decades, he told me David Attenborough had once described it as a forest after a fire. But for him it was like watching someone you love receive a terminal diagnosis. The grief in his voice was dry and belonged to someone who had given years to something and was watching it disappear.

Paul says in Romans 8 that the whole creation is groaning. Not metaphorically. He means it. The fall of humanity sent shockwaves through the created order. The world was subjected to futility, he says, not by its own choice. It is suffering consequences it did not cause, waiting for a restoration it cannot produce on its own.

What that diver felt is closer to what Paul is describing than most of our Saturday morning responses to environmental news. It is participation in creation's groaning. It is the feeling of something being wrong that should be right.

The ecological crisis is a theological issue, not primarily a political one. We were given creation to steward, not exploit. The mandate in Genesis 1 was to rule, in the sense of protect and cultivate, not dominate. Mission that takes all of Scripture seriously cannot be indifferent to what God made and declared good. Caring for the creation is not a distraction from the gospel. It comes from the same love that drives the whole mission.

1. **What part of creation's "groaning" feels most visible or personal to you?**
2. **How does caring for creation connect to your understanding of God's mission?**
3. **What is one practical way you can steward the world around you more faithfully?**

WEEK 2 - DAY 3

JUSTICE IS NOT OPTIONAL

Micah 6:8 (NLT) "No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8 gets quoted so often it has started to feel like a bumper sticker. That is a tragedy, because it is actually one of the most demanding verses in the entire Bible. God is speaking to a people going through the religious motions while exploiting the poor and ignoring injustice around them. His response is not to call for more religious performance. It is to say: I was never asking for that. Justice. Mercy. Humility. These three are held together as one thing. You cannot pursue justice without mercy or it becomes cruel. You can't practice mercy without humility or it becomes condescending. And you cannot walk humbly with God and remain indifferent to what breaks his heart.

I remember it like it was yesterday. We were having lunch, a few of us, and the conversation turned to housing. A friend started telling me about when his parents first moved to a small town in a midwestern state in America. They had worked double shifts for years to save enough for a down payment. One day they found a house they loved and could afford, but the realtor turned them away. They later found out that the house had a deed that contained a restrictive covenant, preventing the sale to people who looked like them. I asked, with what I now recognize was naive innocence: why? It was the first time I had encountered the phrase. The law had technically abolished such covenants, but in that neighborhood, realtors and the homeowners' association still enforced the spirit of them quietly and effectively. The law said one thing. The neighbors said another and his parents never did buy in that part of town.

That is structural injustice. It is not bad luck or individual failure. It is systems that could be different, and are not, because people with power have chosen to preserve them. The Hebrew word in Micah 6:8 for "right" is mishpat: civic justice, advocacy for those who cannot advocate for themselves. The widow, the orphan, the immigrant, the poor. Not soft suggestions. Requirements.

For followers of Jesus, justice is not a political preference or an optional add-on for particularly activist types. It is woven into the character of the God we follow. He is consistently, unmistakably drawn toward those the world's systems have failed. To follow him is to be drawn in the same direction.

1. **Where do you see injustice woven into the systems around you?**
2. **Why is humility necessary in the pursuit of justice?**
3. **How might God be inviting you to advocate for someone with less power or visibility?**

WEEK 2 - DAY 4

JESUS READS THE ROOM

Luke 4:18-19 (NLT) "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

Early on in my ministry, right around the time I got my first job, I went through a very formative experience. I had been to the post office for something routine and was walking back to my car when a man approached me. He was unhoused and desperate, and he asked me for a little

money for food. Something in me closed off. I shook my head, got in the car, and drove away. Then, about half a block down the street, I pulled over. I sat there for a moment feeling something I can only describe as conviction and shame. So, I turned around and went back. I pulled up beside him and said: “let’s go”. He hesitated, after all I had just rejected him a few minutes before. He told me he smelled bad and had soiled himself, and I think he was giving me an exit. I told him it’s fine and I put down some newspaper on the seats. He got in the car anyway. We went to a Goodwill store. He picked out new clothes. Then we drove to a Denny’s and I told him to order whatever he wanted. He got a steak, fries, and a large Coke. Over that meal, slowly, he told me his story and a little of where he had come from. Before we left I told him I was a pastor. He thanked me. He thanked God. I drove home knowing that the half block I had driven before turning around was one of the most important half blocks of my ministry, because I had almost blown it.

Luke 4 is Jesus doing something similar, but of course so much better and larger. He stands up in a synagogue, with a scroll, finds the place in Isaiah, reads it aloud, sits down, and says: today this is fulfilled. It’s the announcement of good news aimed at specific people: the poor, the captive, the blind, the oppressed, people with no hope.

And Crosswalk, these are not rare people. They are everywhere and they tend to be invisible to us, not because there are few of them but because the systems around them are designed to render them so. But, Jesus names them. He purposely does not address the powerful first with the gospel and hope the news filters down, instead He goes to where the need is, and aims the whole weight of the kingdom at it.

The man in the car park did not ask me into his life. I had already driven past him once. What changed was a turn of the car. A small reversal. Mission that looks like Jesus will require the same: being present to the specific, particular, uncomfortable need that is actually in front of us, rather than the abstract need we feel comfortable caring about from a distance.

1. **When have you sensed conviction to stop and truly notice someone in need?**
2. **What “small reversal” might God be asking you to make in your daily life?**
3. **How can you become more attentive to the people society tends to overlook?**

WEEK 2 - DAY 5

GOD’S ANSWER TO THE BROKEN WORLD

Isaiah 65:17-19 (NLT) “Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more.”

In 1994, Rwanda collapsed. In about 100 days, around 800,000 people were killed, often by neighbors, coworkers, even friends. The country was shattered. And then, years later, Rwanda tried something extraordinary. They turned to an old traditional system called Gacaca courts. Community gatherings where perpetrators confessed, where victims spoke, where

communities worked through what had happened together. It was not perfect. Nothing could be. But in village after village, people who had done terrible things and people who had suffered them found a way to keep living in the same place. Not forgetting or pretending, but going forward. It is one of the most haunting pictures of restoration I know.

Isaiah 65 is God's version of this, on a cosmic scale. Not evacuation from the broken world but renewal of it. A world where weeping is gone, and there is no more crying. A city of happiness and God himself rejoicing over his people. It's not a metaphor dressed up as comfort, it's the actual destination of history.

The theological word for this is shalom. Shalom is not simply peace, in the thin sense of an absence of conflict. Shalom means everything is as it should be, it is a world that is complete, whole, and rightly ordered. It is a return to what original creation looked like on the sixth day. It is what Isaiah 65 describes at the end of the story. And the mission of God is the slow, patient work of shalom breaking into the present, partially and imperfectly, until the day it arrives completely.

Rwanda's Gacaca courts did not fix what happened. They could not, however they were signs. Small, costly, partial signs that something better was possible. Every act of justice, every genuine reconciliation, every person freed from something that held them, these are signs of the same kind. The future arriving in the present. God's answer to the world's groaning, and we get to be part of the announcement.

- 1. What picture of restoration or reconciliation gives you hope?**
 - 2. Where do you see glimpses of God's future kingdom breaking into the present?**
 - 3. How can you become an active participant in bringing shalom to your community?**
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WEEK 3 - JESUS AS THE SENT ONE

WEEK 3 - DAY 1

THE WORD THAT MOVED IN

John 1:1, 14 (NLT) "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God... So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."

John doesn't ease you into the incarnation. He drops you in at the beginning of everything and then, in fourteen verses, brings you all the way to a baby in a feeding trough. The same Word that was with God before creation, through whom everything was made, that Word became flesh. Took on a body. Moved into the neighborhood.

The Greek word John uses for "make his home among us" is *eskenosen*, literally, "he pitched his tent." The image is of someone setting up camp in your midst. Not visiting. Not passing through. Not holding office hours for people who make appointments. Moving in. Becoming present in the ongoing, ordinary, inconvenient way that neighbors are present.

This is the shape of the incarnation. And because the incarnation is the shape of Jesus's mission, it must also be the shape of ours.

The incarnation tells us that God does not believe in ministry from a safe distance. He did not address the world's brokenness through a strongly worded letter from heaven. He came down and ate, got tired, and attended weddings and funerals and dinner parties at the homes of people polite society had written off. Jesus wept at a friend's grave and touched lepers who hadn't been touched in years. He was near.

I'll be honest, this is deeply inconvenient for any model of mission that prioritizes our own comfort. But, it is also deeply hopeful, because it means that when we move toward people, not with a program or an agenda, but with genuine presence, we are doing something that looks like God. We are imaging the one who, when the world needed saving, did not stay where it was comfortable. He moved in down the street.

1. **Who has been genuinely present with you during a difficult season of life?**
2. **What keeps you from moving toward people instead of managing them from a distance?**
3. **How can you practice incarnational presence this week?**

WEEK 3 - DAY 2

THE DIRECTION OF THE MISSION

Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT) "You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When

he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."

Most of us spend our lives trying to move upward in relation to other people. Upward into influence, upward into recognition, upward into positions where we are less vulnerable and more difficult to ignore. Even when our motives are sincere, there is usually some part of us still reaching for altitude, because altitude feels safer. If I can just get high enough, respected enough, successful enough, perhaps I can finally stop feeling exposed.

Then Jesus arrives and moves in the opposite direction.

From the highest conceivable place, equality with God, down into the fragility of ordinary human life. Paul's point in Philippians 2 is not simply that Jesus was humble in a general moral sense. He is describing a movement downward, a voluntary descent into limitation, dependence, obscurity, suffering, even humiliation. "Have this mind among yourselves," Paul says. In other words, let this become your orientation too.

That is the part we tend to resist.

Because nearly every culture, including ours, trains people to associate upwardness with success. We optimize for visibility. We want access to rooms where our names matter. We instinctively build identities around distinction and importance. Even ministry can quietly become another strategy for staying above others, another way of becoming the competent one, the needed one, the admired one who always has something to offer but rarely needs anything in return.

What makes Jesus's movement so arresting is that it was chosen. Nothing was taken from him. He relinquished position willingly. The one through whom Christians claim the world itself was made entered history through the exhaustion and vulnerability of childbirth, depended on parents to feed him, learned carpentry with human hands that could splinter and bleed, wept openly at the grave of a friend.

The movement of Jesus was always toward. Toward the sick, the ashamed, the socially unwanted, the grieving, the guilty, the frightened. Toward suffering rather than away from it. Toward death itself.

And when Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you," he is not removing that downward direction from the equation. He is inviting his followers into the same movement.

- 1. In what ways are you tempted to pursue status, recognition, or control?**
 - 2. What would it look like to follow Jesus in downward movement and service?**
 - 3. Who around you needs someone willing to move toward them rather than away from them?**
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WEEK 3 - DAY 3

THE GOD WHO GOES LOOKING

Luke 15:4-6 (NLT) "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the lost one until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'"

The thing that triggers this parable is not a theological question. It is a social complaint. Jesus is eating with the wrong people again, tax collectors and sinners, and the Pharisees are offended by it. Jesus responds by telling three stories about lost things being found.

In the first story, the shepherd does not wait for the sheep to become wise enough to return on its own. He leaves and goes searching into the wilderness, the exposed and uncertain place where vulnerable things disappear. And when he finally finds the sheep, he rejoices. There is no irritated lecture about inconvenience or wasted time. The recovery itself becomes cause for celebration.

I once heard about the president of a small college who noticed that a student had disappeared for several days without explanation. Instead of handing the situation off to an administrator, she drove to the student's apartment herself and knocked on the door. The student eventually opened it emotionally exhausted and embarrassed by how much of life had begun unraveling privately. The president brought her home for dinner, let her do laundry there, and spent the evening talking with her around the kitchen table.

The shepherd in Jesus's parable would have understood exactly what she was doing.

Because the sheep in Luke 15 does not know it is being searched for. It has no strategy for finding its way home and no sudden moment of clarity out in the wilderness. The shepherd's movement toward the sheep begins long before the sheep understands anything at all.

That is Jesus's answer to the Pharisees. Of course he eats with sinners. The table itself is part of the search.

1. **Who in your life might feel far from God right now?**
2. **How does knowing God searches for people before they search for him change your perspective?**
3. **What would it look like for you to "go looking" in love and compassion?**

WEEK 3 - DAY 4

PRESENCE ACROSS THE LINE

John 4:7, 9-10 (NLT) "Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Please give me a drink.' She said to Jesus, 'You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?'... Jesus replied, 'If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.'"

I grew up playing rugby, and every year our school played our great rivals in what was, by the end, less a game than a running confrontation. It would start as rugby and deteriorate. Tempers flaring on the field, parents from both sides screaming at each other along the touchline. One year the game was particularly bruising. By the final whistle everyone was spent and raw. We walked off the field without the usual handshakes, which was a way of saying how the afternoon had gone. I had nearly reached the clubhouse entrance when I heard footsteps behind me. I turned around. It was my opposite number, the player who had been across from me all afternoon, and he had crossed the invisible no man's land between the two teams, jogging over before I got inside. He put his hand out. I took it. Something in the afternoon changed in that moment, not undone, but changed.

Jesus is in Samaria, which a respectable Jewish rabbi would have avoided. Speaking to a woman in public was socially irregular. She was a Samaritan, which meant centuries of ethnic and religious hostility between their communities. And she was drawing water alone at noon rather than with the other women in the cool of the morning, which tells you something about her standing among her own people. Jesus crosses every one of these lines in a single conversation. He doesn't ask for permission. He simply begins, with a request that places him in the position of need rather than authority: Give me a drink. The one who made the water asks a marginalized foreign woman to serve him.

This is the logic of incarnational presence. Jesus enters her world, geographically, relationally, socially, before he speaks into it. He asks before he offers. He receives before he gives. And in that movement of genuine, vulnerable presence, something opens up. She asks questions. He answers. By the end of the conversation, she is running back to her village saying: come and see the man who told me everything I ever did.

She became the first evangelist in John's Gospel because someone was willing to cross the no man's land and actually sit at the well with her. Not to manage her from a safe theological distance, but to sit with her and talk. The lines that divide us do not surprise Jesus. He has been crossing them since Samaria. He is still crossing them. And he invites us to follow.

1. **What lines or barriers are hardest for you to cross relationally?**
2. **How does Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman challenge your assumptions about people?**
3. **Where might God be inviting you to practice vulnerable presence instead of distant judgment?**

WEEK 3 - DAY 5

THE SERVANT SHAPE OF THE MISSION

Mark 10:45 (NLT) "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45 is only one sentence long, but it contains the entire direction of Jesus's life. He speaks it in the middle of an argument about status. James and John are maneuvering for the

best seats in the kingdom, the other disciples are angry about it, and Jesus gathers them together and says, in essence, that they have misunderstood greatness itself. In his kingdom, greatness is not measured by how many people serve you. It is measured by your willingness to move toward the needs of others.

The cross becomes the final expression of a posture Jesus had embodied all along. Throughout the Gospels, he keeps moving toward people most others avoided: the sick, the ashamed, the grieving, the socially unwanted. His life is marked less by accumulation than by giving, less by distance than by presence. He did not come building a platform around himself. He came to serve.

At Crosswalk, one of our values is momentum. We like action, not just ideas. One Thursday evening during our Lovewell dinner for food-insecure and unhoused neighbors, I noticed a familiar face helping in the room. We spoke briefly and I did not think much more about it until two days later, early Saturday morning, 7:30am, when I saw her again at the café preparing to serve hundreds of cups of coffee before church had even started. I watched for a while, then finally walked over and asked, “How do you keep doing this?”

She looked genuinely confused by the question.

“Do what?”

“Show up like this,” I said. “Serve this consistently.”

She paused for a second, shrugged slightly, and said, “I just keep showing up.”

That was all.

And somehow it felt enough.

Because significance often arrives disguised as ordinary faithfulness. She keeps showing up early to serve coffee. Jesus gave his life away entirely. The scale is different, certainly, but the shape is recognizably the same.

- 1. What does “just keep showing up” mean in your current season?**
 - 2. How have you seen quiet acts of service shape people over time?**
 - 3. Where is God inviting you to serve without needing recognition?**
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WEEK 4 - THE CHURCH AS SENT COMMUNITY

WEEK 4 - DAY 1

THE COMMISSION BELONGS TO ALL OF US

Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT) "Jesus came and told his disciples, 'I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

The Great Commission is not a job posting for professionals.

It's easy to read Matthew 28 as an instruction addressed to a particular group of especially qualified people, missionaries, church planters, evangelists, and to understand the rest of us as supporters of their work. We give financially, pray occasionally, maybe go on a short trip. But the professionals carry the commission.

Jesus doesn't talk to the disciples like that. He has just been raised from the dead, which changes the authority behind everything he says. And what he says, to this group of ordinary people who have just spent three years failing and recovering and following and doubting, is: go and make disciples. Not "commission some of your number to go." Go. Make. Baptize. Teach.

The word "go" in the Greek is actually a participle, "as you are going", which suggests the commission is woven into the movement of ordinary life, not reserved for special occasions of religious departure. As you go about your actual life, your commute, your workplace, your neighborhood, your family: make disciples. The mission is embedded in the ordinary.

And then Jesus adds something remarkable: I am with you always. The commission and the promise are inseparable. He doesn't issue the commission and then leave us to fulfill it on our own. He sends us and accompanies us simultaneously. The authority he claims, all authority in heaven and earth, is the authority behind the sending. Which means the mission we're joining is backed by the most significant power in the universe. You are not too ordinary for this. You are exactly the kind of person Jesus commissioned.

1. **How does it change your view of mission to realize it belongs to ordinary people?**
2. **Where in your daily life has God already placed opportunities for discipleship?**
3. **What helps you trust Jesus's promise that he is with you as you go?**

WEEK 4 - DAY 2

SENT OUTWARD IN CIRCLES

Acts 1:8 (NLT) "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere, in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

A few years ago, a friend of mine confessed something incredibly honest. He said, "I realized it's a lot easier for me to love 'the world' than it is to love the guy who shares my driveway."

He had just signed up for a short-term mission trip to a country halfway across the globe. He was excited, raising funds, and packing bags. But that exact same week, his next-door neighbor's lawnmower broke, and the man spent three hours sweating in the heat trying to fix it. My friend watched through the window, felt a momentary ping of conviction to go offer a hand, but hesitated. It felt awkward. They had a polite but distant relationship, and crossing the grass felt like a risk.

It hits a raw nerve, doesn't it? It is always easier to care about the ends of the earth than to love your actual neighbor. A distant need rarely requires you to be personally vulnerable; it can often be addressed with a financial transaction and kept at a comfortable remove. Sponsoring a child overseas feels noble—and it is—but it doesn't require you to have a difficult, messy conversation with a coworker or a person in your own apartment building.

When Jesus gives the disciples a final geography lesson before He ascends, He structures it intentionally:

- **Jerusalem:** The city they are standing in.
- **Judea:** The surrounding region.
- **Samaria:** The neighboring territory, steeped in centuries of cultural and ethnic hostility.
- **The Ends of the Earth:** The distant, unfamiliar unknown.

The mission expands in concentric circles, moving from the immediate to the distant. Notice the order. Jesus does not let us escape into the horizon. *Jerusalem is always first.* The mission begins with the people you see every day, the neighborhood your church is physically located in, and the city with its specific, local brokenness.

But the circles don't stop there. They keep expanding through Samaria—which required crossing cultural lines the disciples would have preferred to avoid—and outward to peoples who don't look or act anything like home.

The Holy Spirit doesn't give us the luxury of choosing between the local and the global. We are called to be fully engaged in our Jerusalem while keeping our hearts wide open to the ends of the earth.

1. **Who is your "Jerusalem" right now — the people closest to you?**
2. **Are there distant causes that feel easier to care about than nearby relationships?**
3. **What would it look like to engage both your local community and the wider world faithfully?**

Acts 2:42, 44-47 (NLT) "All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals, and to prayer... And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had... They worshiped together, met in homes, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity, all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved."

No one told them to be attractive.

The early church in Acts 2 was not running a marketing campaign. They were not strategically positioning themselves as appealing to the surrounding culture. They were simply living, sharing meals, praying together, selling possessions to meet each other's needs, learning together, worshiping with joy. And the result was that the surrounding community noticed, and people kept joining.

This is one of the most powerful missionary strategies in the New Testament: a community so genuinely shaped by the love of God that its common life becomes a form of witness. Not a program or an event. The life itself.

Jean Vanier founded L'Arche in 1964 with a conviction that sounds almost too simple: that people with intellectual disabilities were not just underserved, they were unwanted, pushed to the margins of a society that valued productivity and independence above everything else. His response was to invite two men with disabilities to come and live with him. Not in an institution. In a home. Around a table. The community that grew from that table became one of the most striking examples of Christian witness in the twentieth century, not because of its programs or its theology, but because of the quality of life it practiced. As Vanier put it: every meaningful movement of love begins when someone decides that the absence of love is no longer acceptable.

The theologian Lesslie Newbigin argued that the local congregation is the hermeneutic of the gospel, the key to its interpretation. The way a community of believers lives together either makes the gospel credible or incredible to the watching world. When the church is generous, joyful, genuinely united across lines that normally divide, and extravagantly present with the suffering, it communicates something else entirely.

The early church in Acts 2 had no buildings, no budget, no staff, and no social media following. What they had was each other, and the Holy Spirit, and a quality of life together that the world around them found irresistible. The influence the church exercises on the world around it is not primarily a function of its programs or its platform. It is a function of its life.

- 1. What qualities made the early church compelling to the people around them?**
 - 2. How does shared life become a witness to the gospel?**
 - 3. What kind of community are you helping create through your presence and relationships?**
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WEEK 4 - DAY 4

EQUIPPED TO GO

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT) "Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, fully developed in the Lord."

The church has often read this passage upside down.

The typical reading goes like this: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are the elite corps of ministry professionals who do the work while the rest of the congregation supports them. The gifted few carry the mission. Everyone else serves as a kind of base camp.

But that's not what Paul says. He says the role of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers is to equip the people of God to do the work. The ministry professionals are not the point. They are the preparation for the point. The point is every member of the body, deployed and equipped for mission in the specific sphere of life they inhabit.

Anne Sullivan did not build an institution. She invested in one student: Helen Keller. Through relentless patience and unconventional methods, she helped Keller, who was blind and deaf learn to communicate, then to think, then to write, then to become a voice heard around the world. Sullivan's legacy is not measured in what she produced directly. It is measured in who she equipped, so the greatest thing she ever built was someone else.

This inverts the typical power structure of religious institutions. The congregation is not the audience for the pastor's performance. The congregation is the mission force, and the pastor is the trainer. The gathered time on morning is not the main event. It is the preparation for Monday, when the equipped people of God scatter into workplaces and neighborhoods and families and schools and are the primary carriers of the kingdom's presence in the world.

The church is most fully itself not when everyone is gathered but when everyone is sent. The gathering is for the purpose of the sending. Your work is not secular. Your neighborhood is not outside the mission. The equipped person who goes out Monday morning is the thing the gathered time was building.

- 1. Who has helped equip you spiritually or personally?**
- 2. How does your everyday work become part of God's mission?**
- 3. In what ways can you help equip others instead of simply doing everything yourself?**

WEEK 4 - DAY 5

CHOSEN TO DECLARE

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NLT) "But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the

goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy."

Peter writes to scattered people. The churches he addresses are not the cultural majority. They are minorities living in a world that doesn't share their commitments, often under pressure and sometimes under persecution. And his word to them is not commiseration. It is identity.

But to understand how radical this identity is, you have to go back fifteen hundred years before Peter wrote it. In Exodus 19:6, God tells Israel at Sinai: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This was God's original design, not just a tribe with a religious tradition, but an entire people functioning as priests for the world. Priests stood between the holy and the human. They made the presence of God reachable for those who could not approach it on their own.

Israel largely failed to grasp this. They received the identity as a mark of separation rather than as a mandate for mission. Walter Kaiser, one of the foremost scholars of the Old Testament, calls this one of the great tragedies of redemptive history, a people called to be priests for all the nations who became instead a religious club for themselves. Election mistaken for privilege rather than understood as purpose.

Now Peter takes that same language from Exodus 19 and hands it to scattered, pressured, minority communities of Gentile believers: you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Everything Israel was called to be and largely failed to become, you now are, in Christ. Not chosen for privilege. Chosen for purpose. The election language is not an end in itself. It is the fuel for witness.

You are, by definition of your calling, a priest: someone sent to stand at the intersection of the holy and the human, to make the invisible God visible in the texture of your ordinary days. Your life, regardless of its apparent significance in the world's accounting, is a royal priesthood. You were called out of darkness for the purpose of declaring light. Not someday. Now. Here. In this neighborhood, this family, this workplace, this ordinary week.

- 1. What does it mean for you to live as part of a "royal priesthood"?**
 - 2. How can your ordinary life make God's goodness visible to others?**
 - 3. Where is God asking you to represent his presence more intentionally?**
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WEEK 5 - UNTIL HE RETURNS

WEEK 5 - DAY 1

THE MISSION HAS AN ENDPOINT

Matthew 24:14 (NLT) "And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come."

Somewhere in the economy of God, the mission has a finish line.

Jesus says it plainly: the gospel of the kingdom will be preached to all nations, and then , not before, but then , the end will come. This is not a timeline Christians can calculate or a metric we can obsessively track. It is a statement about the shape of history. The mission is moving toward something. It has a direction. It has a destination. The story is not circling; it is progressing.

Every parent knows what clarity about the future does to the present. When an eight-year-old in the backseat asks "are we almost there yet?" for the fourth time, the answer matters enormously. Tell them twenty minutes and they settle, pull out a book, stop asking. Tell them hours and hours and watch what happens to the atmosphere in the car. Clarity about the destination changes how you carry the journey. It does not make the miles shorter. It makes them bearable, purposeful, even interesting.

If the mission had no endpoint, it might be easier to treat it as background noise , something good people do in modest ways over the long haul. But Jesus tells us that the mission is tied to the consummation of everything. The proclamation of the kingdom to the nations is not merely a good thing to do. It is, in some mysterious sense, part of the mechanism by which history moves toward its conclusion.

This is not a call to anxious urgency or apocalyptic calculation. It is a call to purposeful engagement. You and I are alive at this moment in history, in this city, in this neighborhood, with these relationships , not by accident. God is a sending God, and he placed us here, in this particular chapter of the story, on purpose. The question is not whether the mission will be completed. Jesus has already told us it will. The question is whether we will know the joy of participating.

The finish line is real. The story is heading somewhere. We are people sent into the middle of it, carrying the announcement that the King is coming, that the kingdom is already breaking in, and that the end will be better than anyone dares imagine.

1. **How does knowing history is moving toward God's purposes shape the way you live today?**
 2. **What relationships or opportunities might God have placed in your life intentionally?**
 3. **What would purposeful engagement in God's mission look like this week?**
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WEEK 5 - DAY 2**THE END PICTURE SHAPES THE PRESENT**

Revelation 7:9-10 (NLT) "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great shout, 'Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!'"

John sees the end, and it is a crowd.

Every nation, every tribe, every people, every language: a gathering so diverse, so vast, and so unified in worship that it could only have been assembled by someone who loves difference as much as he loves unity. The throne at the center does not erase the diversity around it. It gathers it, holds it, makes it possible.

This image is not just a comfort for the future, it's a mandate for the present.

If Revelation 7:9 describes where history is going, then anything that moves toward that picture is moving with the grain of the universe. Tribalism, ethnic exclusivity, a church that reflects only one culture, a gospel that only reaches people who already look like us: these are movements against the direction of history.

The eschatological crowd in Revelation is the final argument for cross-cultural mission. The destination of the story includes every tribe and tongue. Which means the mission that gets us there must cross every border, every language, every cultural division that currently keeps human beings from that throne. We are building toward that gathering, and every face not yet there is someone the mission is still moving toward. Let the picture of the end shape what you build.

1. **How does Revelation's vision of every tribe and nation shape your understanding of the church?**
2. **Where do you see division or exclusion that runs against God's future vision?**
3. **How can you become someone who helps build bridges across differences?**

WEEK 5 - DAY 3**AMBASSADORS IN BETWEEN**

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (NLT) "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him... So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us."

Remember the middle school cafeteria? Long before cell phones, if your friend liked someone, they didn't send a text or DM. They wrote a note on a piece of notebook paper, handed it to you, and made *you* the messenger. You didn't write it. You didn't compose the feelings inside it. But you had to carry it across a room that felt a mile wide, because your friend was too

terrified to do it themselves. If you've ever done that, you already understand the core of what it means to be an ambassador. You're just carrying someone else's message.

They don't become citizens of the place they're sent to. But they don't hold the place at arm's length either. They are fully present, learning the language, understanding the culture, navigating its systems, while remaining rooted in their commission and their identity. They are there on behalf of someone else, carrying a message they did not compose and an offer they did not generate, but which they are fully authorized to make.

Paul says that is what we are. Christ's ambassadors. Which means we are people of the in-between: fully present in the world, genuinely engaged with the culture, the neighborhood, the workplace, the political reality. But present on behalf of another kingdom, carrying a message of reconciliation that did not originate in us, but in the God who, in Christ, was already reconciling the world to himself.

"God is making his appeal through us." This sentence should stop us in our tracks. The appeal of God to a broken world is, in some genuine sense, mediated through the lives and voices and presence of his people. He could have done this differently. He chose this, the same pattern as the incarnation, the same downward, present-in-the-mess method. He sends people. He speaks through them. He makes his appeal through ordinary lives that have been made new.

You are in the middle of an era that has not yet ended. The new creation has begun, Paul says the old has gone, the new has come, but the reconciliation of all things is not yet complete. You live in the overlap, the in-between, the now-and-not-yet. And in that in-between, you are not waiting. You are sent. You are an ambassador. God is making his appeal through you.

1. **What does it mean to you to be an ambassador for Christ?**
2. **How can you remain fully engaged in the world while rooted in God's kingdom?**
3. **In what ways might God be making his appeal through your life right now?**

WEEK 5 - DAY 4

FAITHFUL UNTIL

Micah 6:8 / James 2:14-17 (NLT) "This is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." / "Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, 'Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well', but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?"

James has no patience for faith that stays inside your head.

He makes the argument as concretely as possible. Someone is cold and hungry. You say, "God bless you, stay warm." And you walk away. James asks: what good did that do? He's not being harsh for the sake of it. He is insisting that love, to be real, must take a form that the other person can actually receive.

The eschatological urgency we have been exploring this week does not lift us above the concrete. It pushes us further into it. The person who truly believes the King is coming is not thereby exempted from the work of justice in the present. They are more committed to it, because they know which direction history is moving and want to move with it.

There is a scene from Mister Rogers' Neighborhood that has stayed in public memory long after the show ended. It is 1969. Fred Rogers invites Officer Clemmons, a Black character, to share a small paddling pool with him on a hot day. The two men sit together, feet in the water, talking quietly. It seems like nothing. But in the context of that moment in American history, two men of different races sharing that small space was its own kind of statement, made not through argument or announcement but through the simple act of being present together. Rogers did not make a speech. He just kept showing up, kept inviting, kept making space. Faithful until. That is the shape of it.

Micah 6:8 and James 2 belong together. Micah tells us what God requires: justice, mercy, humility. James tells us what that looks like when someone's hunger is in the room. It looks like food. The grand theological vision of the kingdom of God and the bag of groceries left on someone's porch: these are not different categories. They are the same thing, at different scales.

We are waiting for the King to return. And while we wait, there are hungry people, cold people, lonely people, enslaved people, ignored people in our city. The waiting is not passive. It is not a spiritual holding pattern while God finishes the real work. The waiting is the work, the ongoing, daily, frequently unglamorous work of love in its most concrete forms. Faithful until he returns looks like Micah 6:8 and James 2 combined: doing justice, loving mercy, walking humbly with God, and actually giving the cold person your coat.

1. **Where is God inviting you to make your faith more tangible and practical?**
2. **Who around you has a concrete need you can help meet this week?**
3. **What does the faithful waiting for Jesus's return look like in ordinary daily life?**

WEEK 5 - DAY 5

NOW IT'S YOUR MOVE

Revelation 22:12-13, 20 (NLT) "Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." ... "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

The last book of the Bible ends with a longing. Come, Lord Jesus. It is the oldest prayer in the Christian tradition, the prayer of people who have understood what the mission is, given themselves to it, and now ache for the day when the King finally arrives. Not because the work has been exhausting, though it has. But because they have seen enough of Jesus to want more of him, and the mission has taken them close enough to the heart of God that they want to be there fully.

Five weeks ago we began by asking who owns the mission. The answer was God, and it always has been. He sent his Son. He sent his Spirit. He called Abraham before the destination was visible, Isaiah before he felt qualified, disciples before they stopped failing. We looked at the world he loves, at Jesus as the shape of the mission made flesh, at the church as a community formed not to stay gathered but to go out. And this week we stood at the end of the story and let where it is going reshape how we live in its middle.

The invitation is what it has always been. The mission that started in the love of God before time is still moving. History is still progressing toward that crowd in Revelation 7, every nation and tribe and tongue gathered around the throne. The God who sends is still sending. The question is the same one he asked Isaiah in the smoke-filled throne room, the same one Jesus answered with his life: Whom shall I send? The tomb is empty. The King is coming. The mission is yours.

- 1. Looking back over these five weeks, what has impacted you most deeply?**
- 2. Where do you sense God inviting you to participate more intentionally in his mission?**
- 3. If God asked you today, "Whom shall I send?" how would you respond?**