

Sermon Topic: "Five Finish Lines of the Great Commission" by Mr Joseph Chean
Sermon Text: Isaiah 65:1

Introduction

- The Church is the only organisation in the world that does not exist for its members, but for people outside of it. The Church exists for the primary reason to make God known to people outside of it, and to bring them into the community inside of it.
- Isaiah 65:1 - I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said '**Here am I, here am I**'
- **God is a proactive God.** He does not wait for us to call on His name. He does not wait for us to seek His face. He comes to us even before we thought about Him or sought His name.
- What then are the 5 finish lines of the Great Commission, knowing that God is a proactive God? It is important that the Church recognises what its finish lines are, so we don't run the wrong race. This is the race that God has marked out for us, and He has not given us any permission to change it. This is His prerogative. The Church exists for these 5 finish lines.

1st Finish Line: Tell Every One the Good News

- Mark 16:15 – He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."
 - Why does every human being deserve the right to hear and understand the Good News of Salvation?
 - Every human being is made in the image of God. Therefore, everyone deserves an opportunity and has a right to hear who they are in the heart of God, and that through Jesus, they can experience the full life that God intends for them.

2nd Finish Line: All People Groups Reached

- Matt 24:14 – "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations (*ethnos*) and then the end will come"
 - The word *ethnos* means people groups. It does not mean geographical nations, but different tribes, dialects and tongues.
- There are 11,757 people groups in the world (7.6 billion).
 - A people group refers to an ethno-linguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members.
- There are 7089 unreached people groups in the world (4.5 billion).
 - A people group is considered unreached when there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to engage this people group with church planting (ie. still reliant on outsiders, as less than 2% of the population are evangelical Christians)
- There are 3161 unengaged unreached people groups (239 million). Unreached people groups are unengaged when there is no church planting and outreach strategy.
- Most of these unengaged and unreached people groups are located within a 5 hour flight from Singapore (Many are in Sumatra, which is an hour's flight from Singapore).
- 200 years ago, Singapore was a similarly unengaged and unreached people group. The gospel arrived in our land because of the missionaries that came with the British settlers. The church in Singapore exists today because the church then did not forget about our island. Similarly, we must not forget those who are unengaged and unreached.

- Example of the Suruwaha tribe of the Amazon Jungle: There was no record of their existence, but God spoke to 2 girls to bring the gospel there! The girls found the tribe, and through the efforts (both spiritual and practical) of them and many other missionaries, there are now believers among the tribe.

3rd Finish Line: The Bible for Every one

- There should be a bible for everyone, because we believe that the word of God is the only agent that can bring change to all levels of society.
- Currently, there are 6860 known languages in the world. Of that, 2883 languages (42%) have some or all translations. There are 2195 languages (31%) with translations in progress. However, there are 1860 languages (27%) left to do (no active translation going on).
- Translation is important because it is essential that people connect with the word of God in their heart language for real encounter and transformation to occur.
- Example of William Carey: The man who disciple and baptised India through the word of God
 - The word baptised in Greek means immersed or soaked.
 - Kimchi analogy: In order to make kimchi, one must immerse and soak the vegetable in water with various condiments. This action of immersing and soaking the vegetable changes the texture of the original vegetable. When God said to make disciples and baptise them, He meant to kimchi them (change the texture of the community).
 - How did William Carey kimchi India?
 - He was a Botanist – “All thy works praise thee, O Lord.” Carey believed that nature is declared good by its Creator, a subject worthy of human study.
 - He was a Mechanical Engineer – introduced the first steam engine and first indigenous paper for the publishing industry to India.
 - He was an Economics major – introduced savings banks and fought lending interest rates of 36% to 72%. He also attracted foreign investments
 - He was into Healthcare – campaigned for humane treatment of leprosy patients who were burnt alive because of cultural beliefs of reincarnation
 - He contributed to Mass Communication – created the first newspaper
 - He was part of the Agri-Horticultural Society that sought to cultivate land when India’s land was an uncultivated jungle
 - He was into Education – taught Bengali, Sanskrit and Marathi to Civil servants. Began schools for children of all castes and first University of Asia – to liberate the Indian mind from the darkness of superstition
 - He was into Mathematics, Libraries, Social Science, Philosophy, History etc
 - He was not only a missionary that preached the gospel, but he also affected every part of society.

4th Finish Line: Church in Every Neighbourhood

- The goal is for everyone to be near enough to walk, bike or take a short ride to church. It may look different, meet on a different day and time, be at a home, office, void deck etc.
- The church need not appear in an institutionalised form. For example, those who live in 1-room flats in Singapore are unlikely to come to our typical church setup, as they may be intimidated by it, and think they not have the right clothes or speak the right language (have the right form).

- What is stopping us from creating little home churches instead? After all, the gatherings in Acts 2 were in home churches. The church is not a building; it is a gathering of a community of people.
 - Example: The speaker created a weekday church for secondary school students in a school setting for them to commune with other students in a safe environment.
- Today's emerging generation is hungry for a tangible, every-day-of-the-week spirituality that is integrated with all areas of life.
- The standard definitions of church are changing rapidly. God is still at work building His church, but it is looking more different and diverse. We cannot offer them a religious experience that only impacts what they do on a Sunday.
- The next generation is eager to belong to a genuine community of faith which shapes their relationships and is seemingly interwoven with their vocational life 24/7.
- The goal is for every neighbourhood and sphere of our society to have a church presence, where God is worshipped, followers disciplined and community impacted.
- We must look at places where the church does not exist and target the "empty places with fresh, intentional strategies of church multiplication.

5th Compassion and Justice in Every Nation

- Every other Scripture in every book of the Bible is punctuated with God's heart for the poor. If you were to remove scriptures about the poor and needy, the Bible would not stand. God created the church to run all 5 finish lines.

Jesus has called us to GO into all the world. But who is this Jesus in the Bible?

- Genesis: The Creator of the universe, the breath of life and the Seed of the Woman – one who would crush Satan's head
- Exodus: The Passover Lamb- the one who takes away our sins
- Leviticus: The High Priest – who stands in the gap for us
- Numbers: The Cloud and The Fire – one who faithfully guides us
- Deuteronomy: The Prophet like Moses – one who delivers us from slavery
- Joshua: The Conqueror of the promised land – one who leads us into victory
- Judges: The Judge and Lawgiver – one who brings us back to the Father
- Ruth: The Kinsman Redeemer – one who redeems us
- 1 & 2 Samuel: The Prophet of the Lord, one who speaks the word of the Lord
- 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles: The Reigning King – one who reigns and is sovereign over all despite the frailty and weaknesses of man
- Ezra: The Faithful Scribe – one who teaches
- Nehemiah: The Rebuilder of The Broken Walls - one who rebuilds broken lives
- Esther: Mordecai – one who guides us to live our destiny in God
- Job: The Redeemer that lives – one who is far greater than all our troubles
- Psalms: The Lord who is our Shepherd – one who makes us lie down in green pastures, leads us to quiet waters and one who restores our soul
- Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: The Wisdom of God – one who has answers to all areas of life
- The Song of Solomon: The Lover & Bridegroom – one who is a lover of our soul

- Isaiah: The One who is seated on the throne whose name is wonderful, counselor, the mighty God and the everlasting Father
- Jeremiah: The Potter who moulds and shapes us
- Lamentations: The Weeping Prophet – who weeps when we go astray
- Ezekiel: The breath of life in dry bones – one who revives
- Daniel: The 4th man in The Fiery Furnace – one who is faithful in all hardships
- Hosea: The Bridegroom – one who is a stubborn lover
- Joel: The Baptiser with the Holy Spirit – one who empowers
- Amos: The Burden Bearer – one who carries our burdens
- Obadiah: The Mighty Saviour – one who saves us from our pits
- Jonah: The Forgiving God – one who forgives no matter how sinful we are
- Micah: The Messenger with beautiful feet – one who constantly speaks
- Nahum: The Avenger of God’s elect- one who is our defender
- Habakkuk: The Great Evangelist calling out for revival – one who reaches out to all
- Zephaniah: The one who rejoices over us with singing and dances over us with shouts of joy
- Haggai: The one who shakes nations and will fill His temple with glory
- Zechariah: The Almighty one – one who says it’s not by might or power but His Spirit
- Malachi: The Son of Righteousness – with healing in his wings
- Matthew: The Messiah – who is the coming King
- Mark: The Servant King – who shows us the role of a servant leader
- Luke: The Son of Man – who shows us His humanity
- John: The Son of God – who shows us His divinity
- Acts: The fire from heaven, the Ascended Lord – who died , resurrected and raised to heaven so we can hope
- Romans: The Justifier – one who makes us right as though we had no wrong
- 1 & 2 Corinthians: The Power and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit – one who shows Himself relevant in all situations
- Galatians: The One who Sets Us Free – from all bondages and slavery
- Ephesians: The One who blesses us with riches – so that the church may display the wisdom of God
- Philippians: The God who meets our every Need – one who is a faithful provider
- Colossians: The Fullness of the Godhead – one who holds all things together
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Soon Coming King – one who is our ultimate savior, redeemer
- 1 & 2 Timothy: The Mediator between God and Man – one who is a bridge, the man of peace
- Titus: The Faithful Pastor- one who cares for our growth
- Philemon: The Friend, closer than a brother, a buddy
- Hebrews: The Blood that, once and for all washes away all our sins
- James: The Great Physician – one who is a healer of our body, soul and spirit
- 1 & 2 Peter: The Chief Shepherd – one who leads by his sacrifices and exemplary lifestyle
- 1 & 2 & 3 John: Everlasting Love – one who loves and loves and loves to the power of infinity
- Jude: The keeper of His people – the one who keeps us from falling and presents us to God
- Revelation: The Prince of Peace, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Great I Am, the Alpha and Omega, the King of Kings & the Lord of Lords! One who is coming again for His spotless bride! He

is the faithful one, worthy of all our praise and worship. He is the reigning King where nations, tribes and tongues and angels will bow before Him and worship crying “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty who was, and who is, and who is to come!”

Conclusion

- And this God says, I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said ‘Here am I, here am I’ (Isa 65:1).
- Can you hear the proactive longing of God’s heart for those who have yet to know and see Him? He did not just die for your and my sins, but the sins of the whole world, and His longing is for all to come to know Him.
- He is the same God who says Go into all the world, preach the good news to all creation and make disciples of all nations, baptizing (immerse, soak) them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. Lo, (pay attention), I will be with you to the end of the age.
- Hence, if God is longing to be known, can the Great Commission be just a token commitment, a short term, or a partial commitment from a disciple of Christ? You can’t! if you truly understand the heart of God, can you walk away from it and say you don’t care? You can’t! If God is so longing to be known, can the Great Commission be just a short term or a partial commitment of AMC? You can’t! The church exists for its primary purpose of revealing who God is. If the church does not fully dive into this, then we miss our mark. We may be running a race, but it’s a different track. We may end up not crossing the finish line. We may end up lost in self-consuming Christianity for ourselves.

Reflection Questions

1. Will you give your life to live for God’s Greatest Glory?
2. Who will you encourage to listen, to obey and to co-create with God in order to reach the least, the last and the lost?
3. Where will you pioneer new things and new ways to impact your area of influence for Jesus?
4. Will you and your CG commit your lives to the 5 finish lines, no matter your profession, and not just see missions as a specific department?
5. Will you pay attention and put the 5 finish lines as your core goals?

