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Why Are We Here?
Titus 3:1-11
June 21st, 2015, Jeff Germo

Approximately 2,000 years ago, before Jesus was crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, he gave his disciples a job to do. They were to finish the job he started. Make disciples, followers, or apprentices of Jesus by teaching them to live the life Jesus called them to. And Jesus said, in John 17, that **the mission he was entrusting to them would rise or fall depending on whether or not they remained united in love.**

The early church took this call very seriously. They knew that their reason for existing was to bring more people into relationship with Jesus. **They sacrificed everything for that call.** They gave up the comforts of life. They sold their property and used the proceeds to fund their mission. They suffered greatly from the Roman government and from the Jewish religious system from which they came.

And in the middle of horrendous suffering the church grew exponentially. In Acts 2 we read that they regularly gathered in their homes, eating together, fellowshiping, praying and being taught by the apostles of Jesus. We also read that their reputation with the “average Joe” outside their walls was very good. They actively and purposefully went around doing good in their communities in the name of Jesus so his name would be made famous.

A little more than couple centuries went by and the Roman Emperor Constantine, influenced by his mother, Helena, who had secretly converted to Christ in 310 AD, decriminalized the Christian faith and several years later made it the official Roman religion. He began to erect huge cathedrals all over the Roman empire. On the journeys we have done to Israel we have visited a few of those ancient churches.

Since that time the church began to lose its way. Hierarchy, power, image and prestige ruled the day. The Roman Catholic church became very powerful. As a matter of fact, in many respects it became more powerful than the governments and often times swayed the government.

Several centuries later Martin Luther entered the scene. He was a catholic priest who was tormented by his own depravity and through his study of Scripture, mostly Galatians and Romans, he came to the conclusion that the church he served had twisted the Gospel of Jesus for its own ends, for money and power.

He protested the abuses in many ways. His most famous protest was when he nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Church a list of 95 ways the church had gone wrong in their teaching and practice. Martin Luther broke away from the Catholic Church and Lutheranism was born under a new mantle that became what we know now as Protestantism. He, and those who followed after him, and the many other schisms and factions and multiple new denominations, built their churches, some of which were true to the call of Christ and others not so much.

Over the centuries since then and until present day many have forgotten what the mission of Jesus is about. We have been distracted by many things. We have come to think that church is about a building, or about meeting the needs of those who meet in the building. We need to remind ourselves that the mission of Jesus has not changed. He gave us a job to do while we wait for his return. Our job, just like it was for those first disciples, is to purposefully make disciples who make the name of Jesus famous where they live.

There are about 35,000 people in Campbell River, most of whom do not know Jesus, which means they are lost and on their way to a Christ-less eternity while we, at times, sit comfortably in our pews with the false impression that God and the church are here to make us comfortable.

Never once does the Bible promise us a comfortable life. As a matter of fact, it is quite the opposite. Jesus said life with him is going to be hard. He said if we truly were his followers we would have to push against the flow of society. In Matthew 7:13-14 he said that few people are able to walk through the narrow gate, or walk on the narrow road. Walking the way of Jesus is not for the faint of heart. He said people will hate us on account of him (Matt. 10:22; Mk 13:13; Lk 21:17).

Do you ever wonder why Jesus doesn't just take us to heaven now? If heaven is so great, and it's so hard down here, why can't we just go to heaven upon receiving Christ? That to me would seem like a good idea. When we get to heaven we will truly find out what worship really is. We'll see him face to face. The veil will come off our eyes and everything in our being will want to fall down and worship at his feet. It will be so glorious.

In heaven we will have perfect fellowship with each other. The reason is that we will be so enamoured with Jesus that the things we squabble about down here are going to seem extremely silly. We will know what love really is. We'll experience peace, and joy, and complete goodness. All our hopes will be realized in heaven, and all the things we thought were so important down here – the cars and other toys will seem like just one more thing added to the landfill.

I am not an expert on what heaven will be like, but from what I can ascertain from the Scripture, it's not going to be boring, and we will completely enjoy many of the same things we get to enjoy down here in a small way; fellowship, worship, communion with God etc.

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The one thing we won't be able to do in heaven though is to bring more people into God's kingdom. That is why God doesn't take us to heaven right now. That is our job while we are waiting for his return.

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2 Peter 3:8–13 (ESV)

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

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¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

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¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

What sort of people should we be while we wait for Christ's return? He's got a job for us to do, and it's not about our comfort. That's what this section in Titus is about.

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Titus 3:1–11 (ESV)

¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

Just to remind you, in our previous passage, Paul dissected the various age demographics of a church and explained what maturity would look like for each, and he said that the purpose of growing in maturity was so the name of Jesus and God's Word would be attractive, so more people would be added to his kingdom. Now, he speaks to all groups.

¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

I think this is a hard one. It's easy to be submissive to someone who has your best interest in mind, but if you doubt the intentions of the person in authority, that's a hard one. That does not come naturally. But, Paul doesn't say we should only be submissive when our bosses, or governing authorities are benevolent. He simply tells us that we should be submissive to our authorities – period.

In Romans 13 Paul said it is God who actually sets up rulers and authorities. In his sovereignty, which I will never claim to understand, he allows certain people to be in power over us and to rebel against them, Paul said, is to rebel against God. So, whether it's your boss, or your parents, or those in government, unless they are ordering you to do something that is contrary to what God says in his Word, Paul says you should obey. As we said last week, Christians should be the best employees on the planet.

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² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

When our bosses are less than kind or benevolent to us, our temptation will be to trash talk them at the water cooler. That's the most natural thing for us to do. When we are feeling under appreciated, or misunderstood, it makes us feel better to put someone else down. Paul says don't do it. ***“Speak evil of no one, [and] avoid quarreling, be gentle, and show perfect courtesy toward all people.”*** All people? Yup! All people. Even my boss?

Yes. Even the Prime Minister? Yup. My mother in-law? Yes. And your brother and you coworker, and your spouse – especially your spouse.

Why is it we think it's ok to treat those who are the closest to us with the most contemptible behaviour? Show perfect courtesy towards **all** people – especially your spouse. Listen; it is not ok to speak discourteously to your husband or wife. It is not ok to raise your voice, or to nag, or to treat them poorly. It's not ok.

And it is not ok to treat our bosses or coworkers, or even government officials with disrespect even if they have first done the same to us.

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³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

It's easy to try to justify our bad behaviour by saying, "Well, they deserve it. They are evil." We can sort of feel that the terrible things we said to the other person, or about them behind their backs, are somehow ok because they did or said something to us that was equally as bad. But, we forget what we once were, and are even still very capable of. Regardless of who started it, whatever **it** is, if we reciprocate in kind we are stooping down to a very low level. If our goal is to follow Jesus by walking in love and maturity reciprocating when someone hurts us does not accomplish that end.

And furthermore, when I think back to how immature I have been in the past, I have no right to feel any sense of injustice at all if someone mistreats me. I am simply getting some of my own medicine.

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Author Max Lucado writes:

All of us occasionally do what is right. A few predominately do what is right. But do any of us always do what is right? According to Paul we don't. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10, NKJV).

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Some may beg to differ. "I'm not perfect, Max, but I'm better than most folks. I've led a good life. I don't break the rules. I don't break hearts. I help people. I like people. Compared to others, I think I could say I'm a righteous person."

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I used to try that on my mother. She'd tell me that my room wasn't clean, and I'd ask her to go with me to my brother's room. His was always messier than mine. "See, my room is clean; just look at his." Never worked. She'd walk me down the hall to her room.

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When it came to tidy rooms, my mom was righteous. Her closet was just right. Her bed was just right. Her bathroom was just right. Compared to hers, my room was, well, just wrong. She would show me her room and say, "This is what I mean by clean."

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God does the same. He points to himself and says, "This is what I mean by

***righteousness.*"¹**

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Titus 3:1–11 (ESV)

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Next, Paul says, lest we think we are any better than anyone else, or that God in some way is comparing my sort of, kind-of good behaviour, with someone else's a little bit worse behaviour, remember that he does not save us based on our good works at all. We have nothing to feel smug about. We cannot look at our neighbour and say, "Oh, I'm sure glad I'm not as bad as them. Isn't God lucky to have me on his side?"

We have the hope of eternal life with him based solely by his grace. We don't deserve it. It's a gift. If we think we can compare ourselves with someone else and come out smelling good, we have totally missed the point. It's easy to find someone we think is worse than us so we can feel better.

An old story speaks of a man who died and faced the angel Gabriel at heaven's gates. The angel said, "Here's how this works. You need a hundred points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you have done, and I will give a certain number of points for each of them. The more good there is in the work that you cite, the more points you will get for it. When you get to a hundred points, you get in."

"Okay," the man said, "I have read my Bible every day for forty years. I never miss a day." Gabriel replied, "That's wonderful. That's worth three points."

"Three points?" said the man incredulously. "Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my money and service." "Terrific!" said Gabriel, "that's certainly worth a point."

"One point?" said the man with his eyes beginning to show a bit of panic. "Well, how about this: I opened a shelter for the homeless in my city, and fed needy people by the hundreds during holidays."

"Fantastic, that's good for two more points," said the angel.

"TWO POINTS!" cried the man in desperation. "At this rate the only way I will get to heaven is by the grace of God." "Come on in," said Gabriel.

That is what we need to do friends. We don't stop doing good things, but we stop doing them because we believe we gain some sort favour with God for doing them. We need to

¹ Max Lucado, *Traveling Light* (Word, 2001)

give up.

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⁸ The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

We're going to take a closer look at this next week, but one of the main themes coursing through Titus is that we, as followers of Jesus, are to devote ourselves to doing good works. **These are the things Paul says are profitable.** These are the things we need to invest our time, energy and resources on. But we need keep this in mind:

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Good works do not produce salvation. Salvation produces good works.

We have it totally backwards if we think we can impress God by our works of righteousness. We can't.

In a Reader's Digest interview, Muhammad Ali stated: **"One day we're all going to die, and God is going to judge us;[our] good deeds and bad deeds. If the bad outweighs the good, you go to hell. If the good outweighs the bad, you go to heaven."**²

Unfortunately, that is not what the Bible says. The Bible clearly says over and over again that the only way we will be saved is to throw ourselves at the mercy and grace of God and acknowledge that we do not have what it takes, and only Jesus does.

Good works do not produce salvation. Salvation produces good works.

Remember, Ephesians 2:8-10 says we have been saved **by** grace, **through** faith, **for** good works. We are not saved by them, but God did create us to do good works.

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⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Now, Paul also says that there are some things that are **not** profitable. Notice the contrast. Do you want to know one of the reasons Christians get such a bad reputation in the world? We like to argue about things that aren't really that important. We major in missing the point on so many things. People outside the walls of the church see that and guess who that reflects badly on? Jesus. There are some theological truths that are worth dying for, and there have been millions of Christians throughout the ages who have been martyred for these truths. As a matter of fact, there are Christians dying for their faith today at the hands of ISIS. They are given the chance to renounce their faith in Jesus and live, and they choose instead to die with Christ.

There are some biblical truths that are important that we don't compromise on. The deity of Christ, his death and atonement for our sin, his resurrection, our depravity and inability to save ourselves, that salvation is by grace, through faith, and not by works, and the inspiration of Scripture, to name a few. These are essentials. We cannot move on these.

² "Ali," Reader's Digest (December 2001), p. 93

But, we also don't have to be idiots when we discuss them with people who have other opinions, whether they call themselves Christians or not. The interactions I have seen on social media sites like Facebook by people who think they are representing Jesus is enough to make my stomach turn. God does not look down and smile when we think we need to defend him by defaming people we disagree with.

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The reformers from the past used to say, **"In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity."** I think that's a good way to live.

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¹⁰ As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

"In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, charity." There is a time when you need to stop a divisive person in their tracks. There is no excuse for someone who purposefully goes around stirring up trouble. There are those who seem to think God has given them the gift of criticism and controversy.

There is a story of a very well known pastor who has been with our Fellowship of churches for all of his over eighty years. He was called to a troubled church many years ago. The church had a history of division that gave it a bad reputation in the community. Many pastors were burned out at the hands of a small group of probably well meaning dissidents in the congregation. I don't know exactly how the story goes because I heard it second hand, but apparently, in the first week the pastor called a church business meeting in which he asked a couple different people to stand up. He acknowledged their faithful service in the church and commended them in the name of Jesus for serving in humility.

He then asked two other ladies to stand. They stood up. He said to them, "Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Jones, you have been attending this church for many years and have done nothing but stir up division. You have been a thorn in the side of every pastor this church has had. You have been warned countless times. You are a disgrace to the name of Jesus and are no longer welcome in this church. There is the door."

¹⁰ As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

Paul said the same thing to the church in Rome.

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Romans 16:17–18 (NLT)

¹⁷ And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them. ¹⁸ Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people.

Why is this so important? Two reasons. First, because if we spend our time listening to divisive people we will soon become like them. It is so easy to give in to joining in on juicy gossip, or saying negative things about people who are in leadership. It's much harder to walk away from it and it is harder yet to stand against it. When we refuse to walk away or stand against it, even if don't intend to be actively involved with the negativity, we can easily be sucked into following the path of least resistance and become a part of the problem. So, Paul says, stay away from those kinds of people. Do not associate with them or you will become like them.

Secondly, the kinds of people Paul refers to who are divisive yet have the appearance of spiritual piety and rightness, are actually working against Christ, not for him. Friends, it is not ok to dishonour the name of Jesus in this way. How we behave is so important. How we think is so important. How we treat others is so important. It all reflects on Jesus. There is nothing more important than the mission he gave us to reach out to the people of our city with his love.

Our *raison d'être* should be to make the name of Jesus famous so his kingdom will be expanded. We need to live carefully in this world. It's not an easy road, but we are also not alone in our journey. We have the same Spirit in us who raised Jesus from the dead. We have the same Spirit in us who created the heavens and the earth, and with his help we can change and be the people he's called us to be so he receives the glory. Let's not get distracted from the mission of Jesus.



Why Are We Here
Titus 3:1-11
Week of June 21st, 2015

Objective of this study: To understand and take to heart the mission of Jesus.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm 46 meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

What are you looking forward to this summer?

Word/Work (60-90 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read all of Titus. While reading pay attention to every instance Paul talks about good works or goodness, or right living, or anything like that.
 1. In light of the huge emphasis on these things, what is Paul calling us to and why?
3. What are some things you have learned from your study of Titus since the beginning? What difference will those things make in your life?
4. Talk together about ways you can apply these truths in your life as a follower of Christ and in the life of your group.
5. Pray together about these things.

[This will be the last prepared Growth Group study until the week of September 13th. If you have not done so yet, make sure you have a wrap up pot luck or BBQ. You might also want to meet a couple times through the summer for social activities.]