

**Romsey Baptist church    6<sup>th</sup> Jan 2008 am**  
**Purpose Driven Church Reminder**

So, today is the first Sunday of 2008. Who can believe that. Time seems to fly by – 8 years since the new millennium. This is my 5<sup>th</sup> New Year in Romsey.

It is nearly 2 years since we changed our leadership structure from deacons to Teams. Nearly 3 years since we did the 40 days of Purpose course and 4 years since the six week series looking at the Purposes of the church, which was based on a book called Purpose Driven Church.

In that book Rick Warren says that people need to be reminded about the purpose of church every 30 days or so,– because otherwise we forget. So this morning we are going to spend some time reminding ourselves of the 5 purposes that Rick Warren identifies as being the key things that the scripture calls us as individuals and as a church to be doing.

Now I know that not everyone warms to Rick Warren, and those of you who are observant will have spotted that when we talk our new leadership structure, we talk about teams, not Purposes, or Purpose Driven. That isn't an accident.

So this morning as we recap the 5 Purposes of Church I hope you realize that it is only because the things that Rick Warren says are drawn from scripture that we are engaging with them. Rick Warren did not come up with these 5 purposes of the church and doesn't claim to. There can be no debate or argument that these 5 things are things that God calls us to do through the Scripture.

Jesus is the Head of the Church, the church belongs to him, not to us or Rick Warren and it is God that sets our agenda, God that sets our goals and vision and purpose, no-one else.

What Rick has done is remind us from Scripture what God's goals are for the church, and highlighted the fact that many churches tend to focus on one or two of these purposes and neglect the others, which he says leads to unbalanced churches, which is probably true.

So, what are the five purposes of Church?

The **first and most important purpose is worship**. John Piper, Pastor at Bethlehem Church in Minneapolis said this – Mission is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Mission exists because worship doesn't".

In Matthew 22 34 Jesus having just silenced one group of religious leaders is faced by an expert in Jewish law who tested him with the question "**which is the greatest commandment in the law?**" Jesus replied "**love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind**".

And we express our love to and for God as we worship him. That is first and most important commandment, to worship God. We as individuals and as a church exist first and foremost to worship God.

In the scriptures, the Greek word that is used for worship is **proskuneo**, which literally means to kiss the hand, like a dog licks their masters hand and also to prostrate yourself, to fall on your knees with your head to the ground in order to express your honour, respect, submission, and adoration.

But what is important isn't the outward action, but the inner attitude that lies behind the action. The key point is that scriptural worship expresses an attitude of submission, of adoration and love.

### **Number of points that come out of this understanding of worship.**

**Firstly**, if worship is our response of love and adoration to who God is, then it is not limited to what we do when we come together on Sunday's. Worship can and should take place at any time, and any place

**Secondly** no correct style of worship. Jesus gave 2 requirements for legitimate worship – **that it should be in Spirit and Truth. John 4:23**

Jesus was making the point that true worship comes from inside of us, our mind, soul and heart. True worship, is worship where the heart is offered to God, and the external form that such worship takes is irrelevant.

**Thirdly**, because of what Jesus has achieved for us, praise should be a significant part of our worship. It is right that worship is at least some of the time, lively, enthusiastic, passionate. It shouldn't be simply about going through the motions.

**Fourthly**, worship is more than an activity. It is a lifestyle. **Rom 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.**

Paul is saying that as Christians we no longer belong to ourselves but to God who has redeemed us, bought us back at a price. And so we are to be set apart for God, we are to be totally committed to God in every area of our life. This dedication to God is our spiritual worship. It is our reasonable, logical, worship of God as some versions of the bible translate it. Worship is a life long calling. Worship is who we are. By staying obedient to God, by being aware of his presence and guidance in every situation, every moment of our lives becomes worship to God.

One of the key themes that emerged during my sabbatical was worship. And later in the year I hope that we will be able to spend a few weeks thinking more about it. And I hope that in 2008 as we grow in our understanding and practice of worship, that our worship will be more than music, singing songs together, I hope that our worship will be a transforming encounter with the living God.

Before we look at the other purposes, let's worship God in song right now.

**So the first Purpose or goal of the Church is worship. A second purpose of the church is Fellowship.**

Rick Warren says that as Christians we are called to belong not just believe and makes the point by referring to **Matthew 28: 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

It perhaps isn't immediately obvious why he uses this verse, but perhaps that is because we don't have as good a grasp about the meaning of baptism as we should, especially as we are in a Baptist church!

Baptism is not only a symbol of salvation, reminding us of our death to sin and resurrection to life in Christ, it also visualizes a person's inclusion into God's family. It is a rite of initiation into the Church, both global and local. One of the questions that is asked of the person being baptized is "**do you promise to serve God as part of this local church**". Baptism symbolizes the fact that we are not lone-ranger believers, we are family, community, called to journey together in relationship with one another.

It has been a while now since we had a baptism, so if you are a Christian but haven't been baptized, then I would love to hear from you and we can talk about why it is a great idea for you to be baptized.

And there are of course a number of benefits of being part of the church rather than trying to be a lone ranger Christian. The church among other things

provides us with a place to discover and use our gifts.  
places us under the protection of godly leadership  
provides a spiritual family to support and encourage us in our walk with Christ.

**Number of responsibilities.**

**I Jn 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. Romans 12:10 says Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.**

And that is what we aim for in our church.

**In talking about Fellowship, Warren also uses the m word. Membership.**

Reminds us that membership is not about having your name on a church roll, it's relationships. Committing to one another. It is not about being able to vote at church meetings, although clearly that is part of what it means to be a member – it is about expressing your self sacrificial commitment to one another.

Again, if you are a Christian and you are committed to this local expression of the Universal Church, then can I encourage you to think about membership.

And there is one last point that needs to be made as we think about the purpose of Fellowship and that is the importance of **small groups.**

It is in small groups that we develop relationship, intimacy, prayer, where we really get to know each other. If you aren't in a small group, then again I want to encourage you to join one. However hard we try on a Sunday, we will never make you feel as part of this family as you will if you belong to a small group. They are essential if you want to feel loved and supported.

### **So that's worship and fellowship, and a third purpose is discipleship**

Matthew 28: 19 Jesus says, **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

The church is called by God to educate, to teach the new believers so that they can grow and become more like Christ in their thoughts feeling and actions. This is called discipleship.

There is a danger that churches can become so obsessed with numbers, numbers of converts, numbers of baptisms that we forget about follow up. I love the phrase that Rick Warren uses, we are called to teach as well as reach.

So the church has a clear responsibility to teach, but as individual believers or disciples of Jesus we also have responsibilities.

A disciple is a student and we are meant to learn, to grow, to study, to develop. But this doesn't happen automatically or by simply attending church. Truth is churches are full of baby believers. If we want to grow, like most things, it takes effort and commitment on our part – we need to take some responsibility.

Just as an athlete gets fit by doing certain things over and over, there are Christian habits we need to learn and practice in order to grow.

1. Time with God's Word.
2. Time with God in prayer.
3. Tithing.
4. Fellowship.

These four habits influence the key areas of our lives, what we do with our time, our money and our relationships. If we make Jesus Lord over these areas, then he will be in control of our lives and we will be on the road to becoming more like him.

So, the first and most important purpose or goal of the church is worship, a second is fellowship, and a third is discipleship. A **Fourth purpose is ministry or service.** **Matthew 22: 39.** second part of Jesus two great commandments is **'Love your neighbour as yourself.'**

Another important scripture verse that underlines this purpose is James 2: 14-18. **Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his**

**physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead**

Clearly, Loving our neighbours involves **more than words**. Must lead to action

Loving our neighbour involves **sharing our money** with other people. Giving some of it to charities – and also thinking about how we spend our money, the things we buy, trying to buy fairtrade goods when we can, that kind of thing. But it also involves **sharing our possessions**, our time, our skills with other people.

Each one of us has gifts that we can use to help other people. All of us are called to serve God by serving others.

In our church, we need more people offering to serve. A good number of folks have been serving for a long time and want a break. We need new people to step forward and offer their time, energy and skills. So, this year, can I encourage you to think about what you might be able to do – check out the list of job vacancies in the notice sheet and most importantly, pray about the skills and gifts that God has given you and ask how he wants you to use them.

**The last of the 5 purpose is Evangelism.**

**Jesus said in Matt 28:19-20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Evangelism is the command of God. It is not an optional extra that we get round to doing if we feel that way inclined. In the past evangelism has been seen as the preserve of the extra keen Christians, but all of us are called to be evangelists.

Evangelism is our **responsibility**. God called us to do it, and the stark truth is that if we don't do it, no one else will.

But evangelism isn't something that we should be scared about. Not only is it our responsibility, it is also our **privilege**. The message that we have is the best news anyone could ever hear. God hasn't given us the task of trying to off load his clapped out motor or try and sell his double glazing.

He has called us to tell people how they can save their lives, how they can be forgiven, how they can enjoy eternal life. Of course we know that some people don't want to hear this message, they are blind and deaf to the good news we bring them. But the message we have is exciting and life changing and it is a privilege to be given the task to tell people the good news.

And when we think about evangelism, it is important to remember that **the results are down to God**. God calls us to be his witnesses, he calls us to tell people our story of what God has done for us. But that is all. It is not our job to make people believe, to make them Christians. We can be discouraged by a lack of "success" but God

simply calls us to do our bit faithfully, nothing more. And it is important to remember that.

Before we recap, one criticism that is often leveled at the Purpose Driven Church and Purpose Driven Life books is the almost total absence of any reference to prayer. But to be fair to Rick Warren, he does say that Prayer needs to undergird all of the 5 purposes of the church.

One of the things that came out of the Mission Consultancy meeting – oh and they will be coming back to report to us in the morning service on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> January, so make sure you are here to see what they have to say to us.

One of the things that came out of that was a hunger for prayer. So the leaders want to make 2008 a year of prayer. We want prayer to undergird everything we do. And we will be doing various things throughout the year to help us make that a reality. With that in mind, the new banner that is being made for this year is based on **2 Chron 7:14**

**If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**

And next Sunday evening we will be looking at that verse in more depth and I would encourage you to come to that service if you can, or if you can't then ask for a copy of the dvd to watch at your leisure.

So, there are 5 purposes, 5 things that we can see from scripture that God calls us as individuals, and as a church to do.

To Worship God, the first and most important thing.

Fellowship, we aren't lone rangers, we are called to be part of a family, and we express this through baptism, through membership and through involvement in small groups.

We are called to discipleship, to teach as well as reach. We are supposed to continue to grow and learn as believers, not to stay as babies for ever.

We are called to ministry or service, to get involved. Its important to learn and grow, but we have to put what we learn into practice.

And we are called to evangelism, it's not an optional extra, it's our responsibility and enormous privilege to share in God's mission to his world.

We are called to focus on all of these things, so that we can be a balanced church and well balanced believers.