

These are my personal notes, so don't judge me for the poor grammar...

Branches

Being Outward: Why?

Week 1 Notes

Imitating Jesus Outwardness



Key Concept:

Incarntional-Missional
Impluse

Many of you took Roots this past 5 weeks with Pastor Mark. Roots is an incredible class that evaluates our decision to follow Jesus through the lens of having an intimate devotion to the Lord. So you can say that Roots is about looking inward, and evaluating the question, "what does it look like to have a relationship with Jesus". But if Roots is about looking inward, Branches is about looking outward. The two, however, really aren't separable. For example, as you spend time with Jesus, you will imitate him even without understanding that is exactly what we're called to do.

If you walk as he walks, you must be outward because Jesus' very mission was outward. This is probably not news to you. You've most likely heard Matthew 28:18-20 where Jesus gives the great commission - to go and make disciples of all nations. But something that can be missed is the "how" we are to go about making the disciples. And often we co-opt the great commission to mean periodically walking around, handing out gospel tracks, or memorizing gospel diagrams to present, convincing someone on the spot to follow Jesus. All this can communicate that evangelism is a christian extracurricular activity for those who are extroverts or "bold" in their faith. To be fair, parts of that picture aren't bad, but that it is off a little and falls short of what we are called to. What I am talking about is imitating Christ's life which is wrapped up in being with people as he found them, engaging them in ways they understood, and asking them to follow him. Alan Hirsch, a missiologist describes Jesus' nature as the Incarnational-Missional Impulse.

Mission



The phrase combines two theological concepts to describe not just why Jesus came but how he came, Darrell L. Guder, in his book, Missional Church describes mission as this:

"Mission means 'Sending,' and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God's actions in human history. God's mission began with the call of Israel to receive God's blessing in order to be a blessing to the nations. God's mission unfolded in the history of God's people across the centuries recorded in Scripture, and it reached its revelatory climax in the incarnation of God's work of salvation in Jesus ministering, crucified, and resurrected....It continues today in the worldwide witness of churches in every culture to the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Simply put, Mission means God's goal for salvation for every person, tongue, tribe, and nation. Jesus is the climax of the mission, and when we imitate Jesus, as he is sent, we then are also sent.

Incarnation

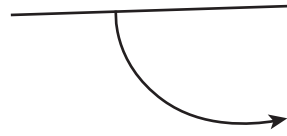


The second part of Alan Hirsch phrase, Incarnation is how we describe God taking on flesh in the person of Jesus. Jesus is fully man, and fully God. Hirsch condenses the opening doxology of the Gospel of John by saying that

"when God came into our world in and through Jesus, the Eternal moved into the neighborhood and took up residence among us. The central thrust of the incarnation, as far as we can penetrate its mystery is that by becoming one of us God was able to achieve redemption for the human race. But incarnation, and Christ's work flowing out of it, achieved more than our salvation; it was an act of profound affinity, a radical identification with all that it means to be human."

>>Now hear this as it relates to you imitating Jesus<<
Beyond identification, it is revelation: by taking on himself all aspects of humanity, Jesus is for us, quite literally the human image of God. If we wish to know what God is like, we need to look no further than Jesus. We can understand him because he is one of us. He knows us, and can show us the way."

Putting the two together



When we imitate Jesus' incarnation, we are to become incarnational ourselves. Part of being incarnational is exercising a genuine identification and affinity with those we are attempting to reach. And through our mission and incarnation we provide little glimpses of Jesus through being directly and actively involved in the lives of people we are seeking to reach. This means we care about what the people we are reaching care about, it means we are giving time to them that is regular and spontaneous, and sharing the gospel in a way that they can understand in the timing of the Holy Spirit leading us. Paul sums this up when he says in his letter to the Corinthian church, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."

These two concepts make up the Missional-Incarnational Impulse. This is Jesus' nature, it becomes our's as we imitate him. You can see the first generation of Jesus' followers putting it into practice, going out and creating communities of Jesus followers. And so many generations we are attempting to do the same thing. We are trying to imitate Jesus' outwardness.

Brainstorm



To get started on your journey to think outward we are going to pray and see who the Holy Spirit desires for us to focus on. We're going to brainstorm a list of relationships that we can use for the basis of our outward thinking for the rest of this class. Try to think of 5 to 10 people. They can be anyone: family members, roommates, friends, classmates, people you see on the bus, regular at the coffee shop you frequent.... It can be anyone!