

ACTS OF THE URBAN PILGRIMS · A PREVIEW · WEEK 16

Six Marks of a Healthy Church

#6: Mission

Pastor Jeremy Park · October 11, 2026

Acts 2:43–47

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

— Acts 2:43–47 (NIV)

Finding a Healthy Church—and Building One Together

For a Christian, finding a healthy church is very important. But just as important is helping to build one together. A healthy church is not made by a good pastor or good programs alone; it is built when its people join in living out the church's essence and mission. So we need to understand the marks of a healthy church and, by that standard, take an honest look at our own community.

THE FIVE MARKS WE HAVE STUDIED SO FAR

- 1. Kerygma — Proclamation.** A church that faithfully proclaims the gospel centered on Jesus Christ.
- 2. Didachē — Teaching.** A church that learns and practices God's Word on the foundation of traditional theology.
- 3. Koinōnia — Fellowship.** A church that shares space, time, and resources to form a community of love.
- 4. Diakonia — Service.** A church that serves one another through the gifts of the Holy Spirit and each person's talents and skills.
- 5. Leitourgia — Worship.** A church that gathers to worship and, in koinonia, scatters to worship in everyday life.

These five marks are essential to a healthy church, but one remains. A healthy church should be measured not only by what it does inside its walls, but also by the mission it carries out toward the world beyond them.

So we begin today with this conclusion: **“We are all missionaries.”**

1 Before Missionaries, There Were Witnesses

When did the idea of “mission” begin? The word comes from the Latin *missio*, meaning “sending.” That Latin word never appears in the original Greek of the New Testament, and the term began to be used for Christian evangelistic work only in the sixteenth century.

It is easy to trace the beginning of mission to the church in Antioch in Acts 13, where Barnabas and Paul were sent out after the church prayed over them and laid hands on them. That moment can be described as the first formal sending of a Gentile mission team by a church community recorded in Acts. But mission did not begin there.

First of all, the whole Bible is the story of God’s mission. The history of mission did not begin when human beings started sending missionaries. Its origin lies in God, who first came to the world and accomplished our salvation.

God the Father is the God who sends. He did not give up on a humanity severed from him by sin, but sent his Son into the world (John 3:17). **God the Son is Jesus Christ, the One who was sent.** He left the glory of heaven and entered human history. The incarnation is the most beautiful model of mission, because in it God entered into human life to save the world (John 1:14; Philippians 2:6–8). **God the Holy Spirit is the God who sends the church into the world.** The Spirit empowers the church and enables it to bear witness to Christ. Mission, therefore, is first and foremost God’s own.

The word *apostle* is connected to mission as well. *ἀπόστολος* (*apostolos*) means “one who is sent.” Jesus also called all who believe in him to be his witnesses. In Acts 1:8, he told his disciples that they would receive the Holy Spirit’s power and be his witnesses. Long before the title “missionary” appeared in the sixteenth century, every believer in the early church was already a missionary. So if we, too, are witnesses who believe in Jesus Christ, we can say that, in essence, we are missionaries whom God has sent into this world for the sake of his reign.

2 Mission Begins Where We Are

Jesus told his disciples they would be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Mission to the ends of the earth matters, and the church must embrace God’s plan of salvation for all nations. But the place where we live is not excluded from that calling. Jerusalem was where the disciples were actually living. Their witness began in the everyday setting of their lives and spread across ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Here is the story of a Christian Instagram influencer: [watch the reel](#).

I agree with one pointed challenge in the influencer’s argument. Rather than asking whether our motives for mission are one hundred percent pure, they say, we should look at what actually governs our decisions. Everyone who goes on a mission trip has a sincere heart. But it is risky, they warn, to choose mission because everyday life lacks a dramatic storyline and we feel we need a special stage in order to experience God. I agree. This applies not only to short-term mission trips but also to conferences, retreats, and worship concerts. What is their point? Turned around, it means that we can meet God even in the most ordinary, repetitive, and seemingly dull routines, because God is with us always and everywhere.

From Mission Trips to Missional Living. What we need is not simply more mission activities, but a shift in perspective that sees the everyday life we live as the mission field. Our homes are where we practice the love of Christ. Our workplaces are where we reveal the values of the gospel through honesty and service. Our schools and neighborhoods are where we build relationships and bear witness to Christ. Even the culture and business of the city can display the values of God’s kingdom.

Taking part in God’s mission is not limited to those who have received formal training from a mission organization or been commissioned at a church sending service. The roles of a commissioned missionary and an ordinary believer are distinct, but the calling to be a witness for Christ has been given to every believer. God’s mission is already unfolding in the places where we live.

Yet even though we know this, we easily forget to live as Christ’s witnesses in everyday life. **What is getting in the way of our missional life?**

3

Persecution and Temptation

The obstacle to mission is not only persecution, but temptation

The English word *martyr* comes from the Greek *martys*, meaning “witness.” The early church was not a community that grew up in comfortable circumstances. Stephen, one of the seven deacons of the early church, bore witness to Jesus Christ before the Sanhedrin and was stoned to death for that testimony. In the Christian tradition, he is remembered as the first martyr of the early church.

For the early church, bearing witness could cost believers their very lives. Baptism, too, was a public declaration that Jesus, not the Roman emperor, is my Christ.

After Stephen’s martyrdom, a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and the believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Yet wherever they were scattered, they kept preaching the gospel (Acts 8:4). The early church took root in persecution, and in the scattering, the gospel blossomed.

The believers scattered by the persecution that followed Stephen’s death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. There, too, they shared the gospel, and a new community of faith took shape in Antioch. That church later grew into a missionary community that sent out Barnabas and Saul. The spiritual significance of this is profound: the witness became a martyr, and the fruit of that martyrdom became the starting point of mission as we know it.

The believers of the early church were persecuted for proclaiming the gospel. But here in urban Los Angeles, where we enjoy religious freedom, persecution is not the only threat we must guard against. There is also the **temptation** of the world.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis writes as a veteran devil, Screwtape, who teaches a novice devil, Wormwood, how to draw a human being away from God. Letter 12 in particular describes how a believer’s faith gradually erodes. Screwtape’s point is that the tempter does not need to lead a person into extreme sin. What matters is keeping that person from realizing that his faith is heading in the wrong direction. He can keep going to church. He can still think of himself as a Christian. But little by little, he comes to neglect his relationship with God. Small pleasures and meaningless activities capture his attention, and he never notices that he is drifting away from God.

It is clear why this story matters for Christians in the city today. We can lose our calling as Christ’s witnesses without ever being persecuted. We can attend church, join in worship, and keep up our religious life while, in reality, living apart from the gospel. The early believers did not give up their witness even under persecution, but today we may forget, amid temptation, that we are meant to bear

witness at all.

Satan draws us away from our missional calling through both persecution and temptation. He leads us to conclude that mission belongs only to missionaries, or that it means nothing more than a short-term trip abroad. The power to overcome this temptation comes only from relying on the Holy Spirit and receiving power to overcome the world. The fire of the Spirit can burn away our idol of comfort and our spiritual complacency. This becomes possible when the wind of the Spirit breathes new life into us.

4 LA Is Our Mission Field

This is why Los Angeles, where we live, is a mission field. It is a center of the world's cultures, economies, and modern arts, and behind its glamour, the temptations of Satan lie in wait. We believe God did not send us here by chance but with purpose, and that he has made us one. It is also a mission field because it is a small global village, home to more than 170 minority ethnic groups.

There is an old saying: "Know your place." Usually it is used to rebuke someone or to tell them to stay within their limits. But we can reconsider it from the perspective of the gospel. I cannot personally love and care for every person in the world. I cannot travel to every region of the earth to preach the gospel. I have limits of time, ability, and physical capacity. Realizing that actually lightens my heart, because God has not called me to carry the whole world alone.

I cannot go everywhere, but in the place where God has sent me, I can live as a witness for Christ. And the place where I live is LA, and in particular, the neighborhood around Pico & Kingsley, where our church is located.

To reveal the values of God's kingdom and share the gospel in the city where we live—I want our church to give its very best to making God's kingdom visible at Pico & Kingsley. This is how we come to know our place, and at the same time how we do the concrete things we are able to do.

While preparing this message at a café in Newport called "Kingdom of God," I was approached by a white man who wanted to voice a complaint. According to him, Americans tend to gather and talk only among themselves, whereas in Europe there is a culture of sitting at a shared table and striking up conversation naturally, even with strangers. What he said does not accurately describe Americans as a whole. But hearing it raised an important question that connects to the message I was preparing: if the place where we live is a mission field, how are we treating strangers?

Within the name of “church,” are we only enjoying the comfort of relationships with people we already know? We easily approach those who worship with us and know us, but are we indifferent to our unfamiliar neighbors outside the church? Mission is going to unfamiliar places, but it is also opening our hearts to unfamiliar people.

If it is hard for us to approach strangers, then perhaps we can become a church that strangers can come to. I hope our church will be one that anyone can walk into, with a low threshold. How wonderful it would be to set out a shared table as a symbol, a place where anyone who sits down can greet one another freely and share their lives in conversation!

Our mission is to build worship. The goal of mission is worship.

Missions exists because worship doesn't.

— John Piper

That's right. Mission exists because there are people who do not know God and do not worship him. Mission is not the final goal; it is the calling to lead the nations to worship God.

Let us do mission through what we do best. What does our church treasure most, and what have we done best? Worship. We love worship, and we place great importance on building a community that meets God through worship. If so, this can be our missional strength in Los Angeles. It means helping a life and community of worship take shape not only within the church, but also in the workplace, in business, and in the arts and culture.

My younger sister Hyejung started a prayer group at DreamWorks. It shows that a workplace is not only a place to earn a living and get work done; it can be a mission field where a life and community of worship are built.

Loveblock — Dreaming of Another Place of Worship. I pray that within Loveblock, too, we would move beyond building relationships with our neighbors and have times to worship God together with them. Worshiping with them, sharing koinonia over tacos and galbi, partnering with local schools, the fire station, and the police station for the safety and education of the neighborhood, and someday even going on a short-term mission trip to Mexico together—wouldn't that be something?

Building the church is also mission, of course. Mission is not just one of the church's programs; the church exists for mission, so serving the church is mission too. A voluntary early-morning prayer gathering has started on Wednesday mornings. Gathering at church to pray, sharing a bowl of seolleongtang, and then scattering to the places where God has sent us is also our mission.

Even without a missionary's certificate, let us remember that we are God's ambassadors, called to mission. Let us remember that mission begins close to home, and that the Los Angeles where we live is the end of the earth and a land of mission. **By the power of the Holy Spirit, let us overcome the world's temptations, master them, and become instruments in God's hands for mission.**