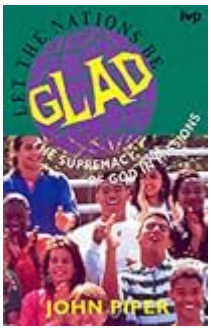
MISSION EXISTS BECAUSE PRAISE DOES

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Category: Mission

Most people who are involved in mission work from an Evangelical perspective know the famous phrase from John Piper:



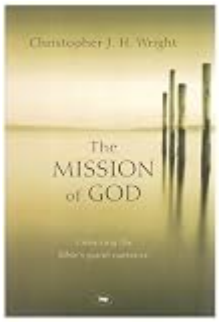
> *Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesnâ€™t. worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over and the countless millions of redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.*

I've always found this phrase to be inspiring while also being slightly unsatisfactory. It is highly motivating - picture of people from all round the world praising God is one that resonates with me. The idea that our focus in eternity will change from action to worship is also very attractive (though I devoutly hope that worship doesn't mean endless chorus singing!).Â However, although this quote has been used over and over again (including by me) I can't help having a nagging feeling that it doesn't quite tell the full story.

Firstly, Piper seems to be implying that mission is all about 'getting people into heaven' so that they can worship God. As my (still incomplete) series on the Five Marks of Mission attempted to demonstrate, there is a lot more to participating in God's mission than evangelism. Mission is also about demonstrating the justice and righteousness of God in the way that we live and bringing his shalom to a waiting world.

Secondly, I think that this quote pulls us away from an incredibly important reality which is that praise and worship should give rise to mission. It is striking that in Matthew 28:18 the disciples worship the risen Christ before he sends them out on the 'Great Commission', and it is when the Church at Antioch was at prayer that they received the call to set Paul and Barnabas apart for mission (Acts 13:2).Â Chris Wright sums up this reality wonderfully when he says:

> *The praise of the church is what energizes nd characterizes it for mission, and also serves as the constant reminder we so much need that all our mission flows as obedient response to and participation in the prior missionof God - just as all our praise is in response to the prior reality and action of God. Praise is the proper and primary stance or mode of existence of the created order to its Creator. So inasmuch as our mission is a part of our creaturely response to our God, praise must be its primary mode also.Â (The Mission of God, p.134).*



Piper is right of course; the coming eternity will be characterized by praise and worship. But worship is not just the end point of mission, it is also the starting point.