



11500 West 20th Avenue  
Lakewood, Colorado 80215  
303-238-2482 (Fax 303 238 2337)

[www.soth.net](http://www.soth.net)

contact us at [mail@soth.net](mailto:mail@soth.net)

9:00 a.m. Christian Education

**10:00 a.m. Worship**

Children's Sunday School during Worship



**"It's What We Do:  
Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the  
World"**

**Acts 2:22-41**

**Rev. Ron Holmes**

**Pentecost Sunday: May 23, 2010**



Today is the last in our series on the Six Great Ends of the Church—or, as we've been calling it, "It's What We Do." These six actions should just be a part of who we are, in our DNA so to speak: *The Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind; Shelter, Nurture, and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God; Maintenance of Divine Worship; Preservation of the Truth; Promotion of Social Righteousness;* and today's topic, *Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World*, an appropriate topic on this Pentecost Sunday because the story of Pentecost is the first example—and perhaps still the greatest example—of exhibiting the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. So, also appropriately, before we hear in different languages a portion of the Pentecost story, let's invite the Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on us that we might hear anew the story. (Congregation sings *Spirit of the Living God*; followed by the reading of Acts 2:22-41).

Of the six Great Ends of the Church, today's topic—the *Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World*—is the most missional. Hopefully you're becoming more familiar with that word by now as we continue in our journey in the "missional" process. A review of the six Great Ends can help us in understanding that word. First, from our great end for today the very word "exhibition" is a missional word. It means to present something for public view. It means to be out there showing off something, exhibiting something for others to see. It doesn't mean something that doesn't count but we're going to stick you for a full ticket price anyway as in the National Football League's definition of "exhibition." They don't even call those games "exhibition games" anymore because there was too much of a negative connotation to that, in the NFL commissioner's mind. So now they're simply called "preseason" games. But, exhibition, in the truest sense of the word

and in the sense we are using it today, is not a negative word. It simply means to put on display something for public viewing—like an "art exhibition," or like the first Pentecost a dramatic exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to those present.

As I mentioned earlier today's topic, the *Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World* is the most missional of the six Great Ends of the Church. Throughout this series I've referred to some of the Great Ends of the Church as being more "attractational" than others, and some more "missional." In fact, a stairstep of the Great Ends from most attractational to most missional would look like this: *Maintenance of Divine Worship*—because of its corporate nature, it's what we collectively do here in the sanctuary on Sunday morning so someone would have to come here, would have to be "attracted," if you will, to show up here on Sunday morning to witness and participate in the corporate worship of Almighty God. Let's not forget that we also emphasize that how you live out the rest of your week away from this morning is also an act of worship and very missional. But, as we said in the sermon on that topic, our corporate worship here on Sunday morning is very much "attractational," the most so of the six Great Ends of the Church.

Next would be the *Shelter, Nurture and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God*. This can be very missional depending on how we define "children of God." However, whenever we think of the children of God as only the membership of this church, or perhaps just other Christians, it becomes very attractational. Our programs for the children of God, particularly for their Christian nurture and spiritual fellowship, are the focus and, hopefully, they're attractive enough that people are interested in them and being a part of them—if they, somehow, can find out about them. *Shelter, Nurture and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God* can be very missional...but when we look inwardly only at our programs providing this, they become attractational only.

Then, I would suggest next in this stairstep from attractational to missional is the *Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind*. Certainly, we hope that the preaching that takes place here is proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind. Certainly, we hope that the teaching that takes place here in our Sunday School, our youth group and other study groups is proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind. But, if that's the only proclamation taking place then it is also very much attractational and not missional. People have to come here to hear it. Somehow, they have to get attracted to our church enough in order to choose to come hear and then hear the proclamation of the gospel. If the proclamation is not also happening "out there," then it is an attractational activity only. It can be missional. But it also can too easily slip into an attractational mode only.

Next in the stairstep would be the *Preservation of the Truth*. It also can be very missional. If we are living out and talking about the values of the truth of Jesus Christ—always with grace also, remember...full of grace and truth—then the preservation of the truth can be very missional. But, again, too easily we slip into an inward mode only in which we discuss and hold up the truth among ourselves. For someone to grasp the truth of Jesus Christ they have to, somehow, get here to hear it. But, it can be very missional particularly because of the discussions

about "truth" we can find ourselves in "out there" in the world—from political conversations to values discussions to simple conversations about what is happening to us in life. However, if we don't at some appropriate point bring into the discussion the truth about Jesus Christ for our lives, then the conversations are neither attractational or missional. They are just conversations.

Which is a similar issue for the next Great End of the Church, the *Promotion of Social Righteousness*. Because we are talking about "society" here—the promotion of social righteousness—the focus is directed "out there" in society. The topics discussed and acted on generally have little to do with church programs and more to do with social issues—immigration issues, environment issues, economic issues, civil rights issue, for example. So, our efforts at fulfilling this Great End of the Church can be very missional. But, the danger here, much like with the *Preservation of the Truth* but even more so, is that we separate out matters of faith from our social righteousness (or social justice) actions. When that happens, what once was a distinctively Christian effort becomes just another social effort among many in trying to promote social righteousness. One has to look only at the YMCA—what was once the Young Men's Christian Association—to see an example. Now, please understand me, the YMCA does great work in the community. It's just that it has lost its Christian message in the work it is doing. The Salvation Army has moved dangerously close to the same precipice. True, at its shelters and soup kitchens, one will likely hear a gospel presentation and worship service, but its exhibition to the world has lost its distinctively Christian focus. I don't think that the first thing a person thinks of when they think of the Salvation Army is the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings salvation to the world. You might, but I suspect that's not what most people think of. A benign bellringer at Christmas and "Don't they have a shelter and soup kitchen downtown somewhere?" are probably what most people think. And, the truth of the matter is, the Christian Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and Christians individually—particularly those in the United States—come dangerously close to the same precipice. There's nothing particularly wrong with aligning ourselves with other organizations and individuals in the promotion of social righteousness. But, when we fail to proclaim a distinctively Christian gospel in such involvement, we become neither missional nor attractational. We're just another social agency. And, when we as individual Christians view—either consciously or without really thinking about it—that what we pay in taxes is fulfilling our call to promote social righteousness, then we deceive ourselves. In fact, I might suggest that the failure of the Church in recent decades to lead the way in promoting social righteousness—particularly in failing to do so in a truly missional manner by exhibiting the Kingdom of Heaven through all the Great Ends of the Church—has led more and more to the condition of thinking our tax dollars are fulfilling that role when, in truth, they are not.

Which is why this last Great End of the Church is so essential. It is, in some ways, the sum of the other five. It is, most certainly, the most missional of the five. In fact, it is what brings "missional" to the other great ends. That is because the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven is...not just to those gathered here, but "to the world." It is the corrective to those Great Ends that too easily become attractational only—worship; sheltering, nurturing, and fellowshiping;

proclaiming—because it reminds us to exhibit "to the world." And it is the corrective to those Great Ends that too easily lose their Christian distinctiveness—preserving truth and promoting social righteousness—because it reminds us that we are to exhibit the "Kingdom of Heaven" to the world.

One final word about these Great Ends of the Church and the idea of attractional and missional. First, obviously, none of the Great Ends are optional. If we are to call ourselves Christians, if we are to call ourselves a Church, we are to be about all of them in some form. We should evaluate ourselves and our church by the measurements of the Six Great Ends of the Church. How are we doing at the *Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind*; the *Shelter, Nurture, and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God*; the *Maintenance of Divine Worship*; the *Preservation of the Truth*; the *Promotion of Social Righteousness*; the *Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World*, both as individuals and as a church? And, regarding attractional and missional: It's not an either/or proposition—we must be either missional or attractional, but we can't be both. It's not that! It is a both/and proposition. We must be both missional and attractional. Interestingly, whenever we emphasize an outward focus, a missional attitude, questions begin to come from church members: What about us? Are we going to care for the members anymore? Are we going to have programs in the church anymore, or are we just going to go "out there?" And the answer, of course (but perhaps not obviously because the questions do come!), is "yes, we're going to care for each other." Yes, we're going to proclaim the gospel here at the church, and, yes, we're going to shelter, nurture and provide spiritual fellowship for the children of God here at the church. Yes, we're going to strive with all our hearts to maintain divine worship here at the church. But, that is not all we're going to do. We're going to take it "out there" also. And the fact of the matter is, the natural movement of a church, the gravitational pull of a church is inward—to focus on its members, to focus on being attractional and to lose sight of the missional. We're not going to lose the inward focus because that is the gravitational pull in the church. But, we must also be missional. I would suggest to you that it is the loss of an outward focus, the loss of a missional perspective that has put this church, our denomination, and Christian churches in general (particularly in the "Western world") in the precarious situation we are in—the loss of prestige and influence in our communities, a "post-modern" world that is not only apathetic about Christianity and the Church, but becoming openly hostile toward it. We must regain, then never lose, a missional perspective that exhibits the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. Or, we might say, a Pentecost perspective. The disciples didn't remain in that room together. Instead, they went out and began to exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven to the world in dramatic fashion. And we must do likewise.

Let's take a moment for silent reflection on how we are doing at exhibiting the Kingdom of Heaven to the world...and how we might do better.