

I wonder why you are here today?

Maybe someone dragged you along. Maybe you want to learn. Maybe it helps you feel better. Maybe to catch up with friends. Maybe because it feels like the right thing to do.

There are lots of personal reasons you might be here today. But why are *we* here? Why do we meet here every Sunday? Why do we meet in small Bible study groups through the week? Why do we meet to run various ministries? Why does our church exist?

There is probably no clearer answer in the Bible to that question than in our Bible reading today. It is a passage known as the Great Commission. After Jesus rises from the dead, and before he leaves his disciples for heaven, Jesus gives them this mission:

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This mission is universal. It applies to every Christian and every church. Jesus has given one mission to his people across every time and place – to make disciples. This is why our church exists. This is Jesus’ mission for us.

Let me make two brief observations:

1. *All nations* is not just about political regions, although it does include that. It is a mission to make disciples in every place on the earth, in every level of society, in every social and cultural demographic.
2. The reason you are here today is because other Christians of the past took this mission seriously enough to bring the news of Jesus to our nation, or to our social or cultural groups, or those of our ancestors, which ultimately led to you and me hearing this good news. We have already benefited from this mission, and now we are called to join in this mission.

As we embrace Jesus’ mission for us, we want to be clear in what we mean by disciple. We want to describe it in a way that is understandable in our context. And so our mission statement is a definition of a disciple of Jesus.

Here is our mission: **Blacktown Anglican exists to Know Jesus, Treasure Jesus, Depend on Jesus and Represent Jesus.**

This is what we believe it means to be a disciple. This is our way of expressing what God wants for you, and for me, and for all people from every tribe, nation, language and culture. We want to be people who Know Jesus, who Treasure Jesus, who Depend on Jesus, and who Represent Jesus.

Today, I want to simply explain what we mean by each of these terms, and how they are a way of expressing what Jesus means by disciple.

Know Jesus

We want every person to personally know and understand the good news that Jesus is God’s Saviour and King for all humanity.

Last week, we heard that more than half of the people who live in our city have no affiliation with Jesus or with Christianity. And no doubt many people who identify with Christianity know things about Jesus, but they do not know Jesus.

I have been a Sydney Swans fan for the past 25 years. I am somewhat ashamed to admit what I am about to tell you. There was a time when I could tell you the name of all 42 players on the team. I could tell you the what number each player wore on their jumper. I could tell you which junior club they came from. I could tell you the height and weight of most players on the list. I knew an awful lot about the Sydney Swans football club.

But imagine if I had gone to a player's house and knocked on their door. "Adam Goodes... How are you mate? Nice to see you." What would he say? "Sorry, who are you?"

I knew an awful lot *about* the players on the team, but I did not *know* them. You are not saved because you know about Jesus. You are saved because you know Jesus and are known by him.

If you don't know Jesus, I want you to come to know Jesus for yourself for the very first time. And if you do know Jesus, I want you to continue to grow in knowing Jesus deeply, what he has done for you, and how you should live in response.

Knowing Jesus is not a one-time event. It is a lifetime journey of growing in knowing Jesus every day.

As a Jesus-shaped community, we seek to Know Jesus.

This means that the Bible shapes everything that we do. Because the Bible is the primary way that we know Jesus, it ought to be central to every activity and every ministry that our church does. Why would a church do anything that doesn't involve listening to the God of the universe speak to us through his word?

We want the ministries of our church to help people develop a deeper knowledge of what God has done through Jesus, and what he continues to do. We want you to grow in your knowledge and confidence of God's Word, and of knowing how to apply it to everyday life.

We want to increase the opportunities we have to help one another grow in knowing Jesus, and to help those outside our church community to begin the journey of knowing Jesus.

Treasure Jesus

To treasure Jesus is to value Jesus above everything else in this world. It means believing that following Jesus is the best way to live. We treasure Jesus by seeking to love what Jesus loves, desire what he desires, and pursue what he pursues.

I have spent the past month attempting to eat healthier and improve my diet. Apparently, KFC is not one of the five food groups. I have never craved Broccoli. I don't mind it, but I can't say I have ever really desired it.

Emily, my eldest daughter, is in preschool, and a few months ago was learning about healthy foods. Apparently, food is now categorised into 'always foods' (you can eat it anytime), 'sometimes foods', and 'rarely foods' – things that should only be occasional special treats. Upon learning this

information, she delighted to put it into practice by identifying which category my food was in. It turns out, most of the foods I desire are probably in the rarely or never categories of foods you should eat.

And as I have attempted to eat healthy, I have had very little desire for these foods. Now, what do you think would happen if I waited until I desired them before I started to eat healthy? I'd never desire them. I would never change.

You can't make yourself desire something. But you can change your behaviour. The best way to form a desire for healthy eating is simply to start eating healthy, even if you don't desire it.

You can't make yourself treasure Jesus. But you can change your behaviour. You can do things that will help you develop a desire for Jesus, and help you treasure him above all else.

You read the Bible to grow in Knowing Jesus, so that you can discover why he should be our greatest treasure. You obey him, even when you don't like it, so that you can grow to learn why his way is the best way to live. We will never treasure Jesus if we don't practice the habits of treasuring Jesus.

As a Jesus shaped community, we seek to Treasure Jesus.

We treasure Jesus by praise and thanksgiving, in song and prayer. We treasure Jesus by repenting of our sin in treasuring other things more than Jesus. We treasure Jesus by our expression of community: by the way that we love, forgive and respect one another.

We treasure Jesus by putting his preferences above our own; by seeking what is good for our church, not just what is good for ourselves. We treasure Jesus by our generosity of time, energy and money. We treasure Jesus by being generous in our relationships, by our openness and welcoming people from other cultures and backgrounds, and adapting to include them in the life of our church.

Depend on Jesus

To depend on Jesus is to rely on him for guidance, courage, strength and change. It means being prayerful in all things because we believe that Jesus is infinitely powerful and infinitely trustworthy. To depend on Jesus is to be bold and courageous about our dreams for this church, and for how we will reach our city, because we know that nothing is impossible for God. And that unless the Lord builds the house, those who built it labour in vain. (Psalm 127:1)

As a Jesus shaped community, we seek to Depend on Jesus.

We depend on Jesus by praying for everything that we do. By praying for God to first change our own hearts and minds; praying that he will use our gifts and resources to accomplish his mission. We depend on Jesus by boldly taking risks to reach people who don't yet know Jesus. We will not reach the thousands of families of this city, or the future students of the university, or the great diversity of this city without bold, calculated risks for the sake of people's eternity.

We depend on Jesus by trusting the Bible to guide both our message and our methods for mission and ministry as a church. We depend on Jesus by not relying on cheap tricks or entertainment to grow our church, but by deep reliance on the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us and all people.

Represent Jesus

Finally, we represent Jesus to the world by the way that we live. We represent Jesus in our character, our words, our decision and our actions. We shine like a city on a hill, a light of hope for our world as we point to the goodness of Jesus in our church life.

As a Jesus shaped community, we seek to Represent Jesus.

We welcome people into our church, just as God has welcomed us into his family. We don't force newcomers and guests to be like us, but rather we accommodate them by removing as many barriers as possible to them being part of God's family and part of our church family. We adjust our language and our practices as appropriate so that they do not hinder people partnering with us in Jesus' mission for this church.

We represent Jesus by being gracious with our thoughts and words. We do not gossip or speak about people behind their back. We pursue unity and good relationships with all of God's people in this church. We represent Jesus by serving one another, being generous, hospitable and sacrificial in the way we serve.

We represent Jesus in the way we desperately seek to make Jesus known to the people of our city and across the world through our mission partners.

One mission

Brothers and sisters, Jesus has given us one single mission – to make disciples of all nations. To help us understand what it means, we describe it in this way.

Blacktown Anglican exists to Know Jesus, Treasure Jesus, Depend on Jesus and Represent Jesus.

From today, this is language that you will hear often in this church. We have no other mission. There is no other reason or purpose for our existence as a church and as Christians. This is the mission we are pursuing as a church.

This is the mission that will guide the way we make decisions and allocate resources. It will shape the ministry activities we engage in – the things we say yes to, the things we say no to. It will affect the staff we employ. It will shape how we manage our finances and property.

Implications

So what now? Next week, we will conclude our Vision Series by unpacking what this mission and this vision will mean for each person in our church, day to day and week to week. But I wanted to finish today by speaking about my responsibility and my commitment to you as a church.

I have been Senior Minister of our church for 10 months. And in that time, I have learned that every person in this church has a different set of expectations about what I should do.

Of course, there are some things that most people will agree on, but there are many other expectations that you don't agree on. And there is no way that any one person could meet all of the expectations that all of us have for our Senior Minister.

I *cannot* promise you that you will like every decision I will make. I *cannot* promise you that I won't change things that you personally love. I *cannot* promise you that the future will be easy.

Did you know that I sometimes have to make decisions that even I don't like? There are decisions that I need to make that I would prefer not to make. If I only ever made decisions that I liked, then I would only make decisions that were easy, that didn't upset people, and that made others like me.

You should be very glad that I don't make decisions in that way. It would be terrible for you and for our whole church. My responsibility is not to make decisions that you like, and it's not to make decisions that I like. My responsibility is to make decisions that are for the ultimate good of Jesus' church here in Blacktown. Because at the end of my life, Jesus is the only one I will have to give an account to for how I led his church.

I *cannot* promise you that you will like every decision I will make.

But there is one thing I can promise you. As your Senior Minister, I can promise you this: I will do all I can to help us as a whole church community grow in Knowing Jesus, Treasuring Jesus, Depending on Jesus and Representing Jesus. I can promise you that. Jesus has given us one mission, and I am committed to leading our church to strive for that mission.

Last week, I shared a vision for our church - a picture of what we might look like if we succeed together in this mission.

We want to see our city flourish in God's good design through a Jesus shaped community.

Humanly speaking, one of our main obstacles to achieving that vision will be our willingness to act in ways that please Jesus instead of ourselves. We will need to focus less on what we like personally, and more on what helps our church pursue Jesus' mission.

I hope you like a lot of what we will do as a church. You might not like all of it. You may not even like most of it. But my prayer is that every one of us will grow in love by letting go of our personal preferences for the sake of others. That we will hold loosely to what we like, and hold tightly to Jesus' mission. My prayer is that we would be a Jesus shaped community that – more than anything else – wants every person here, and every person in our city to Know Jesus, to Treasure Jesus, to Depend on Jesus, and to Represent Jesus.