



Peru Mission

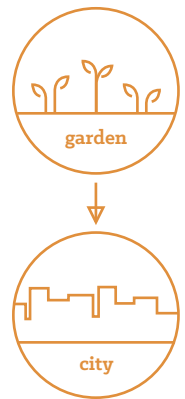
Philosophy of Mission

Peru Mission takes up the call to participate in God's mission with five core convictions about both his plan for the world and his strategy for making that plan a reality.

First, our understanding of God's mission is guided by the trajectory of the Biblical story that begins with a garden and ends with a city.

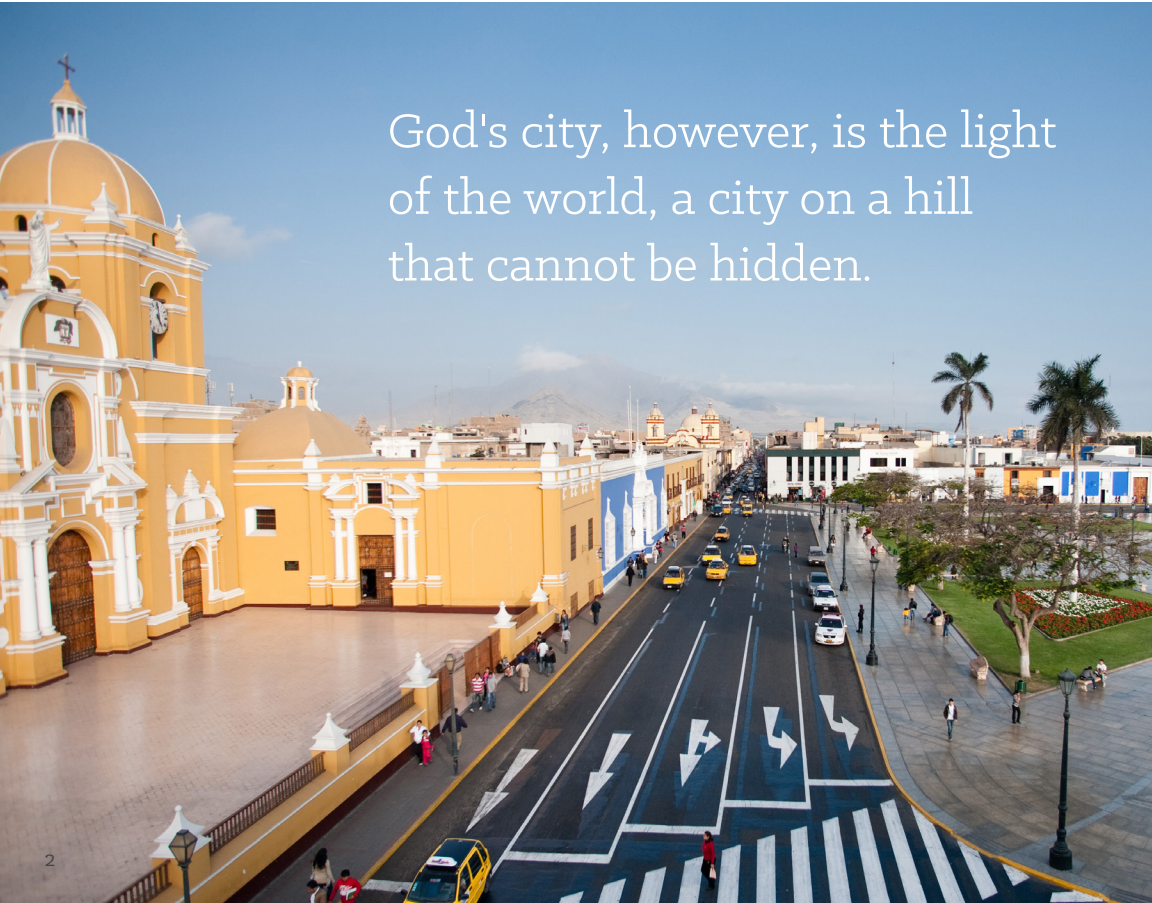
Adam was the crown of God's creation, formed on the sixth day from the dust of the ground, in the image and likeness of God. Being made in the image of God means (among other things) that he was called to continue what God had started, not just ruling and administering, but also naming, ordering, and building. He was to take the world from glory to even greater glory. Revelation 21-22 gives us an important key to understanding Adam's vocation. This latter passage shows us the same garden of Eden, and the same river of life, and even the same gold and precious stones that we saw in Genesis chapter two. The difference is that this garden has now become a city. The tree of life has multiplied to the point of lining the banks of the river. The gold and precious stones that were downriver in Havilah are now used to pave the streets and build the walls and gates. John shows us Jesus, the new Adam, who at last fulfills God's original call to build his city.

It is important to note, however, that when Adam rebelled and was exiled from the garden, his immediate descendants did not lose their interest in city-building. Cain, after killing his brother, built a city and named it after his son. Lamech, the seventh generation from Adam, and twice the murderer that Cain was, founded a civilization especially noted for arts and technology. In particular, their expertise in bronze and iron made them especially adept at creating weapons for warfare. After the flood, Nimrod, another mighty one on the earth builds multiple cities, some of them famous for their violence against the people of God. The first major literary section of Genesis (i.e., chapters 1-11) ends with Adam's descendants seeking to make a name



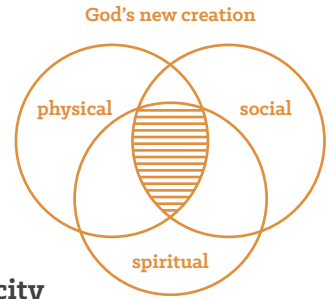
for themselves by building a city and tower that would reach up to heaven. Babel shows us the dreadful results of Adam's sin. The initial vision of a glorious garden-city, renowned for justice and peace, has degenerated into a center of pride and violence.

The following chapter of Genesis, however, shows us that God has a plan. God calls Abraham to leave the land of Babel in search of a better city whose builder and maker is God. The story of Abraham's family is the story of the search for that city. Later we find Israel, rescued from their service to Pharaoh where they built cities in his honor (Ex 1), now on pilgrimage, in search of a better city where they may dwell in peace (Psalm 107.4, 7, 36). This city is supremely beautiful (Ps 48), secure (Ps 46), and the future home of men and women adopted out of every nation (Ps 87). The violent build cities as instruments of domination and oppression (Isa 14.21). God's city, however, is the light of the world, a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. She is Jerusalem, the city of shalom (i.e., peace). From Pentecost until now this city has been descending progressively from heaven to earth. She will fill the earth and God will be all in all.



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Second, Situating ourselves along this garden-to-city trajectory highlights the importance of the doctrine of creation, or more precisely, the story is a resounding affirmation of the physical and social nature of God’s new creation.

Popular spirituality often downplays or even denies the importance of a physical creation. Bestselling books and movies have generated more than a little sensation by taking apocalyptic language about stars falling and the world being “burned up” out of its covenantal context, and turning it into something the biblical writers never imagined. Christians frequently talk of “going to heaven” when they die as if this were the Christian’s ultimate reward, rather than being merely an intermediate state in which we await the resurrection. The biblical view, however, is far removed from this kind of escapism. Scripture is quite clear that our eternal reward is neither non-physical nor non-social. Jesus declares that the meek inherit the earth (Matt 5.5). Paul says that the inheritance of Abraham and his family in Christ is nothing less than the entire “cosmos” (Rom 4.13). He tells the Colossians that, through Christ, God is reconciling both heaven and earth to himself (1.20). He tells the Romans that creation is being liberated from its bondage to decay (8.21). Through the groaning of birth pangs a new world is being born. In fact, just the image itself of a city connotes in the strongest possible terms not an individual bliss in a nebulous heaven, but something that is physical and fully social. The resurrected Jesus is himself the firstborn from the dead (Col 1.18). He is the new Adam who rules over this new creation and who at last turns the original garden into an eminently beautiful city.



3

A third conviction, and further implication of this story, is that the renewal of creation and the building of this city is both progressive and is accomplished largely through the ordinary ministry of the Church.

It is important to see in the passage from Romans chapter eight (verses 18-27) that Paul conceives of the Church as having a role to play in bringing about the birth of the new creation. Creation eagerly awaits the revealing of the sons of God because its own liberation from decay depends upon the Adam-like ministry of those sons of God (19). Also, when he parallels the groaning of creation, the groaning of the Church, and the groaning of the Spirit, and insists that the Spirit's groaning is his interceding for the Church, he implies that the Church's groaning is her intercession for creation. She is the midwife who comes alongside the expectant mother, assisting in the birth of the new creation. The story of Adam and Eve figures prominently in the background of this passage. Just as Adam was to administer the original creation and develop the City of God, now the Church as a new corporate Adam in union with Christ, is to administer and further develop the new creation, and particularly the City of God.

Paul tackles the same subject, though using a very different metaphor, when he describes the flow of history in 1 Cor 15:22-28. Here the progressive nature of this development is much more clearly displayed. Paul uses imagery from Psalm 110:1 to describe Jesus as a David-like warrior-king who is subduing rebellious enemies who refuse to acknowledge his authority until, at long last, (now citing Psalm 8:6) he is like a new Adam with all of creation restored to order and put under his dominion. When Paul says that Jesus must "reign" until he has put every enemy under his feet he is using the word "reign" to mean "wage war." He wages war and progressively destroys "every rule and every

authority and power” (24). Death is the last enemy to be destroyed (26), which will take place at the general resurrection when Jesus returns (23). But the way that Paul describes this march toward final victory carries important implications for our view of history and our view of missions. Paul is quite clearly describing something progressive that culminates in the final victory at the moment of the Lord’s return. But beyond this, by calling death the “last enemy,” Paul is insisting that all other enemies will have been overcome before his final return, implying that this happens through the ministry of the Church. In other words, the victory is not accomplished through his direct, physical involvement. On the contrary, this victory is accomplished by his directing and empowering of the Church, while he himself remains physically absent. This is why he closes the discussion by reminding the Corinthians that their “labor in the Lord is not in vain” (58). What the Church does each day matters, because God is using our labor in the Lord today--perhaps in ways too mysterious for us to grasp--to establish the City of God. In short, Scripture does not expect this City to be established through a millenarian cataclysm. Rather, it is built progressively, through the everyday ministry of the Church, as she takes up her cross and follows Jesus.

A fourth conviction is that the City of God, the Church, is a distinct kind of human community.

The city of fallen man in Scripture is noted for its pride, idolatry, and violence. She is an instrument of persecution and oppression (Rev 17.6, 18). From Cain (Gen 4.8, 17) to Lamech (4.22-23), Nimrod (10.8-12), and beyond this is the pattern of fallen humanity. They say: “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. [They seek to] rise and possess the earth, filling the face of the world with cities” (Isa 14.14, 21).

In contrast with this, however, the City of God bears the name “Jerusalem,” the city of shalom or peace. Her mission is sometimes described as a form of warfare, but the instruments of her warfare are not carnal, rather they are powerful in God for pulling down

Jerusalem, [ji-roo-suh-luh m]
The city of shalom or peace.





strongholds. She does not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers in heavenly places--and she fights precisely in the way that her Lord fought and won the victory. She “fights” against these foes by taking up her cross and dying a sacrificial death on behalf of others. In his crucifixion, Jesus died the death of a political revolutionary. Rome profoundly misunderstood Jesus’ mission, but in an important sense what our Lord did was define a new kind of politics--a politics of sacrificial love, which as it turns out, is far more subversive than Rome ever dared to imagine. It is this new kind of “politics,” we suggest, that most distinguishes the City of God from the fallen city of the world.

Jesus voluntarily gave himself for the life of the world. He came teaching and bringing good news to multitudes. He healed the sick and cast out demons. He ministered to the poor, the outcast, and the oppressed. He was the “Prince of Peace” who offered not only peace with God, but also the way of shalom among humanity. The response to his ministry, however, was not what one might have hoped for. His compassion and love were repaid by being reviled, mocked, and spat upon; he was lied about and falsely accused; he was stripped naked, ridiculed, and humiliated; he was struck with fists, beaten with whips, and finally nailed to a cruel Roman cross as if he were a violent

revolutionary. This great tragedy, however, was part of his plan, both because it propitiated the Father, paying the price for our sins, but also because it presented a model for sacrificial life in the City of God.

When he washed his disciples' feet, he said that this was an example for us. When he told of his impending death in Jerusalem, he called his disciples to take up their cross and join him. He insisted that the one who seeks to save his life will surely lose it, but the one who, by following Jesus' example, loses his life will find it. He taught that returning evil for evil only results in more evil, that the one obligated to walk a mile should instead walk two. The one obligated to give up his cloak should give his coat also. To be great in the Kingdom of God means becoming the servant of all. He accomplished the salvation of the world by sacrificing himself. The Church will successfully bring that salvation to the world only to the extent that she learns to sacrifice herself.

An illustration from the early Church may help. In the Roman Empire of the first few centuries commerce and trade were booming, travel and communication were faster than ever, economies developed rapidly, and urban centers were growing like never before. The result was a spectacular integration of nations and cultures. Not all of its effects were salutary, however. Massive urban growth brought with it a host of social ills. Severe overcrowding was accompanied by poverty, disease, and violence. These and other similar factors, both good and bad, led to a situation very much like what we call globalization today. It was in this context that we can see what was so remarkable about the early Church and how she, as the City of God, took on the Roman Empire and within a short time radically subverted it, putting the demons of paganism to flight, and achieved the most remarkable feat of social transformation that the world that had ever known.

What enabled the early Church to subvert the Roman Empire was the kind of community that she became. The cities of the Empire were filled with people, but their idolatry and violence were dehumanizing and community-destroying.

Much like the world today with its resurgent and more sophisticated idolatries and violence, resulting in over a billion people living in shantytowns, it was a lack of true human community that led to such devastating social ills.

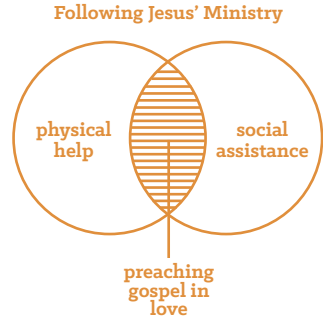
In the ancient world cities tended to be human garbage dumps where extraordinarily high mortality rates took care of the excess population flooding in from the provinces. In our days, immigrants from the provinces continue to flock to the city with similar hopes of a good job and a new life. What they typically find, however, is very different. Neighbor finds himself at the mercy of neighbor. Violence and social chaos were the norm in the cities of the ancient world and they are the norm in the massive and ever growing cities across the developing world today. The early Christians turned the ancient world upside down, however, because they proclaimed a message of forgiveness and reconciliation with God through the vicarious atonement of Christ. But the same Gospel that reconciled these new believers to God also reconciled them to each other and formed them into a new society--a city quite distinct from the city of the world. Providence is now giving us another opportunity very much like that of the first few centuries. The Gospel that turned Rome upside down and put demons to flight is no less powerful to accomplish that feat again in our day.

The message of forgiveness and reconciliation was preached powerfully by the Apostles and their successors, but what gave their message such great power was the way that its intellectual content was accompanied by symbolic actions. Scholars have often noted that our Lord's miracles were both demonstrations of compassion and dramatic portrayals of the new world he was ushering in. The same is true of the ministry of the early Church. Her preaching was accompanied by actions that demonstrated mercy and forgiveness and also acted out in dramatic fashion the new creation that they were announcing. The result was that the Church showed the world what it meant to be truly human. The beauty of God's New Creation so far exceeded the old that the demons saw the writing on the wall and fled.

Preaching the Gospel without a principled, deliberate, organized, and planned effort at mercy ministry is an implicit rejection of Jesus' own mission.



5



Our fifth conviction has to do with Jesus' own practice of ministry. In many ways this is the strategic application of the previous point. Jesus defined his mission as the fulfillment of Isaiah 61.1-2:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (as cited in Luke 4.18-19).

Jesus always preached the Gospel in the context of acts of compassion and mercy. His miracles were clear demonstrations of compassion, but they were also signs of the arrival of the Kingdom of God. The social Gospel movement of the early 20th century went astray when it tried to provide social assistance without the message of the cross and the resurrection--without the call to personal repentance and faith. Its error, however, was not in its desire to help those in need, or that it helped too much. Its error was in not combining that physical and social help with vigorous preaching of the cross and resurrection. The opposite extreme, however, seems to be the peculiar temptation of our day. Preaching the Gospel without accompanying it with real demonstrations of love and compassion is to rob the Gospel of a great deal of its power. These acts of compassion establish the symbolic context in which the Gospel can be fully heard and understood. These accompanying deeds of mercy are an integral part of the act of proclamation. This is not just a practical lesson that can help us be more effective in our witness. Rather, it is a theological principle upon which Jesus based his own ministry, and it is one that he calls us to follow. Preaching the Gospel without a principled, deliberate, organized, and planned effort at mercy ministry is an implicit rejection of Jesus' own mission.

In the book of Acts we find the Apostles following precisely this pattern of ministry. They proclaimed the Kingdom of God as Jesus had done (cf., 8.12; 19.8; 20.25; 28.23, 31). They followed his practice of teaching both “publicly and from house to house” (20.20). They taught informally to gathered crowds or in houses wherever they were received (cf., 2.42; 5.12, 25, 28, 42). But they also engaged in extended and systematic instruction in synagogue schools, when permitted, and in rented lecture halls when synagogue facilities became off limits (19.8-10). This preaching and teaching however, was combined with an extensive ministry of mercy. The Apostles and other leaders continued to heal the sick just as Jesus had done (3.6-7; 4.29-30; 5.15-16; 8.5-8; 9.33-35; 19.11-12; 28.8-9). The Church engaged in radical generosity to the poor (cf., Acts 2.42-47; 4.32-37) even to the point of liquidating personal property to do so. Later we see that they had a daily distribution of food to widows and orphans from what they had collected at their Agape feasts. This was important enough that they organized a diaconal team to supervise and administer it (6.1-7). The Church set out to be a light to the world. They sought to “do good to everyone” (Gal 6.10), to “live peaceably with all” (Rom 12.18), to pay taxes (Rom 13; 1 Pet 2), obey the king (1 Pet 2.12-17), and pray for all those in authority (1 Tim 2.1-2).



We believe that this pattern in the ministry of Jesus and the early Church corresponds directly to at least four principal needs in the urban centers of the developing world. By following this pattern the Church can expect to have the same kind of transforming effect in the urban centers of our own day as she did in the first several centuries after Christ.

First, we must proclaim the Word of God and build up, out of the ashes of shanty towns and urban slums, communities that cherish true wisdom. This means developing deep traditions of practical and personal discipleship, but it also means cultivating equally deep traditions of learning and teaching for their own sake, as part of our proclamation of the lordship of Christ over all things. It means building educational institutions that will develop with their communities, serving the churches and their neighbors for the glory of Christ. From family worship to the Sunday assembly, from missional cell groups to Christian schools, Jesus' mission and ours is to proclaim true wisdom, building the City of God as a light to the nations.

Second, we must heal the sick. Poverty is debilitating in many areas, not the least of which is physical health. Scripture identifies physical illness as among the covenantal curses that spring from Adam's fall (Gen 2.17; 3.16-19; Lev 26.14ff.; Deut 28.15-68 passim). The Gospels show that illness is one of Satan's chief instruments of oppression. Jesus, however, came to deliver us from both covenant curses and Satanic oppression. Both he and his Apostles healed miraculously to demonstrate that his Kingdom was arriving and displacing the kingdom of darkness. We may do so in less spectacular fashion, but nevertheless we must continue to minister to the infirm with the same compassion of Christ, and with the same demonstration of the Spirit's power to renew, restore, and heal. The Church has an unparalleled legacy of healing. We are given clear promises of healing in response to prayer (e.g., James 5.13-16). But a gift of healing is also given to physicians who have dedicated their lives to the practice of medicine. The Christian Church invented the hospital. No one has done more to develop the science and art of medicine than Christians. Through prayer and intercession, through clinics and hospitals, we must give witness, especially among the most vulnerable, to the advancing Kingdom of God by our tireless ministry to the sick and infirm.

Third, we must help the poor. Jesus and his Apostles had a common purse from which they regularly demonstrated such compassion. The book of Acts shows the earliest Christians selling their property to assist the poor. The Roman emperor Julian in a letter to the pagan priest Arsacius encouraged him to adopt the practice of the Christians of caring for widows, orphans, and other poor. He believed that the Christians had shamed the pagans because they not only took care of their own poor, but, he said, “they take care of ours too.” We must cultivate Church communities that demonstrate this same commitment to radical generosity. From food pantries and soup kitchens to microfinance and other economic services, there are many ways to do this. The urban poor frequently find themselves trapped in multi-generational cycles of poverty from which they have little hope of escape. By enfolded them into a community that places a priority on following Jesus through radical generosity we show the power of Christ, working through his Church, to turn the desert into a blossoming garden.

Fourth, our communities must be “peacemakers” or promoters of shalom. This Hebrew word means more than just peace. It connotes blessedness, happiness, harmony, and prosperity. In this fuller sense, teaching, healing, and financial assistance all promote shalom. Shalom is the product of living in a harmonious and well functioning community. But in the specific sense of promoting peace and harmony in relationships, this is a function of church communities, and particularly pastors, elders, and other leaders, being involved in their neighborhoods, developing friendships and winning the confidence of those around them through service. Offering counsel to individuals and families, advocating for the weakest and most overlooked members of society, and organizing events to address specific and pressing needs in the neighborhood are all ways of promoting shalom. Peter Brown argues that the early Church turned Rome’s moral world upside down because she dedicated herself to serving the weakest, poorest, and most vulnerable. By taking initiative and providing leadership to solve problems common to all, the early Church won a position of honor from which she could promote peace throughout the entire empire. From informal conversations between neighbors to the development of peacemaking institutions, the Church must be a promoter of shalom.

Peru Mission believes that
that the goal of missions is
to build holistic, sustainable,
and self-propagating
Christian communities, or
to use the Biblical idiom, *to
build the City of God.*

This holistic vision is precisely what allowed the early Church to turn the Roman Empire upside down. In our globalized world where urban populations now exceed rural ones, and where over a billion people live in shanty towns in extreme poverty, we believe that ministering as Jesus did, accompanying the sound and vigorous preaching of the Gospel with a passionate engagement in ministries of mercy and justice, will result in a similarly spectacular growth of the Kingdom of God. **We invite you to join with us in search of this City with foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**





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