



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for October 16, 2022
“Making a Difference: Minds on Missions”
Speakers: Pastor Ashlee Adkins & Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: Romans 10:13-15

(Ashlee)
Intro

Being mission minded means we are living our lives out loud for Jesus. We serve others, we reach out to others, we share our story, and we love. These things I just listed are things that lots of people do – but the difference is what motivates us to live out these things.

People can serve other people for lots of reasons – but the reason we, God’s people, serve other people and share our story, is for the glory of God. We do so in Jesus’ name. It’s what sets us apart from the world – our motivation – for all people to hear and come to know Jesus for themselves.

Today we are digging into the letter Paul wrote to the Romans. One of the most important books in Scripture that helps shape the Gospel and how the Gospel is to look lived out in our lives. Let’s visit the Scripture for today from Romans 10.

For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:13-15)

Paul emphasizes the Gospel and the truth of our salvation – that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. And we are going to look at this Scripture the way Paul does - laying out four vital questions that shape how we live into our value of being mission minded.

As disciples who have come to know Christ and professed that belief with our words and baptism, this should be a very important part of our lives. Once we understand how to come to Christ (through calling on his name) because of our belief and realization of who he is - it then becomes our priority to be sure everyone else knows how to do that and who they are calling on. Which is why Paul asks this first question.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?

We’ve talked several times about the decline in Christianity – Pew Research just laid out that Christianity in the US could fall below 50% by 2070, as of 2020 Christianity is already at just 64% down from 90% in 1970. That should frighten us and break our hearts. It should also motivate us to fervently pray about how we can be a part of reversing that and to call out to Jesus, the one in whom we believe, about how he’s calling us to serve him.

I believe there are two hard truths that we need to address about this decline and about our role in it. As disciples, people Christ has called to declare his truth, we must take some responsibility in the decline. We have to.

The first hard truth is a disconnect between mission and evangelism. There is a tendency for churches to focus on one thing more than another – social justice, serving the poor and caring for the sick or the evangelism – professing the Gospel and Jesus as Savior. Let's be clear today that there is no separation. All kinds of people serve, care for the poor – help the weak, the imprisoned – but the difference between the world and God's people is why we are doing that work. Not only are we called to love the poor and to serve them, but we are called to do so in Jesus' name. For God's glory. How often do we talk about our faith? How often are we declaring who we are, disciples of Christ's? How much are we talking about who is really taking care of the people we are caring for?

Mission and evangelism go together like peas and carrots; ice cream and sprinkles; biscuits and gravy. You really can't enjoy one to the fullness without the other.

The second hard truth we need to address is being lukewarm. Let's face it – a lot of us live our lives comfortably. Doing what we do day in and day out – most of the time not taking the time to think about our number one priority – which is living our lives out as disciples. There seems to be a malaise in society to live our own lives, mind our own business, and be complacent. Most people are kind, good, nice and perhaps we assume, most people are Christians and don't need to hear the Gospel. But are they calling on the only One who can truly save them?

Is the thought crossing our mind that people could be lost anymore? Are we praying for the lost? Are we praying for God to bring people into our lives who could be lost so we can share the news of the Gospel with them? And I go back to are we inviting people to church? It's a great way to begin that conversation with people. To engage in what could be a hard conversation, but one in which the Holy Spirit can move in their hearts and our hearts.

Who are people calling out to these days? Are they calling out to Jesus – who they have believed in? Or are they calling out to the world because the world is all they know?

(Tom)

How can they believe if they have not heard?

- There are so many ways to connect, yet there are so many who have not heard.
- Our work at Centenary with unreached people groups.
- Again, mission and evangelism are intrinsically tied.
- Evangelism without mission rings hollow. Mission without evangelism lacks power.
- Operation Christmas Child melds the two as do so many of the other missions we support.
- We are a light to the nations, a light set on a hill. There is no need for any bushel baskets.
- Let's work then to make the gospel known by both word and deed.

(Ashlee)

How can they hear if we don't tell them?

So now we make a full circle back to that hard truth number one – mission and evangelism being separated and not emphasized together. This time I'm going to focus on the other part – of only verbalizing the Gospel, not living it out through our actions and our lives. Again, mission and evangelism are not mutually exclusive – they must occur at the same time.

We can't assume that everyone will walk into a church – if only discipleship were that easy, am I right? If only churches were magnets that people couldn't help but walk into and listen to what's being said from up here! That's not how it works. I actually had a friend give me this picture and it made me laugh – some are making airplanes, one is sleeping (Peter?), talking and passing notes – one is starting with a blank face – but Jesus is just teaching... I'm so glad we don't have any of that going on when we are up here teaching...☺ I'll say this – while this seems ironic from someone who pushes a discipleship discovery class – these types of things can be very beneficial for learning and growing in wisdom. One thing the act discipleship class does is focuses on your own God story – it's essential that we know our own story of how God has walked with us through our lives. Our story is God's story and God's story is our story. It's essential to know it and to then tell it. That's the evangelism portion.

People will not hear the Gospel unless we tell them with our words. But hear me – we have to also show God's story through our actions and our ways. We pray in church together – but are we praying with our families at the dining room table? We hear of people within our community who are facing hard times, but are we reaching out and letting them know we support them, love them, are available to them? We attend Saint John on Sunday mornings, but are we serving others through our small groups by volunteering with our many mission partners by serving meals at HighPoint on the fourth Thursday of each month; offering ourselves as greeters on Sunday mornings; volunteering at Bread of Life or Grace Kids; participating in our barrel ministry each month?

We not only have to talk the talk, but we have to walk the walk. Mission and evangelism – hand in hand. How can they hear if we don't tell them who we are truly serving when we serve? If we serve. Are we committing our hands and feet to serve others in the name of Jesus?

(Tom)

How can they tell if they don't go?

- It comes to us to go. Christ left us with the Great Commission, *“Go, there for into all the world and make disciples.”*
- Ask God to help us to fulfill the Commission with our hesitancy, timidity, reluctance, or lack of motivation.
- Maggie, our young granddaughter, “read” the story of Moses and the burning bush, ending with Moses saying *“Okay, okay, okay, I'll do it.”*
- There are opportunities all around us to offer both the good news about Christ and the help and support he longs to give.
- *Go make of all disciples we hear the call, Oh Lord, that comes from thee, our Father, in thy eternal word, inspire our ways of learning through earnest, fervent prayer, and let our daily living reveal thee everywhere.*