

October 8, 2009

Vision Series – The Urgency of the Mission

Good morning. Welcome back to our vision series where God is showing us the steps to the life in Christ that we are all about – that if the vision He has given us is to be moving people to life in Christ one step at a time, then what are the steps and how do we as a church take them.

Take your bibles out and turn to 1 Corinthians. We'll be there momentarily. By way of review, if I were to come ask you this morning what the three steps God has shown us the past 8 weeks have been, what do you think you would say? **What are the three steps so far?**

Hopefully you are thinking that if we are going to make disciples – if we are going to move people to life in Christ one step at a time together – we have got **worship Jesus, learn truth, and build community**. And those must not just be things we are doing ourselves individually, if Fairway – and we as Fairway – are going to move people to life in Christ through those steps, we must give consistent opportunities to do so and we as individuals must push, pull, prod, encourage, exhort, and hold each other accountable for living in those steps together.

This morning we will start looking at the 4th and final step that God is going to show us in this series. And without it – the other three are incomplete at best and nothing more than a farce at worst. Let me explain that, for the past three weeks we have been looking at the step of building biblical community. God has brought us to understand the command – the foundation – and the how of building biblical community. But we've been trying to accomplish that for at least the 6 years I've been here.

We've been trying everything to accomplish the biblical, deep, awesome community we saw painted for us in Acts chapter 2. We've tried fellowships – lets just get everyone together in the gym or at the park or in the skating rink or bowling alley and make everyone hang out together – but that didn't create the Acts 2 kind of community.

We tried all kinds of versions of small groups. Put people in small groups we create – 15 to 20 people at a house centered on a Bible study. We tried smaller groups all up here but discussing separately. We tried larger topical or deeper or practical studies with discussion. None of that created the Acts 2 picture.

We focused the very wording of the vision God gave us on the together issue – I showed that clip from Ice Age about a herd sticking together like 3 different times in vision sermons. But nothing has really made us successful in Acts 2 community.

And still we're told by the so called experts that if you teach and point to and aim at and emphasize Acts 2 community, you'll get it. But as much as I believe God has led us through what we've heard the past three weeks on that, I don't believe it will work. Not by itself. Let me show you why. Hold your finger in 1 Corinthians – we'll come back – but flip back to **Matthew 4:19**.

As we read Matthew 4:19 I want you to ask, what is the starting point here?

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Jesus says come follow me – trust me – abide in me – walk so close to me that the dust from my sandals gets stuck on your pants – Jesus calls them to Himself – he says follow me – pursue me – and I will make you fishers of men. **The first thing Jesus does is call them to HIMSELF and the second thing he does is call them to pursue his MISSION.** That's the starting point and Jesus does it over and over and over. Don't turn there, it'll be on the screen, but he does it in **John 20:21**. *"Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.""*

He says in essence don't be afraid – then he says As the Father has sent me – that word sent is where we get our word mission. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. That verse is saying you aren't at Sheppard by accident. You may have come there to learn to fly or to be trained or to teach but this verse is saying God sent you there on a mission.

You don't live in the neighborhood you live by accident. You may have moved there to upsize or downsize or whatever, but God sent you there on a mission. This verse is saying your conversion is your commission. He calls them to himself and he calls them to his mission.

Jesus does it again in **Matthew 28:19** but we looked at that a few weeks ago so let me skip to **Acts 1:8** where he does it again.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

He says when the Holy Spirit comes on you – in other words when I draw you to myself – you will be my witnesses – mark it down, take it to the bank, it is going to happen – you will be my witnesses. He's saying I'm not interested in a football game – where you have 50,000 people in the stands in desperate need of exercise and 22 people on the field in desperate need of a break – Jesus says, no I want you in the game. He calls us to Himself and to pursue His mission.

That's his starting point. That's what I and we have got to see. We have been aiming for Acts 2 community without Acts 1 mission. We have been aiming for Acts 2 community without Matthew 4:19 mission. We have been aiming for Acts 2 community without John 20:21 mission. And here's what we've got to see – listen.

All the community of Acts chapter 2 – all that beautiful picture – was a direct result of pursuing Jesus and His mission! **We must understand** in this process of moving people to life in Christ one step at a time together, **that if we aim at COMMUNITY, we're not going to get community or mission. But if we aim to pursue Jesus and His mission, we get BOTH mission and community every single time.**

So as you turn back to 1 Corinthians and go to chapter 9 this morning I need us to get how important this is. All of this – the past 8 or 10 weeks of serious defining of our vision and the future of our church will just be another sermon series if we don't absolutely get what we're going to see Paul say here. Where we read these verses and say "yes God I'm going to live that out." Or this series just amounts to a bunch of cool thoughts that stay right here.

Now we need to know that the previous 3 chapters of this letter you can boil down to pretty much one point. **In 1 Corinthians 6,7,& 8, Paul wants to make absolutely sure that we do nothing – that there is nothing in our lives – that would push people AWAY FROM THE GOSPEL** No decisions we are making – nothing in how we live that would cause someone who is weaker than us spiritually to stumble. He says don't do it – don't push people farther away from God. And in what we are going to read he tells us why. **1 Corinthians 9:19-23.**

There are two things in those verses I want us to see that are not in your notes this morning but they are important for what is. First – that at the core of Paul – at the center of his heart, his will, what made him live – was a white hot love for Jesus. Paul was in love with Jesus Christ. You go back to Philippians chapter 3 and the dude says look at all I have every accomplished in my life – all I have achieved or gotten or had in my life and you can pack it all together and I count it as garbage compared to Jesus Christ. He was driven by a white hot love for Jesus.

But what we also see is that the make up of Paul was that he was passionate and broken for those who don't know God. He was absolutely broken for them. To the point that in verse 23 it says every single thing I do I do for the gospel. It drove his entire life.

And knowing that, there are two things we have to see today in this passage that are in your notes. First the how of how Paul went about daily reaching these people who did not know the gospel, who did not know Jesus Christ. He tells us clearly how he did so here, and then we'll look at the urgency with which Paul did that. He lived with an urgency for the lost that most Christians don't.

So first – the how of how Paul went about evangelism. Now when you think of the word 'evangelism'

what do you think of? What comes to your mind with the word 'evangelism'? Hopefully you don't just think of what so easily comes to mind which is televangelists on TV. To think of those folks on TV – to think of pink hair and bad toupees – to think of touch this screen and be healed – send me your money for your prayer towel – whatever.

'Evangelism' is a word that we need to recapture because it is a very biblical word that means so much more than the guys on television or so much of what we have redefined it to be. The word evangelism is a Greek word that literally just means the gospel. And what is the gospel? It's the good news. And what is the good news? The good news is that the Kingdom of God has come – amen? The good news is the proclamation of the story – the truth – that Jesus Christ has come, he paid for your sins. He lived perfectly, died for our sins, rose from the grave so that we can be alive in Christ – that's the good news – that's evangelism – it is just the proclamation of that truth. And what Paul does in those verses is just say this is how I proclaim the good news – this is how I proclaim the gospel every single day of my life. **Here Paul shows us HOW he lives the mission of Jesus Christ.**

Look quickly at verse 19. He says "though I am free I have made myself a slave so that I might win as many as possible." Paul says I made myself a slave so that I can win people to Christ.

Paul says when I'm around Jews, I become like them so that I can have the opportunity to speak Jesus into their lives. When I'm around those who are not under the law, I don't go crazy because I'm still under the law of Christ, but I become like those who are not under the law so that I can speak Jesus into their lives. Paul says when I'm around the weak I become like the weak so that I can be a part of seeing them come to Christ.

Do you see a strategy coming up there? Here's the thing that is so convicting. That **before he ever asks these people who he is absolutely broken for to make any kind of decision for Christ- BEFORE he ever asks them to make any changes in their lives** – before he ever asks them the question "if you're standing before God and he asks you why should I let you into my heaven?" – before he does any of that happens – when he is around the spiritually weak just like you are every day – when he is around those who are far from God just like you are every day, Paul says the first thing I do is not demand they change. The first thing I do is not beat them over the head with this thing called the gospel. **Paul says step one – the first thing I do is I become their SLAVE.** Wow.

Paul says step one is I begin to try to understand them. Paul says step one is I try to empathize with where they're at. Paul says at the end of the day I am trying to love them – 1st thing I serve them – because what he is trying to teach us today is that **there is a direct connection between us loving people, serving people, understanding with them, empathizing with them and our ability to SPEAK JESUS into their lives** – that's what he's saying. That's step one, that's the first thing.

And we don't do that, do we? Empathize? Understand? Be broken for? Be compassionate for? Serve? We don't do that and that's why evangelism is so hard for us. Because we are real quick to want to speak Jesus *at* people's lives but like Paul says we have not become their slaves.

Church, you've got people in your lives that are far from Christ. I know you do. They are there in every one of our lives. Let me ask you a question – are you really broken for them? Really? Are you broken – for them? Are you seeking to understand where they're coming from? Are you empathizing with them? Are you seeking to be their slaves so that by all means some of them might come to Jesus? Or deep down inside are you just not willing to get your hands that dirty?

See it is one thing to invite someone to church – that's kind of our deal in the church culture today – we're cool with inviting someone to church. It is one thing to do that. It's one thing to go to Starbucks and have an apologetic debate with somebody.

It is altogether different to stand before God and say God break my heart for those who don't know you. It is something altogether different to say I'm willing to become a slave – I'm willing to give up my freedom in order that somebody might come to Jesus. But that is the how. That is the how of the mission. That's what it is going to take.

And when we get that, we begin to see the urgency that Paul had. **Paul had such an absolute URGENCY to see people come to the Lord that six times in 5 verses – 6 times we looked at them- in 5 verses – he says I just want people to come to Jesus. 6 times.**

And in verse 23 – look at it again –we just can't get away from this – in verse 23 **he says I do ALL things for the sake of the gospel.**

Who says that? Who has the audacity to sit down at a desk 2000 years ago and write that – everything I do I do for Jesus – I do to proclaim the truth of what He has done?

When I get up in the morning, I do it for the gospel. When I got to bed at night I do it for the gospel. The clothes I wear are for the gospel. The words I speak are for the gospel. The food I put in my body – the things I drink – the movies I see – the way I spend my time – every single solitary thing I do is for the gospel.

Who says that? Do you?

I mean I look at this and I can't help thinking I don't have that kind of passion. I don't have that kind of urgency. Why not? I'm a pastor, I care about lost people – but we don't say things like “everything I do I do for the gospel.” And it begs the question in my life and folks I hope it begs the question in yours – why don't I have that urgency?

And then it hits us. Maybe the reason that I don't have the urgency to see people saved as Paul says is because I have forgotten what it is they are being saved from?

Did you hear that? **Maybe the reason that you don't have the urgency to see those in your life be saved is because you have forgotten what it is that they are being SAVED FROM.**

Fairway – what does the Bible – what did Jesus – what came out of the lips of Jesus that our friends that are far from God are being saved from?

They are being saved from the...WRATH...OF...GOD. From the wrath of God.

I think the reason Paul was so ancy to tell people – to get in their lives – to say I'll do whatever it takes – is because he knew – he knew what they were being saved from. **Paul knew that if people didn't come and give their lives to Jesus and accept the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross that they were going to spend ETERNITY realizing the wrath of a holy and righteous God. And it motivated every single solitary thing that he did.**

Have you forgotten?

See we are a church culture that loves **John 3:16**. Don't we? *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

We love that verse – we've got it memorized as little kids. John 3:16. How many of you have John 3:36 memorized in this room? I didn't either.

John 3:36 from the mouth of Jesus. *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will never see life, for God's wrath abides on him.”*

The word “abide” there in Greek means to stay – to remain. Jesus said you don't know me – you don't know the Son – the wrath of God is going to come on you and its going to stay. We don't have that one down do we?

We have memorized **Romans 8:1** – *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

We love that verse – there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus – we clap when we hear that one.

You got **Romans 1:18** memorized? Not Romans 8:1 but 1:18?

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

The people in your life who don’t know Jesus – your family – your coworkers – your roommates – your neighbors – your friends – your teammates – who don’t know Jesus the scripture says that right now in ways we can’t see or understand are right now under the wrath of God and headed for eternity when it will be unleashed. That’s why Paul had such an urgency.

See I get this today – I get why we are where we are. See we have surrounded ourselves for years with pastors and others who have taught us one message – and the one message is ‘come to Jesus and Jesus will make your life better.’ That’s been the message of a generation of pastors. And because of that **we have forgotten that yes the story of Jesus is the story of God’s LOVE, make no mistake, but it is also the story of God pouring out his wrath on HIS SON for 6 hours one Friday on the cross so that the wrath of God would not be poured out on you.** Have we forgotten that? Have you forgotten that?

See the reason we aren’t broken over this city – the reason the lostness of Wichita Falls doesn’t make us weep – the reason that you are not desperately broken over your roommate, the reason you are not broken over your family – the reason you are not *broken* over your coworkers is because at the end of the day we live our lives like we do not believe that the wrath of God is going to abide on those who have not put their faith and trust in Jesus. And those aren’t my words; those are the words of Jesus.

And that is why back where we started – the calling of Jesus is to Himself and in that, to His mission. To aim at anything less, is to miss the point. I know this is a long summary in your notes today, but for us to live this vision we must connect these things together so here we go.

- **There is no way to really worship Jesus throughout your Christian lifetime and not RESPOND to the mission.**

There is not way to say I am worshipping Jesus – I’m responding to who he is and what he is done in what I say and how I live – there is no way to do that without responding to the mission of Jesus.

- **There is no way to really learn truth throughout your Christian lifetime and not SHARE in the mission.**

There is no way to really learn God’s truth – to get into the Word and learn the truths of the Bible and not grow to share in the mission of Jesus that is revealed in the Bible.

- **There is no way to build community throughout your Christian lifetime and not FOCUS on the mission.**

We’ve already seen this – that there is no way to really build biblical community without a focus on the mission – without the mission, we’ll never experience that community.

But when we focus on, share in, and respond to the mission of Jesus, - when we do that, we will find ourselves with the URGENCY appropriate for the mission Jesus has called us to.

When you and I live in the steps God has shown us of what it means to do life in Christ – to make and be disciples – the we will find ourselves with the urgency appropriate for the mission of Jesus.

“Everything I do I do for the sake of the gospel.”

“I make myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible.”

“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”

Let me ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes this morning. Don't even close your Bibles – just bow your heads right now. And while we pray in response to what Jesus is saying today, let me ask you just three questions to guide your prayers – with your heads bowed and your eyes closed...

Will you pray for true brokenness in your life over those who don't know Jesus? – knowing that if you do, God will.

Will you pray for the Holy Spirit of God to remind you daily of the wrath of God – that you are free from it – but that the lost around you abide in it and are destined for it?

And as that happens, will you offer your life not just to your Savior – but to the very people around you He died to save?

Because if we don't, we will never move anyone to life in Christ one step at a time together.