

Behaving Like Christ in Ministry & Mission
“A New Creation” – Unit IV: Session 4
July 29, 2018

Scripture: John 13:1-17

This morning we are concluding our series which we started just after Easter entitled *A New Creation*. If you have been following along, picking up each Sunday’s lessons, including the Sundays you may have missed, by the end of today you should have a completed binder containing 16 sessions – four for each of the major units – 1) Believing; 2) Belonging; 3) Becoming; and 4) Behaving Like Christ. Our last session today is entitled “Behaving Like Christ in Ministry and Mission.”

In his very popular book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, which was received well by many Christian denominations around the world, now more than 15 years old, Rick Warren defines “Ministry” and “Mission” differently. Rick Warren says that “Ministry” is what we do by serving God in the church and “Mission” is what we do serving God outside the church. Those two are not as clearly delineated as Warren might lead us to believe, and there is a lot of overlap between the two, but I think separating them is sometimes helpful. But it can also be harmful. It becomes harmful when we think that we only have to serve God within the church. God calls us to serve Him with our entire lives – what we do inside the church and what we do outside the church. Not because we can earn God’s love in any way or receive salvation for our works. The Bible tells us that our salvation is a gift from God which comes only through faith in Jesus Christ and what He did for us on the cross. But in view of what God has done for us, we offer our lives in return.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.
Romans 12:1 (NIV)

Worship is not just what we do on Sunday morning’s here at church, worship of God is what we do with our lives – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in return for what He has already done for us in the gift of his son, Jesus Christ.

A little further in Romans 12 the apostle Paul wrote, *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord* (Romans 12:11a NIV).

In our passage this morning from the gospel of John, after Jesus washes his disciples feet, he concludes his teaching with these words:

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.
John 13:15-17 (NIV)

When the mother of James and John, two of Jesus' original twelve disciples came to Jesus, pleading with him to allow her sons to have prominent positions of leadership, to sit on Jesus' right and left, Jesus responded:

"For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28 (NLT)

Once again, none of this is stuff we can do by our own power. It can only be done through the grace of God which he gives believers, through Jesus' work on the cross, and the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives today.

As we learned a couple of weeks ago God has given each of us, believers in Jesus Christ, at least one spiritual gift to serve the church – it may be in leadership, it may be not. It may be in service way behind the scenes. It may be in administration, or music, teaching the children, leading an adult Sunday school class, ushering, sound tech, generous giving, hospitality, discernment, healing, shepherding, prophesy, evangelism, wisdom, or peacemaking. A spiritual gift is anything that God gives believers that builds up the body of Christ, the church. It says in 1 Cor. 12 where we find one of the listing of spiritual gifts:

Now to each one the manifestation of the [Holy] Spirit is given for the common good.
1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV)

"The common good." If there is one phrase that Rick Warren's book will be forever known for, it is the very first words of chapter one, "**It is not about you.**"

"It is not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose."

Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 17

Again, although not as clearly delineated as Rick Warren would make us believe, ministry is what we do in the body of Christ, the church, and mission is what we do in the world. As followers of Jesus Christ we are both a gathered and a sent people. He calls us as individuals to become a people, and then he sends us out to carry out his mission in the world.

The English word "mission" comes from the Latin word for "sending." Being a Christian includes being *sent* into the world as a representative of Jesus Christ. Some of Jesus' last words to his disciples recorded in the gospel of John, just before he ascended back into heaven, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

"The mission Jesus had on earth is now our mission because we are the body of Christ. What is that mission? Introducing people to God! The one God who exists as three in one – God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. That passage from 2 Cor. 5:17, which our series has been based on, "*If anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation,*" is followed by these words:

¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NIV)

That is the core of the entire gospel message right there!

I like the way Today's English Version (TEV) puts it:

"Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also." 2 Corinthians 5:18 (TEV)

In Luke's gospel, just before Jesus sends out a large group of his disciples, seventy-two of them, two by two, he says this to them -

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you . . ."
Luke 10:2-3a (NIV)

Our mission field starts with those who are closest to us:

Spouse – Although the Bible tells us that as Christians we should only marry Christians, not all of us have followed that command. Or some of us didn't become Christians until after we were married. It would really be nice if a Christian husband and wife were always in the exact same place in their Christian journey, but that is rarely ever the case. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7 that if one has an unbelieving spouse, he or she should remain faithful to him or her, with the hope of helping that person one day come to a saving relationship with Jesus. If that will be done, it will be done much more so by loving actions than by words, and probably over a long period of time. Which made me think, maybe we should use the example of a believing and a non-believing spouse as the best way for believers to act towards all non-believers. Usually it is going to take a long term/time relationship and we're going to lead them to Jesus more by our love than by our words. Though words will be needed as well.

Children – If you have children, they are your next mission field.

Grandchildren –

Other family members –

Our neighbors –

Our co-workers –

Those in our neighborhood –

"Those who we live, work and play with" –

It might mean a specific mission to a place or a specific people –

It might mean a specific mission to a place and a people half way around the world like the Zook's mission in Bali, Indonesia.

The overriding mission is really the same. And here is the key point: just because God hasn't called you or me to go halfway around the world to a place like Bali, Indonesia, it doesn't exempt us from having to carry out His mission where He has placed us. The overriding mission is the same – to help lead people to a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

What was Jesus' primary mission when he was here on earth? Jesus did lots of things – healed the sick, he drove out demons, he raised some from the dead, he did a lot of teaching . . . But those were not his primary missions. Those things helped lead people to his primary mission.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
Mark 1:14-15 (NIV)

A little bit later after he began driving out the evil spirits and healing the sick and the people were all crowding in upon him so they too could be healed. Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go somewhere else – to nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come" (Mark 1:38 NIV).

Jesus tells us his primary mission in the gospel of Luke 19:10 –

For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost. Luke 19:10 (NIV)

Unlike Jesus we cannot save anyone. Only Jesus saves! But Jesus is still seeking lost people today and he uses the people whom have already been found to help lead the lost to him. That is our primary mission!

There is lots of talk today in the church about mission! Mission! Mission! Mission! We have even created a word that didn't exist before – Missional!

A man by the name of Michael Horton wrote a very good book a few years back entitled *The Gospel Commission: Recovering God's Strategy for Making Disciples*, and in it he talks about "Mission Creep," in which the church has taken on more and more and we justify it by saying it's all mission. But is it really God's mission.

"From where I sit, the problem is not so much that the church is lazy but that it is distracted. The greatest danger that the church faces in any age is not that it might not be busy enough but that it might not be Christian enough, either in its outreach to unbelievers or its ministry to the saints. Even when the message and the mission have not yet been altered in explicit terms, we can bury the church's ministry in a heap of programs and strategies of our own making." Michael Horton, *The Gospel Commission*, p. 249

Mennonite Missiologist James Krabill echoed those same thoughts in an article he wrote more than 15 years ago:

“Being more missional might actually mean doing fewer things. There is a Latin American proverb that says, “If you don’t know where you’re coming from, and if you don’t know where you are going, than any bus will do.” Kraybill goes on, “Some congregations are clearly riding too many buses! What they need is not more flurry, but more focus.”

More focused on what is the primary mission we have been given by our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ primary mission for his followers is found in what is known as the Great Commission, Jesus’ last words to his disciples before ascending back into heaven, found in the Gospel of Matthew:

Therefore go and make disciples from all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you to the very end of this age.

Matthew 28:18b-20

But the Great Commission actually begins with a great announcement. The mission that we have has a message. The Great Commission actually begins with the declaration: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18a). Behind the sending of the church lies the Father’s sending of his Son and the Holy Spirit. Before we go, we must stop and hear – really hear – what has happened that we are to take into the world. The message is the Good News!

That is the mission for everything that the church is called to do and to be. The church’s [co]mmission is directed by a purpose (“making disciples from all peoples”), and it is driven by a couple of promises. The promise that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus” and the He will be with us if we do what he has commanded us to do.

The church’s mission, grounded in God’s mission, is fulfilled (and has been fulfilled) in his Son, Jesus Christ – in his dying on the cross, bringing believers from death to life (Romans 6:13), and goes forth into the world today through the Holy Spirit. Because the Father sent the Son and then the Spirit, we are sent into the world with the gospel – the Good News! So being mission-driven or “missional,” is the same as begin gospel driven.

If we’re not proclaiming Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, in words and deeds, in deeds and words, then we’re really not carrying out God’s mission. Just doing lots of things, even very good things, and calling them missional doesn’t necessarily make them missional in the eyes of God.

A man by the name of Christopher Wright wrote a very good book several years ago entitled *The Mission of God*. In it he wrote, “the whole Bible is about God’s mission, with Christ as the central character.

At the end of the day the question that God is going to ask His children, “have you helped lead people to my Son, Jesus Christ, so they could have a saving relationship with Him and become His disciples?”