

THE CHURCH: WHO? WHAT? WHY? HOW?- Calvary Church Values-4

Nov. 5, 2017 – Pastor Randy

Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." - Luke 19:9,10

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. - Luke 15:4-7

Today I am wrapping up the series I have been in focusing on who we are as a church. Over the past few weeks I have been unpacking our seven core values and today we will complete this journey by looking at what we mean when we say that Calvary Church is a missionally motivated and community focused church. Those are nice sounding phrases, but it would be naïve for me to assume that everyone here understands what those phrases are intended to communicate.

On our website you will find the following description of what it means to be a **Missionally Motivated** church:

"We are called and motivated by the mission Jesus gave us to seek and save the lost. Our goal is to develop and implement effective evangelism strategies to all cultures in order to introduce Jesus to them." Under our Missions section these words are added to the above: *"We take the words of Jesus seriously when He said in Mark 16:15 "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." Our goal is that all may know Him."*

To say that we are a missionally motivated church is to communicate that we are motivated by the Holy Spirit to continue Jesus mission which, in His own words, was to "seek and save the lost". It is not simply another way of

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referring to the third part of our mission – to share the good news of Jesus. It is communicating something about the heart behind the sharing. We are motivated by a desire to influence people to embrace the good news so that they can experience the abundant life Christ came to give; the blessing of being forgiven OF their sin, freed FROM their sin, reconciled TO their God and recreated BY their God. Missionally motivated Christians, like Jesus, value seeking the lost; pursuing relationships with people who don't know who Jesus is and what he has done for them. The phrase "to seek and save the lost" occurs only once in the gospels. It is found in Luke 19:9,10, the passage I read to begin this message. Jesus used that phrase to sum up the reason he initiated a visit to Zaccheus' home. When Jesus went to Zaccheus' house the religious people grumbled and complained that Jesus would spend time with a "sinner" like Zaccheus. The parable of the lost sheep recorded in Luke 15:4-7 was has a very similar context. Luke 15:1-3 reads, *"Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!"* Jesus is distinguished from the other religious leaders by his pursuit of those who were lost. He is the true shepherd who cares enough about lost sheep like Zaccheus to go after them; to pursue them to bring them home. Jesus is our model, so we must value going after the lost .

A missionally motivated church does not try and draw Christians from other churches. It does not market itself to Christians by communicating that "our church" is better than the rest. As a kid growing up in NY I ate a lot of pizza, at a lot of different pizza shops. Everyone - it seemed - sold their pizza in a box that said on the top, "You've Tried all the Rest, Now Try the Best".

We are not trying to persuade Christians that our church is better than the rest. We are trying to persuade non-Christians that Jesus is best! We also seek Christians who have become disconnected from the body of Christ to reconnect.

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On our website you will find the following description of what it means to be a “Community Focused” church:

“We believe that we are called by Jesus to serve our community with good deeds that demonstrate God’s love and goodness. Our community is our first mission field. We are committed to using a variety of methods to build relational bridges to our community thereby providing evidence of God’s love.”

There are three key points communicated within the description of these two values.

1. Tell People the Good News. The first is that we have a responsibility to proclaim the message of salvation and to persuade people to believe. We are called to proclaim and persuade. To the Christians in Corinth Paul wrote about the responsibility he had before the Lord to “work hard to **persuade** others” of the truth of the gospel. He went on to refer to himself and his missionary team as Christ’s ambassadors. Paul described their preaching as pleading or imploring people to come back to God!

In the book of Acts, when Paul arrived as a prisoner in Rome he gained a hearing with a large number of Jews. Here is what it says Paul: “He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and ***tried to persuade them*** about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening.” The telling part is not just to believe in Christ is not just the responsibility of a select group of trained ministers. It was not just the responsibility of the apostles.

*“A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and ***all the believers except the apostles were scattered*** through the regions of Judea and Samaria.” Acts 8:1*

*But ***the believers who were scattered preached the Good News*** about Jesus wherever they went. Acts 8:4*

On five different occasions in Acts Paul’s preaching of the good news is described as “reasoning from the scriptures”. He didn’t stand on the street

corner and yell at people with a sign. He dialogued with his audience. God works through reason to bring people to faith. God does not expect our faith to bypass our intellect.

William Lane Craig (ReasonableFaith.org) and Ravi Zacharias (RZIM.org) are two of the foremost apologists for the Christian faith. That means they engage unbelievers with rational arguments with the intention of persuading them to trust in Christ as God the Son; Redeemer of mankind and Lord of all creation. Many influential Christian writers were once atheists but converted to Christianity as a result of reading and hearing reasoned arguments in defense of the Christian faith.

2. Show People the Good News. We need to not only proclaim the good news and seek to persuade people to believe the good news, we also need to demonstrate the good news through a lifestyle that radiates the presence of God. This can only be achieved as we live lives that are continually filled with the Holy Spirit. As Pastor Dana likes to put it, “We need to “show and tell”. Showing the good news involves the Spirit working in and through our lives so that both, what the NT calls the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit, as well as the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit are evident.

A) In the book of Acts we discover a clear connection between the miraculous and conversions to faith in Christ. The miraculous healing of a lame man in Acts chapter 3 led to over 2,000 converts. When Aeneas was healed of paralysis by Christ through Peter all the whole town turned to the Lord. These are just two of over a dozen instances where belief in the gospel is attributed to a supernatural work of God through His people. I know of many people who have come to faith in Christ either as the result of a healing, or some other supernatural manifestation. When I was a youth pastor one of our college age student who served as a youth leader brought had been witnessing to her brother and trying to get him to come to church. He was very skeptical, but after we prayed for him and he was healed of long

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term hearing problem he gave his life to Christ and became one of our most committed youth.

B) The NT and church history have taught us that when the character of Christ, those virtues produced in or lives by the Holy Spirit, is evident in our lives it makes our message more persuasive and compelling.

At the opening of this message I read 1 Thess. 2:8,9.

We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too. Don't you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that we would not be a burden to any of you as we preached God's Good News to you.

Paul understood that the credibility of his "good news" rested on the character of those who preached it. People are more likely to believe a message that God loves them if they experience God love them through us. Jesus said to his disciples, "...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Church historian Michael Smith, commenting on the growth of the early church, wrote, "*Personal evangelism was often backed up by outstanding acts of kindness...During outbreaks of the plague at Alexandria, Christian tended the sick and buried the dead when nearly everyone else had fled. In fact, the Christian lifestyle itself was a very powerful influence in evangelism. In a society where kindness, honesty and purity were rare, Christians who lived out these qualities were sure to attract comment and often serious enquiry.*"

Let me sum up what I have said to this point. God uses rational arguments that appeal to man's reason and intellect in order to bring people to faith in Christ. However, rational arguments by themselves are not sufficient to produce faith. God also works through the miraculous power of the Spirit and the love of the Spirit.

"Almost all of the people who have come to faith from a Muslim background will say it was the love of Christ that attracted them, or else, in an incredible way, that God

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reached them through visions and dreams. It seems to me that when human powers block the message, God is able to scale their walls.” - Ravi Zacharias (See <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/indispensable-apologetics/>)

3. Show and Tell the Good News w/ Those Around us and Those Around the World.

We need to be global minded Christians, not just local minded.

The great commission Jesus gave to His disciples was to “go and make disciples of all nations”. The mission was clearly not for those just like us or near to us. The Assemblies of God, the ministry network that we belong, to has always possessed a strong sense of this calling to bring the good news of Jesus to people around the world. I am thankful for young people that are hearing and responding to that call. Next month you will hear from Tom and Brooke Harshberger, a young couple who have recently been called to Ireland. In a few months, a couple of new missionaries will be with us to share their vision to bring the gospel to the Muslims. We are working on organizing a short term missions trip for the Summer of 2018. I pray that through the ministry of Calvary Church people will hear the call to bring the good news of Jesus to people in our world that have never heard. But even if God does not call you to go be a missionary in another country, He does call all of us to be a part of this world-wide mission by praying for and financially supporting those He has called. In Romans 10:13-15 we read,

“For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”

Let’s be a church that doesn’t simply share the good news, but pursues people, building bridges, breaking down barriers, bringing people back to God!

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