

The Church: A People With a Mission
II Corinthians 5:14-6:2
Argyle – 11/5/17 – Applications of Our Life in Christ

Introduction to Worship

What is the mission of the church? We need to know what our mission is so that we know how to organize ourselves, what programs and events to plan and how to manage our resources. And we need to know what the mission of the church is in order to decide if it is worth us investing ourselves in the work of the church. So, what would you say is the mission of the church?

Introduction to Scripture

Many years ago when I was on their staff, Young Life did a top to bottom evaluation of everything we were doing in light of our mission statement. I don't remember the exact statement at the time, but it was something about helping kids find Jesus and grow in their relationship with him. What we discovered was that 40% of what we were doing was not related to our mission of reaching kids for Christ. We were doing good things, like publishing devotional materials and sponsoring mission trips, but they were not directly related to that mission. So we went through a painful downsizing to eliminate those extraneous things. And you know who was happiest about that process? Those of us who were helping kids find Jesus and grow in him. It wasn't that we didn't like those other things Young

Life was doing, but they were draining resources away from what God had called us to do.

If we were to do a similar evaluation of the Argyle Presbyterian Church, what things would we emphasize and what things would we eliminate? In order to answer that question, we need to know what the mission of the church is. This morning we are going to take a look at a passage that will help us understand better the mission of the church. We'll be looking at II Corinthians 5:14f. (Read) (Pray)

Introduction

This fall we have been talking about what it means to be “in Christ.” What difference does it make that we have a relationship with Jesus Christ. We've spent four weeks talking about the “Implications of our Life in Christ.” There are four primary things that are true of us if we are Christians. Do you remember what those four things are? In Christ...

1. We are accepted.
2. We are delivered.
3. We are not alone.
4. We have authority.

I encourage you to memorize this outline because it will be a great encouragement and help to you in living the Christian life. And, if you don't know what any of these four things mean, please go to the website and listen to that sermon again. This is foundational information for us to build on.

Because we are accepted, delivered, not alone and have authority, there are five applications that we need to make in order to grow and thrive as God's people. First we need to learn why and how to pray our way through life. We are absolutely dependent on prayer to live the life God has called us to. Trying to do life without prayer being a significant part of it is like going into battle without your gun. Second, we need to learn how to work together as a church. We are called to live together in community. We need each other. Trying to do life without the Christian community is like going into a battle without your fellow soldiers. Today are we talking about our need to understand our mission. We must know what our mission is so that we can orient ourselves toward that mission. Trying to do life without knowing our mission is like going into battle without knowing what you are trying to accomplish.

There are a number of ways we can state the mission of the church. In Matthew 28 Jesus commissioned us to go and make disciples of all nations. Our congregation's mission statement is based on this verse. "The Argyle Presbyterian Church is making disciples who are making a difference." We can say that the mission of the church is to "make disciples."

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said that we are to be his witnesses in our local communities, in our region and to the ends of the earth. We can say that the mission of the church is to "be witnesses for Jesus Christ." These are just different ways of saying the same thing.

In this morning's Scripture passage, Paul adds a different image to communicate the same mission focus. He says that our mission as a church is to be Christ's ambassadors in this world. Paul wrote that God "has committed to us the message of reconciliation."²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

What does it mean to be Christ's ambassador? Think of what Peter McKinley does. Peter McKinley is the United States ambassador to Brazil. In that capacity he represents the United States to the government and people of Brazil. He speaks and acts on our behalf. He is the link between our government and Brazil. If we have a message for the Brazilians we would send it through Peter McKinley.

You and I are ambassadors for Jesus Christ. We represent Jesus to the people of this world who don't know him. We are the link between him and this world, telling people what Jesus is like and what is important to him and how to know him. We speak and act on behalf of Jesus in this world. Simply put, our mission as a church is to be Christ's ambassadors. Let's look at some of what Paul tells us about being Christ's ambassadors.

The Motivation of Christ's Ambassadors

The main thing I want to emphasize this morning is what Paul says about our motivation as Christ's ambassadors. He wrote, "For Christ's love compels us,

because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

In the church we can talk pretty casually about Christ’s love for us and the world. So let’s take a minute to review what his love looks like. In Philippians 2 Paul tells us that although Jesus is God, he did not cling to that divine privilege. Instead, he gave that up to become a human being...for us. That is love! But that is not all. Once here, Jesus humbled himself and allowed himself to be killed on a cross. Why? So that the penalty for our sin would be paid for. As a result, you and I can be forgiven for our sins, reconciled to God the Father, adopted into God’s family, indwelt by his Spirit and destined for an eternity with God. That is love! Jesus loves you that much. Jesus loves your neighbor that much. Jesus even loves your enemy that much.

And something else about Jesus’ love - we can’t lose it! Listen to these great words Paul wrote to the Romans, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

Jesus gave up his glory in heaven to take on a human body so he could die a sacrificial death because he loves us and those around us. And he will never stop

loving us. If we get that, we will be motivated to embrace our mission as Christ's ambassadors to our world.

There are two striking things that Paul says about being motivated to be Christ's ambassadors. First he said, "For Christ love compels us." (II Corinthians 5:14) "Compel" is a compelling word. It grabs your attention. "Compel" means to force or coerces or require. Do you feel required by the love of Jesus to be his ambassador? If not, then maybe you don't fully grasp the love that Christ has for you and the world.

The other striking thing that Paul said is, "...that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." Because of Christ's love we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus. In his analysis of why the church has often been so ineffective, Richard Lovelace says that it is because we keep drifting back to living for ourselves rather Christ. He describes the church in the Book of Acts as like an "army garrison" quartered in an alien land with a clear understanding of their mission to spread the word about Christ and to build the kingdom of God. Sadly, however, the church has a tendency to drift from that focus. Writing about the church in the 20th century Lovelace said, "The main business of the laity... was business and not the kingdom of God. The church and religion served as spokes on the wheel of life, the hub of which was personal success." In other words, for many Christians, the work of God's kingdom is merely a spoke on the wheel of their lives, rather than

the hub that drives them. For many of us our personal success is the thing that drives us and kingdom work is just a optional activity that we sometimes get around to. If that is true of us, then we don't really get Christ's love.

Oh that we would grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. Pray that that would be true in our lives so that we will be motivated to live out our mission as Christ's ambassadors.

Conclusion

Paul goes on to talk about the message of Christ's ambassadors in this passage and in his other letters he describes the method of Christ's ambassadors. I've chosen not to spend any time on those things this morning, because I am convinced that if we are properly motivated, we will figure those things out. If we grasp the depth of Christ's love for us and for the rest of the world, we'll be compelled to get the word about him out to others. We'll stop living for ourselves and instead live for him. We'll say with Paul as he said to the Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Prayer)

Invitation to the Lord's Table

The first step in grasping the extent of Christ's love for us is to understand the helplessness of our situation as sinners before a holy God. The second step in grasping the depth of Christ's love for us is to understand the price he paid to rescue us. Friends, this morning we come to the Lord's Table as rescued sinners. The bread reminds us of his body which was broken for us on the cross and the cup reminds us of his blood which was shed for us on the cross. Talk about being loved!

Jesus invites his followers to come to this table on a regular basis to be reminded of who we are in him and how we got here. If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and have submitted your life to him as your Lord, I invite you to celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning. If you haven't made that decision yet, I would love to talk to you about what is keeping you from coming to Jesus who loves you so much that he died for you. In the meantime, I would encourage you not to participate in the Lord's Supper until you can do it with integrity.