

**Making Disciples Who Make a Difference -
What Difference Does a Disciple Make?
Genesis 12:1-3**

Argyle – 1/15/17 – Church Mission Statement Series

Introduction to Scripture

(Picture) Harry and Sally have lived in this green house on the right for 15 years. They don't know it, but their lives are about to change. Their lives are going to change, (picture) because you are about to move into the house next to them. I want to think this morning about how Harry and Sally's lives might be different because you are their next door neighbor.

These first few weeks of 2017 we are focusing on our church's mission statement which is "making disciples who make a difference." Last week we looked at the question, "What is a disciple?" We said that a disciple is....

1. someone who believes in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation
2. someone who is becoming more and more like Jesus
3. someone who is making disciples of others

Our plan this morning was to look at the "How are disciples made?," but that plan changed on Friday night when Corinne called Bryan at the Session retreat and said, "It is time." I don't know exactly what she said, but I knew then that Bryan wasn't going to be preaching this morning. So, Lord willing next week Bryan will be preaching on how disciples are made and showing us pictures of his new son.

Today we are going to jump to what was supposed to be the third sermon in this

series which is to talk about “What difference do disciples make?” If we are disciples who are making a difference in the world, what difference are we supposed to make? To get us thinking about this, we are going to look at Genesis 12:1-3. This is God’s call to Abram to leave his home and take his family to the Promised Land. In that process God changed Abram’s name to Abraham. (Read)
(Pray)

Introduction

We are going to look at several Biblical passages this morning, but I wanted to start with this one, because it establishes a fundamental truth that we sometimes forget. God blesses his people so that we can be a blessing to others. He said to Abram, “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” As one of my seminary professors used to say, “We have been blessed to be a blessing.” Say that with me. “We have been blessed to be a blessing.” God has called us to himself, saved us from our sin, sent his Holy Spirit to live in us and has blessed us in so many other ways, so that we can bless others. How exactly do we do that?

Ultimate Good Neighbors

That takes us back to Harry and Sally (picture). We aren’t the only good neighbors they will have, but there ought to be something different about having us

as neighbors. They ought to be blessed by having us as their neighbors. Here are some ways we can bless them. **We can bless them by...**

1. **Praying** for them. We know the God of the universe and should speak to him about our neighbors and their needs. There might even be an opportunity to pray with them. People are very open to be praying for when they are going through a crisis and we can bless them in that way.
2. **Loving** them - remember, we are the “love your neighbor” folks. So we are going to listen to them, invite them into our home, care about their needs, shovel their walk when they are out of town, make them a meal when they are having a tough week - we are going to love them in the same ways that we love one another.
3. **Sharing Christ** with them. What a great blessing to have someone who knows Jesus Christ move in next to them. They will get to see Jesus in how we live and be touched by Jesus as we care for them and to hear about Jesus when the opportunity presents itself.
4. **Blessing** them. I know that sounds redundant, but let me describe what I mean. In Galatians 5 Paul tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is what...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness gentleness and self-control. In Colossians 3 he has a similar list that also includes compassion and humility. What is it like to be around someone who has these qualities?

It's a blessing. I don't know how else to put it, but having neighbors who are humble and compassionate and patient and good, what could be better?.

I guess you could summarize this whole section up by saying that one of the differences a disciple makes is that we are the ultimate good neighbors. Our neighborhoods and communities ought to be better places because we live there. We ought to find us coaching Little League and leading the scouts and serving in community organizations and government. Our presence and activities in these ways ought to be making a difference.

Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World

Jesus said that his followers are the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world." In addition to being the ultimate good neighbors, we ought to be salt and light in our world. I find it helpful as part of my morning praying to use the prayers of some of the great saints of the church. Yesterday, I was particularly struck by a prayer from John Baillie's *A Diary of Daily Prayer*. It is the prayer of someone who wants to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Please read this with me.

"O Thou who indweldest in our poor and shabby human life, lifting it now and then above the dominance of animal passion and greed, allowing it to shine with the borrowed lights of love and joy and peace, making it a mirror of the beauties of a world unseen, grant that my part in the world's life today may not be

to obscure the splendor of Thy presence but rather to make it more plainly visible to the eyes of my fellow men. Let me stand today...

- *for whatever is pure and true and just and good;*
- *for the advancement of science and education and true learning;*
- *for the redemption of daily business from the blight of self-seeking;*
- *for the rights of the weak and the oppressed;*
- *for industrial co-operation and mutual help;*
- *for the conservation of the rich traditions of the past;*
- *for the recognition of new workings of Thy Spirit in the minds of the people of my own time;*
- *for the hope of yet more glorious days to come.*

Today, O Lord...

- *let me put right before interest;*
- *let me put others before self;*
- *let me put the things of the spirit before the things of the body;*
- *let me put the attainment of noble ends above the enjoyment of present pleasures;*
- *let me put Thee before all else.*

O Thou, the reflection of whose transcendent glory did once appear unbroken in the face of Jesus Christ, give me today a heart like His - a brave heart, a true

heart, a tender heart, a heart with great room in it, a heart fixed on Thyself; for His name's sake. Amen.

There are copies of this prayer on the table under the balcony and this pulpit next to the choir loft if you would like one. It is the prayer of a disciple who wants to make a difference.

A disciple who makes a difference is one whose presence and ways reflect the beauties of an unseen world and point to God's presence among us. A disciple who makes a difference is one who stands for whatever is pure and true and just and good. A disciple who makes a difference is one who makes his or her school, workplace and community a better place. A disciple who makes a difference is one who shares God's concern for the weak and oppressed. A disciple who makes a difference is one who lives with hope for the future based on God's promises.

Conclusion

The mission of the Argyle Presbyterian Church is to make disciples who are making a difference. Are you growing into that kind of disciple?