

Sunday, November 28, 2021
First Sunday of Advent
Pastor Matt Duerr

“The Why of it All-His M&M”

Grace mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. As we come to the last sermon in our sermon series “The Why of It All,” the relationships we have with God and with others; it is not surprising that God's mission for us is relational. It is people being reconciled to Him; and the reconciled then spreading this gospel of relationships through relationships. Our final question deals with that. Why does God want us to share Christ with others? And if we think back over the last three weeks in our why questions, I believe that we will begin to see the answer. Because those why questions motivate us to consider remembering that God wants His whole family back. He created us. We were meant to all be a part of His Kingdom, His family. And if any one part of that family is not back, it hurts Him. Just as if one child out of your whole family, if they walk away from you, it's going to hurt.

The why questions motivate us to consider thinking of people and what they truly need. Seeing what they truly need. Jesus again was the master of this. Jesus saw 5000 hungry people, so He fed them spiritually all day long. He did not stop, but then as evening came, they needed to be fed physically. And He saw they truly needed that, so He took care of it. Now consider the disciples, what did they see? They saw trouble, 5000 mouths to feed, not enough dollars to handle it. They saw obstacles. Again, in our gospel today, Jesus went to the people, He saw they were harassed, they were helpless, they were like sheep without a shepherd. And what did He do? He had compassion on them, and that compassion led Him to pray. Boy, doesn't that say something about the power of prayer? That's what Jesus did in compassion, He prayed to the Lord of harvest that the Lord would send out laborers, disciples into the field.

Why? Why make disciples? So that the Kingdom relationships can be reconciled and restored to others as well. And it is done one by one, through teaching and discipling. That is what we are called to be, disciples. And we're not to worry about the response we might give as we share that message with

others, because it may not be received well at first, or maybe at all. But it is to be shared and we are not to count ourselves as being unworthy of the task because Christ has called us, and he says he'll take care of that for us. He'll send the Holy Spirit.

Those why questions motivate us to consider understanding. Understanding that God has asked, God has said, God is even commanded that we follow in His footsteps with His message in His fullness in His likeness. Again, we want to say, 'Oh no I can't do that! I can't be like Christ! I can't have the fullness of Christ! And yet consider the words of Jesus Himself in John 10, verse 21; "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." We are sent just as Jesus was sent to bring salvation into this world.

But if His words there aren't good enough, let's go to Matthew 4:19 where Jesus is calling His disciples and says, "come follow me and I will make you fishers of men." notice He didn't say, 'I'm going to make you people who attend church every Sunday.' He didn't say, 'and I will make you an elder or Deacon.' No, He said, "I'll make you (plural) all of us, fishers of men. Still not enough? How about His last words to His disciples in Acts 1:8. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the very ends of the earth." This is what we are called to do. In His likeness, in the fullness of Christ. ***Therefore, relationships are God's method and the message.***

So, what are the relational parts of being witnesses, disciples for Christ? Number one, opening our eyes, looking as I mentioned, Jesus went, He saw, He had compassion. Jesus did not put a sign out there for others to see that said come meet me Sundays at 10 AM. No, He went, and He saw. What did He do after He saw people in need? He prayed and that is something that I think we could do a much better job of. We need to pray for those who we will see. We need to pray for those who we know aren't reconciled. Maybe a coworker, maybe a family member, maybe a neighbor, we need to be praying for them. And I'm serious; in the morning when you do your morning prayers, take two minutes, two minutes to pray for those people you know, and those people who God will bring to you through the day who don't know Jesus. Pray that they will get to heaven. Before you start praying to keep people out of heaven; praying for these people to be healed from cancer or from other diseases. We have quite a list. But those people know Jesus. The ones who

are most sick are those who don't know Him. Start praying for them, and pray for relationship building between you and them, and how to see the points of connection that might bring you together. And understand as you think about those people that you run into, or that you know, the most receptive people; and I'm not trying to sound like some cult leader here, but it's just the honest truth. The most receptive people are those who are in broken relationship. The result is their lives are not working out too well. Think back to the sermon three weeks ago; we've got suicides going crazy, we have drug addictions off the charts. Why is that? People in broken relationships will feel alone and are desperately trying to find answers. They have everything to gain. They have nothing to lose. It's at that moment, that they are most receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, if we want to change the world for Christ; and maybe that's what we should start with, is asking ourselves; do we want to change the world for Christ? If we do, we need to move into it, and not point a finger and say someone ought to go and do this. It's what Jesus did. It's His methodology. John 1:14 "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." He came into our world. John 3:17 that's right you didn't hear me wrong. 3:17 not 3:16. That's "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." But verse 17 continues on with "for God did not send His Son into the world to the condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." This needs to be the focus. And we ourselves need to think about who we are and how we acted and what that fullness of Christ is like. *It was loving and serving.*

When we look at Luke chapter 5:1 to 11; the great catch of fish; there was a powerful message there. Here come the disciples, professional fisherman. They're coming in the morning. Jesus asked, 'how was the fishing?' 'Oh, fishing stank, we were up all night and caught hardly anything.' And you remember what Jesus said? 'Go out into the deep water.' That is the last thing those disciples wanted to hear after fishing all night. And as Lord we rattled by pulling up the Nets and everything that people are is no fish out there go out of deep water. They went out and they caught so many fish that their boats began to sink. They didn't expect any fish to be there. The question for us to ask is 'where is the deep water today?' 'Who are those fish in the deep water?' Unbelievers will know that we truly love them, to the extent that we are willing to sacrifice for them. And if we go to the deep water, they will see we're

sacrificing self. *That is the methodology of Jesus.* One has to die so that others might live. He died so we might live. But we have to die to self so that others might live. We have to get away from our preconceived notions that we can't do it. We can through the power of the Holy Spirit. Great harvest means great sacrifice. Think about the apostles, they sacrificed. They gave it all for Jesus. And for those He had told them to go to. Isn't it interesting, that during that first and second century, when the Christians were under the greatest persecution, even their executioners and persecutors of them, saw how much those Christians loved them and were willing to die for them? So that they might hear the good news and the church grew exponentially. Church, the church exists for the world. The world does not exist for us.

The people in Indonesia understood that. Remember what happened back in 2004? Indonesian is a predominantly Muslim country by a longshot. The Christian missionaries were making some inroads and so the Muslim people were told, feel free to kill the Christians in your neighborhood. It was almost like the situation when Esther was queen. The Christians had to flee for their lives. They ran to the hills, literally to the mountains. And then at Christmas that tsunami hit. It wiped out the coastal towns, wiped out the population centers. When the waters receded in the people who were still alive were left. They saw we lost everything. Our homes, family, everything, we've lost it all. And what did they see? They saw the Christians coming out of the hills and their response was 'Oh my gosh, they're going to come and seek retribution. They're going to kill us. We have nothing left. Instead, they came down with saws, with hammers, with nails, and they came to their neighbors and said, 'let us work with you. Let us help rebuild your house. Let us help you get yourselves back on your feet.' And that great compassion and action resulted in a great harvest of Christians.

They showed compassion, they shared themselves, they shared the love of Christ, they shared the gospel message. and that is what Paul writes about in Romans 10. "How will they call on Him, if they don't believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they haven't heard of Him? And how can they hear if no one is sent?" But we are sent. Jesus has sent each one of us and He has told us through Saint Paul, that faith comes from hearing and hearing comes from the word of Christ. And so, we are called to reach out. But not alone, together.

Again, it's easy to teach to a large group but discipleship is in the smaller groups. And we are perfectly set for that. Zion in Lodi, Emanuel in Jackson, Foothill and Shepherd of the Hills in Valley Springs, we're already in small groups. What we need to do is truly embrace that, and that family nature of that, and begin to share with each other. Share and ask for prayer for those who you know, who don't know Jesus; family member, neighbor, coworker, it doesn't matter. Share that person's name with others and say please pray for them. They need to come to faith and please pray for me that God would give me the words to say. And then as we see some of those people come into church with our family, our members, then step in as family and invite those people to come back. Introduce yourself to those people. Welcome those people and include them immediately in the relationship of God's family.

You might be saying, 'pastor Matt this is most unique first Sunday of advent sermon we've heard. It's not that doing anything as far as talking about Christmas.' I beg to differ. I think it has everything to do with Christmas. The first candle in the advent wreath is called the preparation candle. Prepare for what? Prepare to see Jesus Christ sent to restore the relationship through reconciliation that was broken in the garden of Eden. That is what we are to prepare to see. And why do we need to prepare to see it? Because the message is, now you go in the fullness of Christ, filled with Christ, in the likeness of Christ, and bring that salvation to others. When we see what God has done for us through Jesus Christ who sacrificed it all for us; that's the extent to which He loved us and loves us. Then we should be motivated to follow His method, using His message so that others may be reconciled and restored to relationship with Him. Then we have the real Christmas! Then we rejoice and give thanks! When we see that salvation, that gift from God, opening up in the lives of others. In our Savior's name, Amen.