

St. Paul: On The Same page

for 10.05.14



Day One: Matthew 28:19

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...”

This coming Sunday is the one we call our “All-One-Family” Sunday. Even though our members worship at four different services, on two different days, and at two different locations, we take one weekend a year to remember that we’re just one family of believers.

Remembering that we’re one family, it’s good for us to remember that we also share just one purpose. There is one reason why our church was started, and why it is here.

That reason is summed up in the words of the Gospel lesson above. “Go and make disciples...”

Being a disciple means being a follower, an imitator of Jesus. We all want to imitate Jesus who called people to follow him. We want to imitate Jesus who welcomed children. We want to imitate Jesus who brought healing and comfort. We are called to imitate Jesus who forgave sins.

So when we all worship together next Sunday, we are imitating Jesus and his disciples who broke bread together, shared God’s word together, listened to Jesus together, and received God’s gift of a new life together because Jesus gave his life for them – and for us.

We are also imitators of one another. Paul urges the new believers in Thessalonica to imitate him as he imitates Jesus. And we are told to serve as examples to one another, to encourage each other to good works.

That’s what a Christian congregation is. And I pray you will join us next Sunday to lift up the image of Jesus in Ann Arbor.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, make us one family, as you have called us to one faith. In your name, Amen.*

Day Two: Acts 5:42

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ.

You've seen this verse around lately. It's the inspiration for the graphic on the first page. It's the summary of our worship direction this year. But it's also a good picture of our work as a congregation.

St. Paul is a city church. This is who we are. We were started over 100 years ago in the middle of the city and we've always been there, on the edge between the restaurants and offices and the bustle of downtown and the quiet neighborhood streets of the west side.

More than that, our members now come from all over town, and from the surrounding communities. And much of our ministry, most of the teaching and caring that we do, happens on the east side of the city at our school.

We chose this verse because it talks about the work of the early believers in the same way. It didn't matter where they were. In the courts of the Temple, there at the

highest point of the city, or from house to house in the narrow neighborhood streets. Everywhere in the city they were teaching. And everywhere in the city they were proclaiming the same message. Jesus is the one who was promised, the Messiah.

This is not a description of worship sites, although they did worship in houses all around town. This is a description of individual people speaking about Jesus everywhere they went.

Yes, our ministry is a bit complicated, taking place in 4 services and 2 places. But we are not just speaking Jesus' name in those services. We are called to speak about Jesus day after day in every corner of Ann Arbor, and Ypsilanti, and Brighton, and Canton, and Saline, and Dexter.

How could the first believers do that? It was because they knew they weren't alone. They were part of one body, the Body of Christ. And he was risen!

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, we're scattered all over the city and the county. But you can make us one, and fill us with one purpose and one Spirit. Call us into service again. Amen.*

Day Three: 1 Cor. 2:1-2

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

So we all agree that we've been called into this time and place, and we've been called into being as a congregation, to proclaim the good news about salvation in Jesus. How do we do that?

That sounds like a job for a pastor, doesn't it? Or some other church professional – or at least a really special member of the congregation who is unusually well trained or gifted to be able to convince people to believe in Jesus. But not you, right?

YOU don't know how to talk people into believing in Jesus!

I know the feeling. I've lost track of how many conferences I've attended and books I've read about this same good news. And yet I think they have almost made me *worse* at telling people about Jesus. Where do I start? Do I start by arguing about creation and evolution? Or the

10 Commandments? Or do I start with the Christmas story, or by telling them how Jesus is both God and man...

Paul, who also had lots of education, took a different path. He only knew Jesus – the person of Jesus – the character and actions of Jesus. And that's what he talked about.

Carl Medearis, author of the book "Speaking of Jesus", put it this way. "We have an unfair advantage. We know the Creator. We're friends with the King. We know where truth is found and its name. We know what brings life and what gives life and where eternal life resides. It's not fair. While others are explaining and defending various "isms" and "ologies," we're simply pointing people to our friend."

Medearis says that when he simply talks about Jesus, most people, even Muslims, have been eager to listen.

Prayer: *Dear Savior, let me have your name on my lips this week. Teach me to speak of you. Amen.*

(Note: Carl Medearis will be speaking at St. Luke this Saturday, 10/4, at 7pm.)

Day Four: Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying (LSB #826)

*Hark, the voice of Jesus crying,
“Who will go and work today?
Fields are white and harvests
waiting. Who will bear the sheaves
away?” Loud and long the Master
calleth; rich reward he offers thee.
Who will answer gladly saying,
“Here am I, send me, send me?”*

That’s a challenging hymn. It dares us to get up out of our seats and actually DO something. And it’s a risky business. Did you know that’s how I became a pastor?

I volunteered to go with my youth group and help take a survey. That’s all just a door to door survey, asking people a couple of questions about their faith. And I had fun – after all, it was a youth event and there were a lot of girls there. But then I found, after dozens and dozens of houses, asking people about what they believed and sharing a tiny bit about what I believed, I began to be convicted about what I was saying. If I really believed this, that Jesus had died for me, maybe I should put my money where my mouth is.

This hymn is scary. It dares us to go into the harvest

fields. And we think of distant shores, and jungles, and bugs, and strange foods. But Jesus said that the harvest fields were all around us. They are not far away. In fact, there is probably one within reach of your hand right now.

I saw a t-shirt this week that said, “Every heart without Jesus is a mission field. And every heart with Jesus is a missionary.”

Which heart do you have? If we know Jesus, then the hymn says we can speak about him, show him, imitate him for others. For children, for our neighbors, in our friendships, at work, Jesus belongs in those places because he belongs in us and we are in those places. In fact, he has put us in those very places so that we can live out the good news of forgiveness and mercy.

“Let none hear you idly saying, “There is nothing I can do.”” On the contrary, let them hear you saying, “I thank Jesus for what he has done for me.”

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, it was me that you were calling that day. And I have not answered. Help me to answer now and to follow. Amen.*