

Text: Mark 4:26-29

Title: “The Mission ... Sharing Christ”

This has been a very difficult week starting Wednesday morning when I received a text message from Chad Brantley, our Assoc. Pastor for Discipleship, that he had gone to the ER in the night with severe abdominal pains. They ran tests and the initial diagnosis was that his cancer had returned. We were stunned! Well after three days of running tests they discovered that he does not have a malignancy, but he does have a benign tumor that will require major surgery for removal. We were so relieved, but we need to continue to pray. His surgery will be in Dallas as soon as possible this week. Let's pray.

Today I'm concluding a series entitled **“THE MISSION ... WHY WE'RE STILL HERE.”** The reason God doesn't take us on to heaven after we are saved is that there are others who need to know Jesus, and His mission for His church is to proclaim the Gospel. Through our Re:Vision process and the work of the SLT we have developed a **MISSION STATEMENT** that will hopefully keep us as a church riveted to what we're supposed to be about. “We exist to know, follow and share Jesus Christ.” And so that the mission statement will become a reality in our church, not just a slogan or a motto, we are challenging everyone to pray this **ONE PRAYER** for ourselves and for our church: “Lord Jesus Christ, give me the hunger to know you intimately, the faith to follow you fully and the passion to share you fearlessly.”

Open your Bibles to Mark 4:26. Jesus was constantly trying to impress up His followers the importance of His mission. He called them and said, “Follow me and I will make you to fish for men.” So as followers of Christ we are to be casting God's net of the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that the hearts of people will be captured by Jesus. On another occasion Jesus told a parable where He compared His disciples to farmers who scatter the seed of the Gospel on the soil of the hearts of people. And that's the point of Jesus parable here about the Kingdom of God.

Read Mark 4:26-29.

So Jesus came to bring about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the reign of God through His Son Jesus Christ in the hearts of people. Today His kingdom is mostly invisible, but one day the Kingdom will be entirely and universally visible. Today the invisible Kingdom of God expands person by person as the Gospel is proclaimed and people are saved. Jesus explains that the Kingdom of God comes...

1. THROUGH THE SCATTERING OF GOSPEL SEED

Mark 4:26 - He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground.

ILLUSTRATION – There's a story about a crew of government workers who were going along a highway. In one truck there was a group of guys who would jump out with their shovels and dig holes, jump back in the truck and move on. Right behind them came another truck with guys who jumped out with their shovels and quickly filled up the holes, jumped back in the

truck and moved on. A lady was watching this process going down the highway so she stopped the crew and asked one of them what they were doing ... why someone dug a hole only to have someone come along behind them and fill it up. The worker answered, "We're planting trees. We dig the holes and those guys cover up the holes. The guys with the trees have the day off." I'm afraid that as a church we're good at digging the holes and covering up the holes, but we need to do a better job of getting the seed of the Word of God into the soil of the hearts of people.

Now the parable doesn't say that the seed is the Word of God, but an earlier parable here in Mark 4 does. The main action here is that a man scatters seed on the ground. He knows this is an crucial if there is to be a harvest come from all of his hard work. He's not so concerned about where the seed falls; it just must get into the soil.

And because scattering the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is hard work, time-consuming and costly it's easy for us to just not do it ... as a church and as individuals.

You see, it's a "me" thing. Jesus intended me and you to personally make a difference in our world by sharing Him with others.

Matthew 4:19 - "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

We need to prepare ourselves to be able to speak clearly about Jesus, why He lived, died and rose again, and how one puts their trust in Him. So this is a "me" thing, but it is also a "we" thing. Jesus said to His followers as a group...

Matthew 28:19 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

What is our Jerusalem? One of the things we've learned from the Re:Vision process is that our church does not look like our community. Most of our church members don't live in our church's zip code, or even in two mile radius around our church. We will always have a regional witness, but the light that shines farthest out is the light that shines most brightly at home. We must do a better job of scattering the seed among our neighbors.

But our responsibility doesn't stop with our Jerusalem. Sometimes people ask me why we spend money on planting churches and proclaiming the Gospel in Seattle WA or in Karnataka, India. Why do we take 10% of our budget and send it away to reach Tarrant County, North America and the world? Our church could use that money for our own ministries right here in FW. We do it because Jesus said to do it. God has blessed our church through the years because we haven't been stingy with our support for global proclamation of the Gospel.

There are basically three kinds of evangelism described in the NT:

- **COME AND SEE** – This is where we invite people to Sunday church, or some other event here at the church where they will hear the Gospel and respond to Christ.
- **GO AND TELL** – When you leave here today you are going into a field where you live, work, go to school and play. There you are to plant the seed of the Gospel. And we must be more strategic as a church where we intentionally take the Word of Christ into places in our city where the seed must be sown.
- **SALT AND LIGHT** – Jesus told us, “You are the salt of the earth that penetrates this lost world. You are the light of the world that illuminates this dark world.” We are to be influencers for God’s Kingdom in all we do.

The seed has to be scattered, but the Kingdom of God also comes...

2. WITH THE INVISIBLE POWER OF THE WORD

Mark 4:27 - Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.

There’s power in the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When the seed of the Gospel ... the Word of God ... is planted in the heart of a person, if the conditions are right, the mysterious, invisible process of conversion takes place.

ILLUSTRATION – On our recent trip to Israel our bus driver was a man name Dov. Most of the guides and bus drivers in Israel are Jewish. But when I was introduced to Dov he pulled me aside and said, “I’m a believer.” I said, “Really? I want to hear your story.” Later Dov explained to me that for 25 years as a Jewish bus driver he drove buses for Christian groups like ours. For 25 years he heard tour leaders like myself talk about Yeshua (Jesus). There had been a crisis in his life about two years before and a Jewish friend who had become a follower of Jesus invited Dov to a Messianic church where he heard the Gospel and put his trust in Jesus. I was reminded of the power of the Gospel. That’s why the Apostle Paul said...

Romans 1:16 - I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Also the Kingdom of God comes...

3. THROUGH THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

Mark 4:28 - All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.

There’s a natural progression that takes place. The convicting and convincing of the Holy Spirit draws a person to Christ. Their heart begins to soften, warmed by the love of Christ. The light of Christ begins pushing back the darkness. Soon objections begin to melt away. The grace of

God captures the heart of the sinner and they find themselves able to take God at His word. They no longer try to rationalize their sin, but freely admit their need for the Savior to forgive them and to give them new life. And the process of transformation continues as they grow in Christlikeness and sanctification for the rest of their lives. It's an amazing process that all starts with a seed. But there's something else. The Kingdom of God comes...

4. WITH A VISIBLE HARVEST

Mark 4:29 - As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

You just don't plant seeds to plant seeds. You plant seeds because you expect a harvest. If we are faithful to share Jesus Christ with others people will be saved. Not because of our persuasiveness or creativity, but because of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And Jesus taught that one day there will one last harvest when God brings all those who have been saved into heaven for eternity.

The question we need to be asking ourselves as a church is this: "Where is the harvest?" At the bottom line, that's the big thing. Are people being saved? And if not, why not? Are we digging holes and covering them up without putting down any seed? Are we praying and trusting in the power of the Gospel of Jesus to transform lives? Are we obeying Jesus by sowing the seed of the Gospel?

Now let me explain why I believe the change in our worship schedule we are proposing is important in this regard? We are faithful to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ because God wants every human to worship Jesus. That's what happens when people get saved ... they worship and glorify Jesus. And the outward expression of that is the public worship of the church. And through the public worship of the church we are to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We come together to worship not just to feel good about God, but to communicate what is true about God to His glory. And when we do that well non-believers who are present come to see that God is among us and they are moved with the conviction that they need Christ. One of the ways that we witness to the Gospel is through our unity. Jesus prayed...

John 17:23 – (Father) I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ‘

We have a unique church in that we have a very wide distribution of age groups from the younger to the older and everything in between. That's not something to be ashamed of. We should celebrate that and capitalize on it. Now in multi-generational churches, there's the challenge of different preferences when it comes to the way we worship. But stop to think about this. The one thing that we seem to have the most problem with is basically what happens for 30 minutes out of our week ... the first half of our worship services. The second half is the preaching of the Word that we all agree is central and crucial. Can we not subordinate our preferences for about thirty minutes a week to find a way to worship God in a way that pleases

Him and with the unity that demonstrates to our neighbors that Jesus and God are one and that God sent His Son to save us?

Psalm 145:4 - One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts.

We are a family. All families are different. And sometimes families have to make adjustments. If a family is struggling with their relationships they might sit down one night and say, "Alright, we're going to not watch as much TV and we're going to do things together and talk together." Or if a family is having financial problems they will sit down together and say, "We need to adjust our budget and all of us start sacrificing so we can live responsibly." And that's where we are as a church. If we are to get serious about the mission Jesus has given us, we need the strength that comes from being united in our worship ... not contemporary worship or traditional worship or blended worship ... just worship. For several months I've been praying...

Romans 15:5-6 - May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ILLUSTRATION –There is an old legend about when Jesus returned to heaven after He had died on the cross and rose from the dead. In the legend, Jesus was met by the angel Gabriel who said: "Master, you suffered terribly for those down on earth. Do they all know how much you loved them and suffered for them?" Jesus said, "No, not yet. Right now only a handful of my followers know." Gabriel looked perplexed. "How will everyone find out about your life, death and resurrection?" Jesus said, "I have commanded Peter, James, John and a handful of My followers to tell other people about it. And when other people hear and believe, they in turn will tell others. In this way the whole planet will hear the Good News." Then Gabriel asked: "But Jesus you know how humans are. What if they get tired? What if one generation gets distracted or divided or disobeys? What if down in the 21st century, people aren't committed any longer to your mission? What then?" Jesus looked directly at the angel of God and said: "I have no other plan."