

Sermon

November 17 and 18, 2007

Mission Statement: "Sharing God's Love"

Our mission statement is:

**Following Christ,
Growing in Faith,
Sharing God's Love.**

This is our 3rd week talking about
our new mission statement.

It all starts with Christ.

Who loves you so much—

--enough to die for you.

And in response to that amazing love,
we follow—

--growing in faith

--and sharing God's love.

Today we focus on the 3rd section:

Sharing God's Love.

We are sent out into the world
to follow Christ,

to serve,

to share in word and deed,

the wonderful love

God has first given us.

I'd like to teach you a song this morning.

Simple little song.

From Africa.

It's #773 in the Blue Hymnals,

although you probably don't need words or music.

It's a reminder that we are sent out.

And a prayer that God will send me.

Send me Lord.

Lead me...

Fill me...

We have two short Gospel readings today.

The first is from Mark 3,
when Jesus calls the 12.

And it says:

“...whom he also named apostles.”

They were called to follow,
but also were sent out.

And that’s true for us, too.

As it says in Matthew 28 (the other reading for today):

**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always,
to the end of the age.**

We are sent out.

Gathered in to follow.
Sent out to serve.
To share God’s love.

Last week we talked about the second line
of the mission statement:

Growing in Faith.

Jesus calls us to be disciples.

Disciple means
one who follows,
learns from,
sits at the feet of a teacher.

We are called to be disciples.

But we are also called to be apostles.

An apostle is one who is sent out.
Sent out to Share God’s Love.

You are disciples.

You are also apostles.

1 Peter 2:9-10

is a wonderful, affirming Bible passage:

**But you are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood,
a holy nation,
God's own people.**

You are chosen.

Set apart.

Special.

And sometimes we're tempted to stop there,
but there's more.

What does the rest of the passage say?

**You are a chosen race,
a royal priesthood,
a holy nation,
God's own people...**

The Bible reading continues:

...so that

**you may proclaim the mighty acts of him
who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**

God has chosen you

and set you apart

in order that you might serve—

--and your actions shine in the world.

(When Karly is baptized in a few minutes,

we'll light a candle,

and hear the words:

**“Let your light so shine before others,
that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

God claims you

and sends you out

to shine in the world.)

So, how do we do that?
What does it mean to be sent out?

There's a question in the sermon notes section
of your bulletin.

Something for you to think about
and jot down some thoughts during the sermon (or after).

How will you share God's love this week?
--As part of the community of faith?
--In daily life?

How will you share God's love this week?
First, as part of this community of faith.
And second, in your daily life?
Both parts of the question are important.

The first part,
we share God's love together as a community of faith.
Jesus often sent his apostles out in twos or groups.
We support one another in our mission.

So, we share God's love by:

- Delivering Thanksgiving baskets,
with the gifts shared by the congregation.
- Through Christmas Child boxes,
many of which were sent off this past week.
- Through Bill's house,
the Habitat House which many of you worked on,
dedicated yesterday/today.
- Through the Giving Tree and other Christmas projects coming up in weeks ahead.
- Through all the work preparing for the trip to Kenya.
- Through Feed My Starving Children,
when we packaged over 100,000 meals.
And our Advent/Christmas offering in December
will help provide funds so we can do it again.

Good Shepherd
does a good job
in Sharing God's Love in these ways.
It's exciting to be part of a congregation
that shares so generously.

It says in Acts 1:8,
"You will be my witnesses."
We are witnesses in what we say and do.
It's not that we decide to be witnesses.
We are witnesses.
The question is,
"What do people see?"

At a conference I attended recently,
one of the speakers said:
"Witness, at its heart,
is who you are
that people see."

And I think,
as people see these generous acts of giving,
they see God's love being shared.

He also said
that the way we relate to one another
as people of the community of faith
is often the first witness people have
of God's love.
The way we live together
is often the first way people see Christ.

So,

how do we care for one another?

How do we work together?

How do we fight when we disagree?

How do we support one another?

In times of crisis, how do we respond to one another?

How can each of those things reflect

that we are following Christ

and sharing God's love.

We can share God's love a lot

as part of a community of faith,

a congregation,

as we work together.

How will you do that this week?

(Send me Lord.

Lead me Lord.

Fill me Lord.)

The second half of the question is:

How will you share God's love in daily life?

Sometimes the challenge for us

is that we think,

when we've been involved in Thanksgiving Baskets,
and Feed My Starving Children,
and all those projects,
that we're finished sharing God's love.

But sometimes the bigger challenge is how we

share God's Love in daily life,

in our normal, everyday activities.

God sends you to share God's love there, too.

And that's a big, big chunk of your life.

As Americans,

we're really quite good at compartmentalizing our lives.

We have the work compartment,

and the family compartment,

and the school compartment,

and the play compartment,

and the faith compartment.

Of course,

there's a problem with that.

Faith isn't a compartment.

Church can be a compartment,

but faith is for every part of our lives.

Faith means that we follow Christ at work,

and at home,

and at school,

and at the football game,

and when we are relaxing.

And you say,

"But I'm not even allowed to talk about Christ
at work."

That's probably true for a lot of folks.

But it doesn't mean that Christ can't be central—even there.

There's a quote making the rounds,
attributed to Martin Luther,
talking about his concept of vocation,
which says:

**“The maid who sweeps her kitchen
is doing the will of God
just as much as the monk who prays—
—not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps
but because God loves clean floors.
The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty
not by putting little crosses on the shoes,
but by making good shoes.”**

I think that's pretty good.
Problem is, Martin Luther almost certainly didn't say it.
Don't know where it came from.

And, although the quote rightly gives value to everyday work,
the quote probably misses the mark a little on motivation.

What's the motivation?
A real quote from Martin Luther says this:

**“If one is a Christian tailor,
he will say:
I make these clothes because God has bidden me do so,
so that I can earn a living,
so that I can help and serve my neighbor.”**

As a commentator said,
thinking about all this,
the real quote and the fake quote:
“God likes shoes (and good ones!)
not for their own sake,
but because the neighbor needs shoes.”

Where does your great passion
meet the world's great need?
In words or in actions (or both),
that's where you often find the opportunity
to share God's love.

But at the end,
 I want to go back to the beginning.
It all starts with God's love for you.
 For me.
 For the world.

The great Japanese Christian,
 Toyohiko Kagawa,
 when he was a student,
 was sick for a while,
 confined to his room,
 all alone.

While he was there,
 a Christian missionary
 came and knocked on his door.
Kagawa told him:
 "Don't come in.
 I have a contagious disease."

But the missionary came in anyway,
 went to Kagawa's side,
 sat down,
 and said:
 "I have something more contagious than disease.
 I have come with the love of God."

(Karly Ann?)

God's love moves in you and me
and leads us to our mission of:

Following Christ,
Growing in Faith,
Sharing God's Love.

(Send me, Lord)

In Jesus' name,
Amen