

**M I
S S I
O N I N
F O C U S
A T W A I T E
P A R K C H U R C H**

F I N D L I F E S H A R E L I F E G I V E L I F E

Sept 17 - Oct 21

This book belongs to:



Waite Park
WESLEYAN CHURCH

KEEP ON LOVING

one another as brothers and sisters.

DO NOT FORGET

to show hospitality to strangers for
by so doing some people have
shown hospitality to angels without
knowing it.

CONTINUE TO REMEMBER

those in prison as if you were
together with them in prison, and
those who are mistreated as if you
yourselves were suffering.

Hebrews 13:1-3

YOUR GUIDE TO MISSION IN FOCUS

from Waite Park Church

During this upcoming five week season our church will be focused on mission and outreach as we follow God's leading for us to be stretched in that area.

Sermon Notes: Use this portion of the booklet to take notes during the sermon. You can watch a livestream online at <http://www.waiteparkchurch.org/live-stream/> or use our sermon page or YouTube channel to stay caught up on messages.

Small Group Questions: Respond to each question before you meet so that you can be prepared to share when the time comes. In doing so, you won't be caught off guard and you'll be able to offer thoughtful responses.

Family Devotion: Take one night a week in which your family can share and reflect on what we're training for as a church. These are mostly geared towards young children but can still be useful for all. Which night of the week will you meet? Circle One: S M T W TH F SA

Soul Training: We've created some daily training opportunities that correlate with the sermon. These provide an opportunity for you to put into practice what was preached about on Sunday. These are best read in the morning.

As a church, we've sensed that God is calling us to focus on outreach. Unite with us in practice and in purpose as we set our sights on God and "fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith."

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Week 1

SEEING PEOPLE

Have you ever been to the optometrist and used one of those eye exam machines? It can be an illuminating experience for us to see how the world is supposed to look. The first time I put glasses on, I loved looking at simple ordinary things. It was neat to see leaves on a tree that was far away. I could see the texture of walls even when I wasn't near them. I was entertained by reading small print on far away signs. Prior to my eye appointment, I had no idea that I wasn't seeing the world the way it was meant to be seen.

What would it be like to visit a heavenly optometrist? What would Jesus correct about our vision? Is it possible that we're not seeing the world the way it was meant to be seen? The way that he sees it? What are we missing out on?

In Luke 16:15 Jesus says to religious people, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight."

It's clear that God sees people differently than we do. Where we might see mud, He sees a masterpiece. Where we see a rebel, he sees a child. Where we see the outside, He sees the inside. Where we see past, He sees potential.

Are we willing to receive sight from God? If we are willing to receive it, what will it take?

Week 1
09/17/2017

SERMON NOTES
SEEING PEOPLE

FAMILY DEVOTION

Read Psalm 139:13-18

(We suggest the NIRV or the ICB or the NLT for young children)

Being reminded that God is the Creator gives us a sense of wonder at God's power. My son and I often pray and thank God for hanging the moon in the sky and putting the stars in their place.

Psalm 139 teaches us some powerful truths about our God who created all things. One of the things we learn is that God created each one of us and that He loves each one of us.

- 1) Was God in a hurry when he made us?
- 2) How does God feel about you?
- 3) V.18 says that when we wake up, God is still with us. Why do you think He never leaves us, even when we're sleeping?
- 4) How does God feel about other people?

Spitting Image

²² They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Seeing things correctly is dirty work. Often times it takes a community, it means confronting our own ungodly prejudices, it means being willing to try and try again, it means asking God for help and recognizing we can't do it on our own.

The physically blind man in Mark 8:22-26 has a similar experience. The man finds out that healing:

- Requires help from others
- Can mean getting dirty
- Doesn't happen in an instant
- Requires the power of God

These physical truths have clear spiritual parallels. Pray and ask for God's help in restoring your eyesight and helping you to see others the way He sees them. Be willing to receive help from others in this process, be willing to let life get messy, and be ready for it to take time.

Matthew 7:1-5

09/19/17

Specks and Planks

³“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

A video online shows a priest with road rage. A woman screams at her young daughter in the parking lot of Cub Foods. A man is rude to the server at Hazel’s. The cashier is impatient with you as you try to figure out why your card isn’t working. A coworker has an affair. A police officer reacts with unnecessary violence and fear. Someone leaves their dog in the backseat of a car on a hot day with the windows rolled up.

In Matthew 7:1-5 we learn some very important principles to navigating this world that’s full of people and poor decisions.

- 1) Everyone is your brother or sister
- 2) Recognize and deal with your sin first
- 3) Being humble and teachable when it comes to our own sin will help us to respond to others without self-righteousness.

Ask God: Am I ignorant of my sin and as a result am I often judging others more harshly than I ought to? Do I hold others to an unfair standard? Is there sin in my life that’s keeping me from viewing others fairly?

John 8:1-11

09/20/17

Stone Throwers & Redeemers

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

In Old Testament law, it was rather easy to break a law that was punishable by death. This could include: idol worship, false prophecy, breaking the sabbath, adultery, cursing your parents and more. Built into this law was also an opportunity to redeem the life by paying a redemption price. This design made the truth of sin a serious matter but also provided grace and mercy for the sinner. When a lawbreaker couldn't afford to pay the price themselves, the community would pay it. Sin and redemption was to be a community matter.

In John 8:1-11 the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus and asked Jesus if they should stone her in accordance with the law of Moses. Luckily, Jesus was a redeemer, not a stone thrower:

“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

Ask God: Do I have the heart of a stonethrower or a redeemer? When it comes to conflict, do I seek to reconcile or punish the offender?

Luke 8:26-39

09/21/17

Naked, Homeless, and Possessed

We read in Luke 8:26-39 about a naked man who lives in the tombs and is possessed by a demon named “Legion.” The town’s response to this man is found in verse 29. They had chained his hands and his feet and kept him under guard until he broke free and was driven to a solitary place. Here, evidently, they had left him.

Sometimes we do that with people who seem beyond redemption. We keep them under lock and key and put them out of sight. We don’t like to admit it, but we can probably all think of someone that we’ve given up on.

Jesus doesn’t address the symptoms by covering them up. He confronts the issue at hand. When the man is found whole and totally healed we’re told in verse 35 that he’s sitting at the feet of Jesus (the posture of a disciple) and he’s clothed. And Jesus tells the man:

³⁹ “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Jesus didn’t see a problem that needed to be hidden and secured. He saw a new recruit.

Ask God: Will you soften my heart towards people that make me afraid or uncomfortable? Will you help me to see the potential that you see in others?

John 1:43-50

09/22/17

From Doubter to Disciple

In John 1:43-50 Jesus recruits Philip to be his disciple. Philip immediately goes to his friend Nathanael and tells him about “the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.”

Nathanael’s gut reaction? “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Philip doesn’t give up: “Come and See!”

When Jesus sees Nathanael his gut reaction is “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

Nathanael knew nothing about Jesus and the first thing he chose to say was something negative. Jesus knew everything about Nathanael (including his worst thoughts and worst decisions) and the first thing he chose to say was something positive.

It’s the love, the attitude, the response, and the power of Jesus that turns Nathanael from a doubter to a disciple.

⁴⁸ “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”

Ask God: Will you help me to be quick to see the best in people? I want to have their best qualities at the forefront of my mind, not their worst. Help me to be more like you.

Luke 19:1-10

09/23/17

Eye Contact, Soul Contact

In Luke 19:1-10 we meet Zacchaeus, a wealthy and despised chief tax collector who climbs a tree in order to see over a crowd a man that might very well be his exact opposite: a poor and beloved Rabbi.

Jesus, as soon as he reaches the spot, looks straight up at Zacchaeus (who might've been assumed that Jesus would pass right by). They make eye contact. Jesus knows his name. Jesus invites himself over his house. "He's gone to be the guest of a sinner," the people murmur.

Jesus is clearly seeing with other worldly eyesight. He doesn't see Zacchaeus the way the crowd sees him. He doesn't see Zacchaeus the way Zacchaeus sees himself. Notice that Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus from a distance. He couldn't see over the crowd and he wouldn't dare consider being in front of the crowd. Jesus doesn't see a wealthy chief tax collector who is beyond grace, mercy, and friendship.

He sees a "son of Abraham"; he sees someone he calls "lost." And Jesus is seeking him and saving him.

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Ask God: Help me to notice people, to look them in the eye, to treat them with dignity and respect even when they're hoping to remain unseen.

Week 2

SEEING NEEDS

“Preach the gospel always, use words if necessary”

St. Francis of Assisi is commonly given credit for the above quote. However, there’s no evidence that he ever said this. I happen to think he’d take issue with it. The quote is most often used by Christians to suggest that doing good works is a better way to share their faith than using words.

You see this play out from time to time. The Student Body Outreach Coordinator at my college loved to do massive canned food drives and show how much we could provide for the community. Yet sharing the gospel was never on his radar. Thousands of dollars later, no one ever came to Christ.

Again, at college, there was a group of students who went to Cambodia on a short-term mission trip. They rode elephants, ate at fancy restaurants, and played with children at orphanages. But they never shared the gospel (partly because none of them spoke Khmer). Thousands of dollars later, no one ever came to Christ.

Paul boils the argument down in Romans 10:14: But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

The breadth of the New Testament makes it abundantly clear: right words and right actions are both necessary. Christians cannot be blind to the real needs of people and we have to see beyond the surface – this will only happen as we enter into relationship with people with open ears, open minds, and open hearts.

Week 2
09/24/2017

SERMON NOTES
SEEING NEEDS

FAMILY DEVOTION

Read 1 John 3:16-18

(We suggest the NIRV or the ICB or the NLT for young children)

John often calls himself, “The disciple who Jesus loves.” John doesn’t say this to brag or to show off. He most likely says it to remind himself of the truth. Jesus loves John. And Jesus loves you. You could just as easily refer to yourself as “The disciple who Jesus loves.”

So it’s no surprise that verse 1 John 3:16 says that we know what love is because Jesus died for us. In other words, Jesus’ death is a picture of his love for us and it’s an example of how we’re to love others. John goes on to say in verse 18, “Don’t just say you love others, show your love to others.”

It’s not just words and it’s not just action. It’s both. We’re to share the love of Jesus with our words and with our actions.

- 1) How can we share Jesus’ love by using our words?
- 2) How can we share Jesus’ love by using our actions?
- 3) Who is one person that you want to share the love of Jesus with?

Safe Keeping

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

I knew a woman whose house was broken into. The thief took what they could quickly carry out – mostly jewelry. What kind of things would you want to put in a safe if you knew someone was going to rob your house? Do you have expensive watches? Necklaces? Antiques? Do you have expensive collections and memorabilia? Do you have designer shoes and handbags? Perfumes? Car keys? House Keys? Boat Keys? Vacation home keys? Expensive tech?

One thing struck me about the woman after her house was broken into - her standard of living never changed. Consider that observation. Her treasure was stolen from her and it didn't cause her to live on less.

There's three things Jesus wants us to know about earthly treasure from Matthew 6:19-21:

- Earthly treasure won't last
- Earthly treasure will consume our attention
- Earthly treasure will direct our hearts.

Ask God: Am I storing up treasure on Earth? Is it leading me to financial or spiritual impoverishment? Are there things I can give away that don't affect me but can change or even save someone else's life?

John 5:1-14

09/26/17

Pool Party with Jesus

In John 5:1-14 we read about a pool in Jerusalem where the waters were occasionally and mysteriously stirred which had gained a reputation for healing. We're told that a great number of disabled people would lie there – the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. They seemed to place their hope in something rare and farfetched – like lottery players.

Jesus learns of a man whose been there for 38 years and Jesus asks him a hard question: “Do you want to get well?” The man is slow to say “yes” and quick to come up with excuses for why he cannot get well. There's a lot to learn from this account.

- 1) Not everyone gets healed
- 2) Jesus is the ultimate healer
- 3) Jesus made sure his help was wanted
- 4) Jesus made sure his help happened in relationship
- 5) Jesus addressed deeper needs

¹⁴ Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Ask God: Will you help me to be someone who engages with people when I'm serving them? Will you help me to ask questions, to listen well, and to do things in relationship with people. Help me to do “incarnational” ministry – the way Jesus did. Will you also help me to dig deeper with people so that we might see what you see?

Sick, Poor, and Ostracized

Three of the four gospels tell a story of a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. The most details come from Mark 5:25-34. We're told that these 12 years were marked with suffering, we're told that she had spent all she had on the care of "many doctors." Knowing the culture of the time, she would've been considered unclean. If she was married, she would've had to sleep in a separate bed from her husband.

She has so much faith in Jesus that even when all of her money and all of the doctors failed her, she believes that she can reach out, touch the edge of Jesus' clothes, and be healed. When she touches Jesus, she becomes physically healed but it's not until Jesus addresses her and proclaims her healing that she'll become socially healed. Notice her fear of being discovered. She didn't want to offend Jesus by touching him while she was unclean. Notice Jesus' response. May we never be too clean for other people's mess.

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Ask God: Are there people in my life that I avoid? Are there people that I ostracize or consider untouchable? How can I be a friend to the marginalized?

James 1:27

09/28/17

True Religion

John Wesley often used the phrase “the means of grace.” For Wesley, these were anything that we did to provide God opportunities to work in us, for us, and through us. He would often provide two categories:

1.) Works of Piety

Prayer, fasting, meditation, scripture reading, worship, church attendance, sharing our faith, communion, accountability, small groups, etc.

2.) Works of Mercy

Doing good works, visiting the sick, remembering the prisoner, showing hospitality, giving generously, etc.

When it comes to “Soul Training” it’s easy for us to think of personal spiritual disciplines but seldom do we emphasize the spiritual growth we receive from doing good works. James 1:27 would be in close agreement with Wesley’s theology.

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

Ask God: Will you help me to see outreach and service and other “works of mercy” as equally beneficial if not more beneficial for me than it is for others? Can you help me to see good works as a means for me to receive grace?

Leather Jackets & Grace

It was the worst moment in the history of mankind. Adam and Eve had brought sin into the world. Its devastating effects could never be fully known by anyone but God. Even then, God the Father knew that His Son would one day die so that we could be clothed in righteousness.

Adam and Eve did what any newly mortal person would do. For the first time ever, they felt naked, exposed, and helpless. They put on fig leaves and they hid from God (as best they could). You'd expect a thundering voice, lightning, fire, and more. God comes gently. He doesn't accuse, he asks questions. "Where are you? Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree?" And God does something remarkable, he makes them clothes out of animal skins. He meets them where they're at. He cares and provides for them even immediately after their sin. And in doing so he also begins a tradition of animal sacrifice, hinting at the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Mankind will one day be clothed in righteousness. This is not the end.

²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Ask God: Will you give me a heart like yours? That even in the midst of people's worse sins I would respond gently but firmly, that I would seek to help and not harm. Thank you for your gentleness and great mercy towards me for all the times that I've betrayed you.

Psalm 34

09/30/17

Broken Hearts and Crushed Spirits

Jesus says “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest... My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

A yoke signified oppression. It’s the harness for an ox as he pulled the plow. The plow was a heavy burden. Jesus paradoxically says, “trust this yoke, it’s easy. Take this burden, it’s restful.”

God has a heart for those who are weary from the Fall of Adam and Eve and the effects of sin.

We have a God who doesn’t just notice our physical needs and our spiritual needs and our financial needs. He also notices and cares for our emotional needs. He’s an ever-present help in times of trouble. He wants us to find refuge in Him. God the Holy Spirit is called “The Comforter.” And we’re reminded and comforted often in the scripture of truths like Psalm 34:17-18:

¹⁷The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;

he delivers them from all their troubles.

¹⁸The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Ask God: Will you help me to be aware of and take seriously the emotional needs of my brothers and sisters in Christ? Will you help me to love like you do and to notice when people are hurting emotionally?

Week 3

SEEING SOLUTIONS

Keep seeing people (yourself included) as Jesus sees them. Let's never forget to do that. And keep seeing the needs of the people around you – don't be quick to assume that you know what someone needs and don't oversimplify the issues at hand.

But now we need to move forward and move further. We must recognize that there are hardly ever quick and easy solutions. God's not looking for Band-Aid wielding Christians. Most colleges will put their best foot forward during visitation and tour days. They'll pull weeds, put fresh mulch down, sweep sidewalks, replace burnt out bulbs, and most of all make sure that their cafeteria has the very best food they'll ever offer.

It's human nature to whitewash tombs, beautify a city during the Olympics, and put our best foot forward when we're set up on a blind date.

God's not interested in appearances. God's not solely concerned with what happens externally. God's not interested in Band-Aid wielding Christians who don't address the real issues. Ministry shouldn't be an afterthought or something we do in order to look good. No, God wants to see real life change happen in us and in others. As the Body of Christ, we're called to act like Christ and that means providing real solutions for real problems even if there's real cost and real risk involved.

It's not about doing good in order to feel good. It's about doing good to create good. As Jesus said, we're to be children of our Heavenly Father.

Week 3
10/01/2017

SERMON NOTES
SEEING SOLUTIONS

GROUP QUESTIONS SEEING SOLUTIONS

3. Read verse 3. Interestingly, the apostles aren't asking that the leaders for this ministry be gifted with administration or hospitality or compassion. What are they looking for? What does this teach us about what it means to be qualified?

4. In thinking about our ministry partners (Together for Good and Prison Fellowship) what do you think are some ways that people try to help a single mom or a former prisoner reentering society that might not actually be helpful?

5. Remember the four types of poverty from last week. What are some ways our church might be able to provide real help in a way that restores or maintains the God-given dignity of those we're serving?

FAMILY DEVOTION

Read Luke 10:25-37

(We suggest the NIRV or the ICB or the NLT for young children)

Samaritans were an ethnic group that the Jewish people often discriminated against. Jesus decides to make him the hero of this story.

In Jesus' story a man is beaten and robbed and lying in the road, close to death. A Pastor (Priest) and a Worship leader (Levite) both walk by on the other side of the road, intentionally avoiding the person who clearly needs help. It's the Samaritan who stops and helps.

- 1) Why do we sometimes not help people who need it?
- 2) Look at the passage again, can you list the things the Good Samaritan did to help the stranger in need?
- 3) What did the Good Samaritan get in return for the time, energy, and money that he spent in order to help this stranger?
- 4) Why should we be like the Good Samaritan?

James 2:1-9

10/02/17

Heavenly Millionaires

We drove down the long driveway with perfectly spaced trees. We pulled up to the mansion - the biggest house we'd ever seen. We passed an inground pool on the way into the basement (the only part of the house we were allowed in) complete with billiards, a game room, and a home theatre with heated leather recliners. It was the ultimate party spot for a teenager.

I never met the owner but I remember wanting to meet him. We're often impressed with people that amass small fortunes. Lottery winners are often bombarded by friends and family that previously never would've paid them any attention.

God's not impressed. In fact God is often more impressed with those who have less. The rules of God's kingdom would have us make sure that we as believers would follow James 2:1 which commands us to never show favoritism to the rich. And James goes on to say in verse 5:

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

Ask God: Do I show favoritism to those who have more? Am I more willing to help and get to know people who look more like me? Will you help me to see both the wealthy and the impoverished the way that you see them?

1 Corinthians 12

10/03/17

Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes

I once heard a pastor say that every single person is invaluable and irreplaceable. Why? Because we all have our part to play in the Body of Christ. Each one of us has good works prepared in advance for us to do and each one of us is to use our gifts faithfully as stewards of God's grace to one another. In other words, if I don't do my part, I'm keeping others from experiencing God!

When we minister to others we have to recognize their immense value in God's eyes as well as their equal ability to minister to us and steward God's grace to us. If we don't buy into that then we can't possibly communicate the dignity that others are due in accordance with the truth of scripture.

In the Body of Christ, no one is without a job.

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?¹⁸ But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. (1 Corinthians 12:17-18)

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. (1 Peter 4:10)

Ask God: Will you help me to live out the purpose that you've created me for? Will you help me to be an active and contributing member of Christ's Body and will you help me see the same potential in others?

Will Work for Food

The early church had a rule: if you aren't willing to work, you don't eat. Of course, this means helping people to find jobs that are suitable for them. And it refers to willingness – not ability.

Even when there was a food ministry set up for widows, the widows (we're told in other places in the New Testament) were expected to be devoted to prayer (one of the main jobs of an apostle!) and good works. The church was careful to not create unnecessary dependency or unhealthy one directional relationships. It takes more work, not less work to make sure that everyone is contributing as they're able. It's often easier to not have hard conversations, to not mentor, to not hold people accountable, and to not raise the bar for people. But God doesn't call us to do what's easiest. He calls us to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing... and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you." God expects that we take the time that's needed to patiently walk someone through the process of being an obedient follower of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ Even while we were with you, we gave you this command: "Those unwilling to work will not get to eat."

Ask God: Help me to see when others can contribute and to be open to their involvement. May I never be a one person show just because it is easier or quicker. May I reflect your heart, knowing that you could've done the work of the church more effectively on your own but decided to bestow great dignity and value on the Church.

Matthew 15:21-28

10/05/17

The Dog Under the Table

Jesus has this amazing conversation with a foreign woman in Matthew 15:21-28. The disciples are so bothered by her (being both a foreigner and a woman) that they tell Jesus to send her away.

And Jesus not only doesn't send her away but enters into a debate with her and ends up conceding to the woman's arguments. You can almost hear the disciples' jaws hit the floor.

J: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel"

W: "Lord, help me!"

J: "It's not right to take the children's bread and feed it to the dogs."

W: "Yes it is Lord, even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table!"

J: "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted."

The disciples watched as the most skilled Rabbi who ever walked the earth lost an argument to a foreign woman. Can you imagine disagreeing with God, standing your ground, and winning?

Yet this is Jesus. He bestows enormous honor and value and dignity on others even at his own expense.

Ask God: Will you help me to consider the reputation of others as more important than my own? If given the opportunity, will you give me the strength and resolve to show dignity to others even at my own expense?

Jonah 1-4

10/06/17

It's Not About the Fish

Tim Mackie, one of the creators of The Bible Project has an amazing podcast called “Exploring My Strange Bible.” In the second episode on the podcast, Tim looks at the book of Jonah and time and time again he reminds his listeners, “It’s not about the fish!”

The Book of Jonah is only four chapters long. You should read it today! The fish is a minor character and while you wouldn’t know it by listening to Sunday School lessons – it’s not about the fish!

The Book of Jonah is about a prophet of God (whose name means dove and whose father’s name means “truth.”) He is “Dove, The Son of Truth” But in all reality this man of God is anything but. As a matter of fact his life is marked by disobedience, racism, hardheartedness, resentment, and entitlement.

And he preaches a message of judgment and doom to a foreign people (who he considers unworthy of receiving the word of God) and the people and the king and even the animals fast and wear sackcloth and repent in hopes that God’s judgement will turn to mercy and grace and forgiveness.

It’s not about the fish. It’s about religious people who incorrectly judge those outside their community and all the while expose their own self-righteous hypocrisy. The “evil” people of Nineveh have softer hearts than God’s prophet “Dove, Son of Truth.”

Ask God: Have I been hypocrite or self-righteous this week? Is there something I need to confess to you or to someone else? Will you help me to not judge those outside of the church?

Ruth 1

10/07/17

World's Best Daughter-In-Law

Ruth didn't know it but her decision to follow God obediently would ultimately end up making her the Great Great Great Grandmother of Jesus the Christ (or something like that). It all starts with Naomi.

When you read Ruth chapter 1 you see that Naomi doesn't shy away from talking to her daughters-in-law about God. Naomi has lost her husband and her sons and yet still speaks highly of God and continues to use his covenant name – YHWH or LORD.

Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to leave so that they can go back to their families, marry again, and be provided for. Naomi sees no future, no hope, and no comfort if they follow her. Ruth was a Moabite (a long-time enemy of the Jewish people) and even though it appears that she can't gain anything from staying with Naomi, she stays. And she binds herself to Naomi's covenant God:

“Where you go, I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely if even death separates you and me.”

Ruth decides that knowing YHWH is everything. And no one could've seen it coming.

Ask God: Do I assume certain people won't follow you if I tell them about you? Do I ever assume that some people are further from you than they really are? Help me to not assume I know where people are.

Week 4

SEEING OPPORTUNITY

Jesus is really good at saying things that catch me off guard and take me by surprise. Sometimes he's using a literary tool called "hyperbole" in which he's intentionally overemphasizing. That was a common teaching style for Rabbis of his time.

There are other times though where Jesus says something and I just don't see it coming because of my own false preconceived notions. This is one of those times. You ready for it? It's a doozy.

³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matthew 9:36-38)

The harvest is PLENTIFUL. For Jesus, it's not that there's a lot of workers and a little harvest but just the opposite. There's a huge harvest of souls. We just need workers who are willing to go into the harvest field.

You know how you buy a car and then start seeing that car all the time on the road? You're noticing it because you're looking for it. There's a name for that! It's called the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon. The cars have always been there but you're just now noticing them. In the same way, we have to open our eyes to the opportunities to bring shalom and extend the kingdom of God that are all around us. They're there. We just need to get used to seeing them.

Week 4
10/08/2017

SERMON NOTES
SEEING OPPORTUNITY

FAMILY DEVOTION

Read Matthew 5:13-16

(We suggest the NIRV or the ICB or the NLT for young children)

Salt doesn't taste very good when it's by itself but it tastes great on food. When Jesus says that we are the salt of the earth one of the things he's saying is that we as Christians are meant to spend time with other people and we're supposed to be making life more enjoyable. Just like salt makes food more enjoyable, Christians should make life more enjoyable.

Jesus also says that Christians are like light. Light helps us see, it allows us to work and to live and it overpowers darkness. In the same way, Christians are supposed to help people see and understand God and life more clearly. It's our job to overpower darkness and be a force for good.

- 1) Who is someone that you know that seems like the kind of person Jesus is describing? Who do you know that makes life more enjoyable, does good things, and is quick to help others?
- 2) Who are some people in your life that you can help make life more enjoyable for? What are some things you can do for them?
- 3) What can your family do to be "salt" and "light" together?

Partying with Sinners

Jesus calls Matthew (AKA Levi) to follow Him. It's an invitation to be a disciple of a renowned Rabbi. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity, it's a huge honor, and undoubtedly it will require a huge sacrifice. Most of all though, it's a huge surprise. Matthew is a tax collector – one of the most despised occupations in the Roman Empire (especially when it comes to the Jewish people). In a list of shameful professions, it's right up there with prostitution.

Yet Jesus calls him. And Matthew doesn't miss a beat! He gets up, leaves everything, and follows Jesus. Then Matthew does something unique. He gets all of his co-workers together (other despised tax collectors and "sinners") and he throws a party for Jesus. We read about it in Luke 5:29-32.

²⁹ Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

³¹ Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

What's Matthew's game plan? He wants his friends to know Jesus the way he knows Jesus.

Ask God: Will you increase my love and passion for you so that I can't help but want to share you with everyone I know?

Luke 5:17-26

10/10/17

First Century Elevators

In Luke 5:17-26 an incredible scene unfolds. Jesus is teaching at a home and it's standing room only. The crowd is breaking fire codes. A group of men are carrying a paralyzed man on a mat, wanting to bring him to Jesus. They can't. So they do the only sensible thing. They make a hole in the roof and lower the man down right in front of Jesus. All eyes on Jesus now. Talk about pressure!

Jesus' response? "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

He's not breaking the tension. This isn't a joke. Jesus is for real. Clearly the paralyzed man wants to be healed. The men who went through all of this trouble most likely had physical healing in mind.

It's almost as if Jesus is saying, "These are kinds of lengths we should be willing to go to in order to find forgiveness. If only we loved our souls as much as we loved our bodies." Of course, some in the crowd are not impressed: "Who does this man think he is? Only God can forgive sins!"

²³ Which is easier: to tell this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to tell him, 'Stand up and walk?' ²⁴ But I will prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, stand up! Take your mat and go home."

Ask God: Will you help me to recognize that bringing people to Jesus is sometimes a group effort? Is there anyone in my life that needs people to bring them to you?

Get in the Fight!

Revelation 12 presents a description between Satan and the Bride of Christ. In verse 11 we're told about how the Church triumphs over Satan.

**They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.**

Reflect for a moment on the importance of your testimony. John says it's how the Church overcomes Satan. He puts the power of our testimony almost on par with the blood of Jesus! Think about that for a moment. Your story about how you came to know, love, and follow Jesus is so important, valuable, and powerful that it's right up there with Jesus' sacrifice.

Sometimes when we use the words "spiritual warfare" we might think of prayer and fasting. We might think of memorizing scripture passages. We might think of more charismatic things like praying hedges of protection and identifying specific strongholds. Yet none of these are mentioned. Understand the incredible power of your testimony in combating Satan's agenda. We must share our stories. We must get good at telling people about how God has changed our lives so that He can receive glory for the work He's done.

Ask God: Will you help me to take the time to write out my testimony, to practice it, and to be ready to share it that I might give you glory for the work you've done in my life?

Colossians 4:2-6

10/12/17

Steak, Salt, and Speech

In Colossians 4:2-6 Paul gives us a super practical list for how to be men and women who intentionally look for opportunities to share our faith.

- 1) Pray often for opportunities to share your faith
- 2) Be watchful and thankful for those times
- 3) Pray for others to share their faith
- 4) Be careful about how you treat non-Christians
- 5) Make the most of every opportunity
- 6) Let your speech be like a well-seasoned steak

Point six might need some further explaining. Paul says to let your conversation be full of grace, seasoned with salt. Salt was often a synonym for truth. Paul's saying – let your speech be full of grace and seasoned with truth. A lot of Christians have a tendency to reverse the recipe– we'll give a tiny portion of steak and a huge mound of truth.

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone”

Ask God: Can you bring me opportunities this week to share my faith? Will you help me to be watchful and thankful for the times that you do?

John 3:6

10/13/17

Holy Spirit Midwifery

There's an often repeated principle in the Bible: flesh gives birth to flesh and Spirit gives birth to spirit.

When God promised Abraham offspring, Abraham and Sarah grew impatient. They tried to make God's promises come to fruition out of their own power, out of a work of the flesh. Sarah asked Abraham to sleep with her Egyptian slave Hagar. Abraham agreed and it would end up causing their marriage and their descendants untold amounts of suffering, conflict, and heartache.

The divine plan? The spiritual plan? It was to do the miraculous – to make Sarah fertile in her old age. Had Abraham and Sarah waited for God's spiritual answer, the story of the Israelites would've been incredible different.

Spirit gives birth to Spirit. It's a divine law that makes perfect sense. Think of conversion. It's a spiritual fruit that requires a spiritual work. Debating and apologetics and arguing out of our own power are a fleshly work that's only capable of bearing a fleshly fruit. If we want to bear spiritual fruit – we **MUST** do a spiritual work. Like prayer, fasting, meditation, and more.

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. (John 3:6)

Ask God: Do I sometimes try to achieve spiritual results through my own strength? Can you remind me often of the importance of working out of the power of the Spirit?

1 Corinthians 16:5-9

10/14/17

Follow The Leader

Jesus once said, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” That probably resonates with type B personalities.

When we recognize that the flesh gives birth to flesh and the Spirit gives birth to Spirit and as we begin to prayerfully seek opportunities to share our faith... our lives will become a little less predictable.

It’s really difficult to be in two different places at the same time. Some might even say – impossible! Disciples of Jesus learn to follow the Spirit’s prompting and leading. As we seek to share our faith, we go where the Spirit goes because that’s where we’ll see fruit.

We see this at play in Paul’s life. In 1 Corinthians 16:7-9 Paul clearly wants to visit the church in Corinth (and for good reason!) but he needs to stay in Ephesus because that is where the Spirit wants him.

⁷ For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

Ask God: Am I willing to say, “Where you go I’ll go, where you stay I’ll stay?” Does my life reflect that? Does my evangelism reflect that?

Week 5

SEEING "THEM" AS "US"

Pastor Mark Driscoll once used an analogy to help his church understand why things needed to be continually changing as new people came to know Jesus and belonged to the community.

He said it's just like when you bring new life into a house. When a baby is born everything changes. Why? Because babies are valuable. We install annoying child safety locks on the kitchen cabinets. We plug our outlets with plastic covers. We turn our office into a nursery. We set up baby monitors. We baby proof. We buy a plethora of toys, rattles, diapers, and whatever else we need. Why? Because when a baby comes along that baby becomes that family's priority.

In the same way, when new life comes to a church, we have to be willing to make room and make changes for that to happen effectively. Why? Because when new life comes along that new life becomes the church's priority. It's our job to see lives made new and as we do, we'll have to change, we'll have to adapt, we'll have to make way.

But we also have to be a community where people can belong. It can't feel as if they're the outsiders and we're the insiders. When a baby is born into a family they take on the family name. They're immediately "one of us" and that's exactly how it needs to be as we begin to see new life in the church.

Week 5
10/15/2017

SERMON NOTES
SEEING "THEM" AS "US"

FAMILY DEVOTION

Read Matthew 22:36-40

(We suggest the NIRV or the ICB or the NLT for young children)

Jesus says the entire Old Testament (around 75% of the Bible!) can be summed up with these two commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And Love your neighbor as yourself.

- 1) What does it mean for someone to be your neighbor?
- 2) What do you think it means to love your neighbor the same way that you love yourself?
- 3) Why do you think it's so important to God that we love Him and each other?
- 4) What are some ways that we can love the people around us?

But 'They Don't Look Like Us!

Very early in the life of the ancient Christian church there was a group of former Pharisees who had given their lives to Jesus! There were also gentile believers who had given their lives to Jesus and these two groups looked different and acted different in many ways. The Pharisees struggled to understand how both groups could be followers of Jesus if they had such a wide range of differences. Some were circumcised, some were not, some worshiped and celebrated certain days, others did not, some ate foods that others did not.

The early church called a council of leaders together. This council set a pattern for leadership decisions for the early church throughout the centuries. But most important was the decision of the council. That decision was "They" are "us" and so Peter addressed the crowd:

⁸ God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. ¹⁰ So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? ¹¹ We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus."

Ask God: Do I have expectations for Christian behavior that aren't in line with the teachings of the New Testament? Do I require more from others than you do?

1 Corinthians 7:20-24

10/17/17

Right Here, Right Now

In 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 and in other places in the New Testament, Paul makes it clear that God can use anyone wherever they are. Even slaves can be active members of the Body of Christ. They don't have to wait to be freed to start living for Jesus.

I think sometimes we get the sense that we're waiting for God to bring us out of something when the truth is... we can always be used by God right where He has us.

I completely believe that God has plans for every single life that submits to Him. And that plan is that each of us would use our gifts and abilities as members of the Body of Christ. Each of us is called to play an active role in the Church – increasing God's kingdom here on earth.

Right here, right now. You don't have to be a teacher at a Christian school in order to share God's love to your students and coworkers. You don't have to be married and have children in order to start going to church regularly. You don't have to wait until you finish your degree to start blessing others. You don't have to wait until you've read through the Bible to start mentoring.

²⁴ Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should remain as you were when God first called you.

Ask God: Am I waiting for something else when I can I be doing your work right where you have me? Am I open to the fact that you can use anyone wherever they are?

Sharing is Caring

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. ⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

In Acts 2:42-47 we're given a picture of how the church acted in its infancy. Clearly it's not a prescription for today and it's not a pattern that the church continued throughout the next several years. Yet it shows us the power of the Spirit to bring about unity and it shows us the power of unity to bring about life change in ourselves and others. Here are some great principles from this passage:

- Believers study the Word together (v.42)
- Believers worship together (v.42, 46, 47)
- Believers spend time together (v.42, 44, 46)
- Believers give generously and selflessly (44-45)
- Believers multiply (47)

Ask God: Am I doing all I can to experience the Acts 2:42-47 lifestyle?

John 17:20-23

10/19/17

Jesus Prayed for You

Seriously. It's in the Bible. Do you know what He prayed for? Unity. Jesus prayed for future Christians and he prayed for one thing - Unity. Just one thing. That's pretty significant isn't it?

Do you know that I've seen passionate, zealous, well intentioned Christians working against the prayers of Jesus?

Jesus' expectation isn't that this extreme unity would be offensive or exclusive but rather that it would be attractive and draw people into loving relationship with God. As followers of Jesus, we need to be taking Jesus' prayer for unity seriously.

²⁰ “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”

Let's take a moment today and together as a church let's join Christ in praying for unity for Waite Park Church as well as for all of Christianity.

“I had to Oppose Him to His Face”

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

Paul calls out the Peter in front of all the believers and then he writes about it his letter to the Galatians for everyone to see (for all ages) and Peter allows all of it to take place.

We learn a lot from this passage.

- We all need people in our lives to hold us accountable.
- We should allow God to use our past sin for good and for His glory.
- A wound from a friend is better than many kisses from an enemy
- Discord and hypocrisy need to be addressed

Ask God: Am I open to my past poor decisions and sins being exposed if it means that you are glorified and that others can learn from my mistakes? Am I willing to accept correction from a friend? Is there any hint of discord and hypocrisy in me?

10/21/17

“One Another.”

There are A LOT of “one another” verses in the New Testament. Some lists go upwards to 59.

Here’s a condensed version:

1. “Love one another” (John 15:17)
2. “Be devoted to one another” (Romans 12:10)
3. “Live in harmony with one another...” (Rom. 12:16)
4. “Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
5. “Serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)
6. “Carry each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2)
7. “Be patient, bearing with one another” (Eph. 4:2)
8. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19)
9. “Submit to one another” (Ephesians 5:21)
10. “Build each other up” (I Thess. 5:11)
11. “Spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (Hebrews 10:24)
12. “Confess your sins to each other” (James 5:16)
13. “Pray for each other” (James 5:16)
14. “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another”(I Peter 5:5)

The kind of community that Christ expects from His people looks good on paper but it’s messy, it’s difficult, it takes training, and it takes the work of the Spirit. Let’s pray for ourselves and our church as we seek to honor Jesus’ design for the Body of Christ.



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