

One Message – One Mission

June 27, 2010

A.

Well good, morning. Needless to say we are excited to be here. These first few days getting started have been very helpful and I want to thank everyone for their warm greetings and help as Kathy and I get settled in. Because of Ann Garner and the great tour she gave me, I have now seen parts of a church that I didn't even know existed; Because of Dick Ray I think I could communicate with my files right here in Tipp City even if I was near Mt. Kilimanjaro. Student Ministry: handed me their signatures on a framed picture of the actor Danny Glover. But I want to thank these people for making this a soft landing for Kathy and I. I also want to thank the board for their prayers this morning and their strong desire to see this church continue to become a healthy and vibrant environment for making of disciples who will fully commit in their pursuit of following Christ.

B.

In preparing to get started this morning I found myself, over the last month, thinking about you guys. My wife Kathy and I have lived within a very short drive of this church for over 26 years. Except for one of those years when we moved to Gainesville, Fla. (home of the University of Fla. Gators) But once a Buckeye fan, it is just too hard to become Gator bait, so we moved back.

This church and the people here, have been very close to me. I know many of you, we have partnered in ministry on several occasions, but still the change of pastors can not only be kind of weird, it can also be emotionally tough.

Story: (When I was a teenager and the only pastor I had ever known left the church, that my mother and us kids went to, I remember being angry. I did not understand why this person had to leave. The next Sunday when the new pastor stood in front of us and began his ministry, I remember feeling like I was holding up a wall between us. I was not going to let him in. Then he stood in front of us and took his shoes off and he said, He would never try to fit into the shoes of the former pastor, he said that he had his own shoes and if we would let him wear his own shoes then he would be glad to do it.) That's what I want to say to you today. I look forward to this next season of ministry with you and I honor the pastors who have gone before me and laid the foundation that I now step onto.

Story: (I also have to tell you before I preach this morning. The story around my first sermon ever. It was Jan 3, 1982. I was serving two little churches in rural Pennsylvania. The day was getting closer and I didn't know what to preach. Then Sat. night before I was to preach I torn up all my notes. I decided to preach the greatest sermon I had ever heard. It was the sermon on the

Mount. So that is exactly what I did. Those very patient and loving people, I read 3 full chapters (5-7) from the book of Matthew. After the sermon that morning I was standing at the back of the church greeting people and a line formed. There were two women talking as they approached. They were still a couple of people away from me when one of the woman said to the other. “Well at least this one can read!”) So are you ready for this sermon? I will start reading at...just joking.

Actually I want to share a message this morning from the book of Acts chapter 2 and I do want to share a couple verses from Matthew 28.

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd... Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited to you by miracles wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge and you with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross But God raised him from the dead...” Acts 2:14a & 22-24a

Let me speak about these verses first. It starts by saying

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd...Acts 2:14a

This is no small thing.

A. 50 days earlier Peter - court yard of the high priest - where Jesus beginning the mocking

B. Peter given the chance 3 times to stand up for Jesus, Did not.

C. Now it is 50 days later and Peter and the disciples have just experienced something. We now call it the day of Pentacost, but they did not know it as that.

D. They felt inspired, empowered, they began to talk in all kinds of different languages.... But the crowd that had gathered, thought they were drunk...and they began to laugh at them. The pressure was on.

E. Peter is left here with a choice. These were people who were from out of town, salt and peppered with people that were his friends, people who knew his family. Peer pressure is one of the greatest pressures there is. Don’t make waves, don’t rock the boat. Had Peter caved to that pressure, Christianity could very well have been in the balance. But he didn’t, Scripture says “He stood up with the 11, raised his voice and addressed the crowd. Make no mistake, he was putting everything on the line.

F. We have the same choice today. Churches all across America have the same choice and far too often we are not standing up. We are sitting. Why? I don’t know. Maybe for the same reasons Peter sat only weeks earlier when he denied Jesus.

He was afraid. Maybe churches are afraid. Change people will think they are weird, won't know what to do, if they actually stand up...

I believe God gives people moments, like Peter got

Peter seized that moment and out of his mouth sprung the message that really is the message of Christianity.

He said, verse 22

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited to you by miracles wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

- He establishes Jesus' credibility. In essence, Peter said, First things first. Jesus is central. Jesus is what this whole day is about. Jesus is what this whole movement is about. Jesus is what our whole lives is really about.
- Jesus' creditability comes in the form of changed lives. If at the end of the day no one's life is really changed by the ministry that we do here, then we can know that Jesus wasn't really in it. Changed lives is the criteria that will let us know whether our efforts are God driven or just well meaning human effort

He goes on:

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge

- Then Peter said God ordered Jesus' steps. Peter is saying to this crowd 'God was in utter control of the entire situation. Peter didn't know that weeks earlier. He followed Jesus but he had not yet committed to him. He had been coming to Jesus' church for 3 years, but he had not yet really given himself over to what God was up to through Jesus. He still thought life was out of control when Jesus was arrested. But something has happened to Peter since the arrest and crucifixion of Christ.
- Have you ever been there? Life out of control. Adversity seemingly everywhere. You are a follower, but still something hasn't clicked into place. What this verse is saying is that at that moment. Peter got it, that God was fully in control.

Then Peter says something that had the potential to enrage the crowd. He said

and you with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross

- In psychology this is referred to as facing the brutal facts. This is the part that we skip over. The part that says we did something wrong. But now listen, he is eye ball to eye ball with these men.

- Here's what you did. For years I rejected that message. Until I came face to face with it. That in my nature, in your nature, all that I am really capable of is nailing him to the cross. The truth is we prove it everyday.
 - We nail him to the cross,
 - we nail our spouses to the cross. ("you never do anything around this house")("you spend too much money")("you never spend time with me") and so on.
 - We nail our brother and sister to the cross. (mom always let's you do stuff)
 - we nail our employees and our employers, our neighbors, to the cross.
 - What I am, is an expert at nailing people to crosses.
 - When I can admit that, when I can confess that, then I can make room for a Savior, not before.
- Then Peter finally says
- *But God raised him from the dead...* " Acts 2:14a & 22-24a
 - God overcomes our sinful nature. I am capable of nailing people to the cross. But God raises those people off the cross and He started with Jesus as a demonstration to us of his power to do it and His love that compels him to do it whenever we ask.

Peter shares this fastball of a message, throwing it right down the center of the plate because ringing in his ears is the mission. Go and Make Disciples... Jesus said it, right before he ascended into heaven

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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

Peter had this mission statement from Jesus pounding in his heart. He realized this was going to be his first opportunity to start that process. So that is what compelled him to stand up.

The knowing part of being a disciple of Christ is, about knowing 4 things:

1. Knowing that Jesus is central, and we know he is in it when there are changed lives
2. Knowing that God was fully in control of his death, and our adversity
3. Knowing we were responsible for his death and we need a Savior
4. Knowing God was responsible for his return from death, because he loved us and wanted to demonstrate the power of that love

So what about you? What do you know?