

West Valley Church
01/08/12

Being an Acts 1:8 Church

I'm grateful for Dave and Rosie Kerr, and their willingness to come share with us a glimpse of what God is doing in the world, and I'm grateful that we get a chance to share in that by giving to support the work. But let's be honest: many of you listening to their story were thinking, "Man, I'm glad God didn't ask me to go into the mission field!" I would bet that there are some, too, who think the opposite—"I wish I could go do that!" But let me tell you today that *every person* who is a follower of Jesus Christ has a mission to carry out; every Christian is a missionary. Jesus told us that just after his resurrection and before he ascended into heaven: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8, nlt)

Every person who has decided to order their life around Jesus Christ and who knows what it means to have their life transformed by him, has been given the call and the power to be a missionary—in your Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. I'm thankful for David and Rosie, and others like them, who are called as missionaries to the ends of the earth. But all of us are called to be missionaries in our own towns, our regions, and beyond. We are missionaries to introduce people to Jesus where we live. Yes, we are a part of a denomination that supports those who go to the ends of the earth, but we are a church that is supposed to go to our own community and region.

God has a mission for you, and for us together. You were created and called to carry out a purpose, not just to exist through life and suck up oxygen. When God created you, he said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:26-27, niv) You were made in his image, that means you are part of his plan. You are in his likeness, so you have a part in that plan.

You were made for something! That's why the Bible says, "Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love." (Ephesians 1:4 message) He has chosen us to be whole and holy by his love, and that means to be *like Christ*, which is to carry out God's purposes for this world. Made for a mission! The Bible says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10, niv) Do you see that? We

were created in Christ to carry out God's good work in this world! Listen to how the Message Translation unpacks that verse a little more: "No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing." (Ephesians 2:10, the message)

We were made and saved for a reason, for a purpose, for a mission. To carry out Christ's work in this world. And its work we had better be doing. God's Word is very clear about this, and it is as true for every believer as it is for our church.

That's because of the **Great Commission**. The Great Commission is Jesus' last command to his disciples and to us, after he was resurrected from the dead and before he rose into heaven. The Great Commission is the words Jesus wanted ringing in our ears until the day he returns for us. This is it: "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, gnb)

This is the Great Commission—it's Great because it comes from God and it's a co-mission because Jesus is empowering us and commanding us to carry out His mission with him—it's a co—mission. First is to tell people about God's love. Jesus said we are supposed to make disciples. We are to introduce people to Jesus Christ so that they might come to know him and become a follower, or a disciple, of his. The second important part of the Great Commission is to teach people to grow in their faith. Making disciples means that people are growing; that they are actively following Jesus and doing the things that Jesus has told them to do. It means that people are growing deeper and higher in their faith, learning and living in all the great things God has for them. We have to do everything we can to introduce people to Jesus.

We are also missionaries because we've been given the **Great Commandment**. Jesus said that there was a command in Scripture that was the greatest of all. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:34-40, niv)

That's the Great Commandment. The first half of that is about loving God supremely. In all our actions, all we do, we should be showing our love for him, especially as we worship. That's why what we do here together on Sunday mornings is *so* important. We are practicing and proclaiming our love for him.

But Jesus said that there is a second commandment that is just as important as loving God, and that is loving people equally. People matter to God—we matter to

Him so much that he paid the absolute highest price to buy our freedom from death and sin so we could have abundant life—he bought it with the life of his One and Only Son. There is no higher price he could have paid for us. So we, as his church and his people, naturally ought to have the same priority for people that God does. That’s why we will love people as much as we love God, by welcoming them as friends no matter where they come from or what their life circumstances are. We will accept them. But there *are* certain people we will never allow in this church. No one who is perfect is allowed in this church. No perfect people allowed! Other than them, everyone else will be warmly welcomed accepted here.

A Christian’s purpose, and our church’s mission, must be a commitment to those four important principles found in the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Our mission is this:

Introduce people to Jesus Christ

Equip people with a faith that works

Live as people with purpose

That’s it! That’s what this church is for, and that’s what this church is determined to do, and we’ll do it until Jesus comes back.

Introduce people to Jesus Christ.

Jesus told us to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Make disciples of all men.” We do that by *introducing* people to him—to Jesus Christ.

Look at that first word with me: “introduce.” No one wants to be converted, evangelized, proselytized or deep fried. But everyone can meet someone else. The word “introduce” is best because it is about a *relationship* with Jesus. Yes, I’ve met Him; I know Him! He is an amazing, powerful, personal, rescuing, healing, resurrected, living God, and I am graced to know him personally. I know how great, kind, loving, forgiving, and powerful he is, and I’d like nothing better than to introduce you to him. I’ll tell you all about him! BUT: *I* don’t convert you. *I* don’t save you. HE does those things. So if I introduce you to him, I’m confident that you will find the same things about him to be true as I have. The choice is *yours* whether you accept him or not. But I’m going to make sure I’ve done the introductions. And so will you. And so will this church to people in this community. That’s why it’s so important to make sure we do all we can to help people feel welcome. The way we introduce people to Jesus is by loving them. Loving them enough to accept them where they are at. We do that by the way this place looks and sounds and how we greet people and treat each other. That’s why it’s important that this is a place that people want to come to without feeling they are taking a step back in time. The way people are greeted, treated, and seated. To

develop genuine friendship with them. To make sure we are speaking their language. To do whatever we can to meet their needs and make them comfortable. Because they are not going to believe that Jesus is real until they see him and his character in us. People have to know we care about them and accept them before they'll ever give a rip about what we believe.

The next part of our statement simply says, Equip people with a faith that works - to teach people to grow in their faith. That's why the Bible says, "And he (God) gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13, esv) As a church, we are to equip each other so that we can all grow up in our faith. As each of us carries out our purpose, we will all grow into and obey everything Jesus tells us to and accomplish our purpose as a church. So we equip people with a faith that works.

Now notice that we also use the phrase, "equip people with a *faith that works*." First, because this faith we have in Christ really works, doesn't it? It is real and this life of faith really does do what God said it would. This faith makes a real difference in our day to day lives. It sustains us through the hard times and it guides us through the good times. It works!

But there's something else in that statement and it's this: if you have this faith, you will do those good works that you were created for. It's a faith that works for us, and it's also a faith that gets to work:

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (James 2:14-18, esv)

Do you see that? If we have faith, we *work*—we work to meet the needs of people. SO if you are a part of this church, you are not allowed to just warm a pew. You've got to get working for this great purpose. That's why, lastly, I want you to see that last phrase: Live as people with purpose. This is the challenge to live our lives on purpose; to live out what Jesus commissioned us and commanded us to do, the good work we were created in Christ to do: introduce people to Jesus Christ, equip people with a faith that works, and live as people with purpose. Pretty simple, but that's what we're here for. Love. Learn. Live. That's it! We *love* God and love

people enough to introduce them to Jesus. We *learn* and grow and teach others to grow in their faith; we'll *learn* by equipping people with a faith that works so we can grow together. And we will *live* out this faith, on purpose, for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ. This is *his* mission; it's the agenda of Christ's Kingdom. It is up to you and I as believers in Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to live out our mission in West Valley—to be missionaries. And if we are missionaries, that means this church is a mission outpost—strategically placed, and that exists to reach people and help them grow in their faith. This mission: to Love, Learn, and Live in our community, our valley, our region, and around the world is the air that we breathe—it drives everything we do and is the reason for all we do.