

6-21-20

Sermon- Focus on the Out

Scripture- Philippians 1:3-30, CTW- Psalm 86:1-11

Hymns- 302, 455

Theme: Today we look at the third side of the triangle of a Jesus' shaped life: the left side, and the word OUT. As a movement of Christ, we are all called to be involved, one way or another as our God given talents permit, in growing a community of people who are to become like Jesus.

In the last 90 days or so, we have all had the opportunity to think about who we are, the meaning of our lives, what we **have** accomplished, and what would we still **like** to accomplish as individuals and as a church.

We have placed our youth and family ministry program in hiatus because over the years we have just not been successful with the stated goals of these programs.

We have studied and lamented about how the neighborhood and society has changed, and that people are pulling away from strong faith values in daily living.

We have thought about our faith life both personally and as a force planted by God on this hill so many years ago, and have wondered what things would and should look like once the powers that be turned us loose to be the church again.

As you know, I found a book that is being used by the EC church to revitalize congregations that are tired of trying to grow their churches using traditional means. It is not some sort of manual or latest method of the day kind of thing. It focuses on relationships...with God...with fellow believers...and with the rest of the world.

The book is called "A Jesus Shaped Life" and the author concludes that somewhere we lost a vital component of what Jesus started. The movement that Jesus began has become for too many a religious institution rather than a dynamic way of life in a MISSIONAL FAMILY, IN THE COMMUNITY WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN PLANTED BY GOD.

The goal for these types of churches is to grow communities of people who are becoming like Jesus and are learning to do what he did by living as spiritual families the way Jesus lived with his followers.

I am convinced that this really aligns with the theme of "Going Deeper", which our church adopted months ago!

The author says that the Great Commission which we are all supposed to follow, can be interpreted by use of a triangle, where at the top the word is UP, at the bottom right hand side is the word IN, and at the bottom left hand side is the word OUT

1. The **UP dimension** would have been when Jesus gathered with large crowds as in **Luke 8:4**. While in these situations he did model all three dimensions of kingdom life...UP, IN, and OUT, most powerfully in these situations would have been the UP dimension, where the audience would experience the authority and power of God by virtue of healings, miracles, and preaching of the word. This is our relationship with the Godhead three in one, which we have already talked about.

2. The **IN dimension** would have been most evident in a small group meeting of the disciples as shown in **Luke 6:13**. Again, all three dimensions of the triangle would have been present, but the IN dimension would have been most significant. They shared their possessions and lives together in an intimate, loving and learning environment- a close relationship with one another.

3. The **OUT dimension** shows most later in Jesus' ministry. When he was traveling around from town to town, Jesus would gather with households filled with people. Remember the story in **Mark 2:1-2** where it says "soon the home was so packed with people that many had to stand outside...all were welcome!" That will be the focus of our message for today.

The whole purpose of this kind of OUTREACH is to begin the process of pulling people into the triangle so they can feel a sense of responsibility for one another and to God. In other words, these people are to become an extended family of the kingdom.

In our lesson for today, Paul's letter to the Philippians begins with a beautiful recognition of this process and a declaration of our responsibility to be intricately involved.

In Philippians 1:3-30, Paul identifies four principles that all disciples would do well to keep in mind:

**I. THE PRINCIPLE OF HOPE:** THE DAY OF CHRIST IS WHEN HE COMES TO US OR WE GO TO HIM. IN EITHER CASE HE'S WITH YOU AND WORKING IN YOU, AND THAT SHOULD GIVE YOU HOPE

Now, I'm not the brightest bulb in the box, but when the Apostle Paul says he has confidence or is hopeful or assured of something, yes, I need to get strength from that truth for my life! People look in vain for encouragement as they look to the future... well right here it is!

He says: "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. **(Vs. 6-11)**

Even though we look for "the day of Christ" when we see Him with expectation, we also know that our **love for others** will have an effect on that moment for us.

The power of hope turns cowards into conquerors. Paul didn't look forward to death, his hope was in all that Christ still had for him and all those who follow.

You see you are a work in progress. The Lord is forming in you the very nature and character of Christ **if you're a Christ follower**. The greatest thing any believer can hear is, "**that's so Jesus**" about themselves.

Paul tells them that he's sure, his hope is strong that the work that was started by God at the moment you believed will not only continue, but will be perfected or completed at the moment we see Jesus.

If the main hope of your life is a new job, or a new relationship or anything in this world, you will not experience biblical joy. If your joy comes from world happenings, it's not true joy and it can be taken.

SO HOW DO WE LIVE THE PRINCIPLE OF HOPE?- HAVE A DEEP CONFIDENCE OF GOD'S WORK IN YOU.

## **II. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH**

As I said earlier, faith is not based on something you think up for yourself, it's based on what God has said. Did God say that the gospel would be preached in the whole world? YES. Did he say Paul would be the only one to do it? NO. In fact, in the letter to the Philippians, Paul is imprisoned and **the gospel is still going forth.**

**In verses 12-18** Paul reveals a situation that's going on. Some people were trying to undermine the validity of Paul as a preacher and a teacher. Maybe they wanted to assert that they were the true leaders, to show Paul they didn't really need him.

"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me **has really served to advance the gospel**, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ."

"And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are **much more bold to speak the word without fear.**"

People are watching how we respond to problems like this Pandemic...**that is why I have been calling it an opportunity!** If we respond in faith, **their** faith grows. If we respond in fear, **their** fear may grow.

**WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH IS THAT GOD USES CIRCUMSTANCES FOR A GREATER PURPOSE.** See it this way. While many people in the world

depend on circumstances to be happy, God uses them in a greater plan and for our joy.

### **III. THE PRINCIPLE OF PERSEVERANCE**

Let's face it, each one of us from time to time has wanted to give up because we feel tired or defeated.

Paul has been beaten, ship-wrecked, jailed and falsely accused yet his hope was for what was to come and in that he persevered, **he didn't allow himself to lose heart.** Instead, he rejoiced!

Paul knew that while he worked to share God's love, God was honoring it, and when he died, he would receive the great reward of being in the Lord's presence.

"Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

Certainly, the flesh of Paul longed for release, but he could see that God was using his suffering and would even use his death for a greater purpose.

Paul says: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, **for your progress and joy in the faith**, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again." **(Vs. 19-26)**

Paul wanted to go but knew that remaining was good for the believers. He was willing to stay as long as God wanted...there was much work to be done...**there still is!**

The reason we can succeed in going out into the world, is that we know our lives are in God's hands. When we finish this life, we are with Him. It created quite a conflict for Paul because as much as he wanted to be here and complete his work, he couldn't wait for the day that he would see Jesus.

His thought was if I'm here God has a purpose for me, if I'm not here, I'm in the presence of God! **That must be our adopted thought process as well!**

#### **IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF FOCUS**

The principle of focus is such that whatever we are focused on will be what we are moving toward.

One of the things that makes Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs a great football quarterback is his ability to make no look passes. Why is that a big deal?

Well because generally you must be looking at the object you're throwing to. He can't make every pass like that, but from time to time he can. Still, it cannot be accomplished without great focus, to see what's happening across the entire field.

The gospel of the Jesus will never be known in your office or your home or neighborhood **until you focus on living it out**. It takes intentionality, great focus to see that happen, to see what's going on around you. To say each day, "God my life is Yours today!"

Paul says it this way:

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that **for the sake of Christ** you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have." **(Vs. 27-30)**.

**Ponder this profound question, "Can you say that your life is worthy of the gospel?"**

There's much happening around you, but what God is doing in you is so important because it informs all of your life, those who know you, and those who only watch you to see the kind of person you are.

Paul closes by telling the believers that they have been granted the privilege for suffering for Christ. I know so many people that hate that thought, they do not want to believe they should have to suffer because we're Christians.

"Suffering" is to experience unpleasant things

The reality is, we really don't know what suffering is when it comes to the gospel.

**WHAT'S YOUR COMPLAINT ABOUT LIVING AS A CHRISTIAN? DOES IT COMPARE TO THOSE WHO ARE LOSING THEIR LIVES FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL?**

We are called to Daily live lives worthy of the message of Christ. Imagine what would happen if we as the church in Rutherford began to see ourselves as a mission outpost in this community, called out to purposely engage everyone we could with the full message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

What if we went about identifying the passion of our membership in that regard, and instead of hiring people to develop and administer programs to achieve the goals God set for us, we turned the passion of those members loose on this community?

Tune in next week and we will talk about the possibilities!

Amen? Let us pray!