

“What is Your Personal Mission Plan for this Week?”

Isaiah 61:1-3, Matthew 22:36-40

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We Christians are familiar with the terms *Mission* or *Outreach*. On the front of the bulletin, it clearly states our church's mission statement: To promote the love of Christ and nurture spiritual growth for each individual, the church and the community. The key words are “the love of Christ”. When we experience God's love and grace, we share that love with others. That is the meaning of mission. I am sure that when Jesus came into your life as your Savior, He gave you the dream. The dream is your own life mission statement: How do you want to live your life as a child of God? If you haven't made your own life statement yet, consider making one. Simply speaking, mission is your follow-up action after we experience the grace of God in Jesus Christ. We Christians are people of practicing Jesus' teachings in our daily lives.

Our church is small, but we are involved in many mission works: Downtown Cake Ministry, Heifer International Project, Family Promise (We are going to host “Sister Swings Concert” for a fundraiser to support the Family Promise ministry on November 1st), Loaves and Fishes, Sunrise Christian Food Ministry and Tarps for Homeless. And our Youth Group SWAG made a special summer mission program. I appreciate all your voluntary participation and loving care to make our community better. When we think about our mission plan, we automatically tend to associate with activities like long term or short term missionary work abroad or in a remote area like an Indian Reservation. Or you may think about homeless ministries. There is nothing wrong with that, but mission doesn't necessarily have to be a special and big outreach project. It can be a small, random act of your kindness that you can offer to others around you. This morning, I invite you all to rethink the meaning of mission.

Let's think about the purpose of mission. We all chose this Sunday morning time to come to church and worship God. Definitely our souls long for spiritual peace, strength and encouragement. So I hope that we all receive God's grace, finding hope and meaning of life in Christ through an hour of service. But there is one more important purpose for worship this morning. Spiritually speaking, our Sunday worship is a spiritual Sabbath (or Sunday retreat) for recharging our souls, faith, and strength, and equipping ourselves to proclaim Christ and his good news to everyone in our daily living. After service, we depart to serve. God is sending us to a mission field. Our mission field doesn't have to be a different country or a long distance trip, but it can be our friends,

family members or our neighbors whom we meet every day. It's just our people!

Why do we do our mission? When Jesus proclaimed a new image of God, it wasn't just good news for a special chosen group. It was for everyone. Jesus' vision for the Kingdom of God is to include everyone sharing and spreading the love of God. Don't get me wrong. I believe that Jesus doesn't mean to sacrifice you to love others. He challenges us to understand others and care for others as ourselves. Discipleship was a training process to learn about God's love and understand others in their shoes. I have an image of a crying baby to describe why we are called to do our mission. My new son Joshua is a big crier. He is truly a powerful crier!! When he starts crying, no one else can stop him crying except one person. That is my wife. Sometimes, I imagine God would be challenged if he comes to my house as a baby sitter even just for one day. But only Youngjae, my wife knows how to take care of him and calm him down! When she holds the baby in her arms and makes eye contact, surprisingly he stops crying and starts smiling at her! This is my theory: her secret is milk and time spent with him!

Last Friday morning, while he was crying again, I happened to see a phrase on his bib, that said, "GOTTA LOVE ME!" I thought this baby symbolically represents our neighbors who are in great need and ask for our outreach. Literally they are desperately crying for any help like a little and tiny baby. I don't mean our sacrifice but our caring response to their need. I believe that our small act of kindness can make a big difference. An ancient philosopher, Plato shared this maxim, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle." Pastor Joel Osteen in his book, "Your Best Life Now" reminds us that "Somebody needs what you have to give. It may not be your money; it may be your time. It may be your listening ear. It may be your arms to encourage. It may be your smile to uplift." Who knows? Maybe just like that little baby, putting your arm around somebody and letting him or her know that you care can help begin to heal that person's heart. Maybe you can give a rescuing hug. **This is the spirit of mission!**

Last week, I watched TV news about a young man's act of kindness toward a senior citizen at a Florida grocery store. This young man's name is Gage Boucher. One night, while he was working as a stock clerk at the store, he noticed an elderly man struggling after his shoe became untied. Boucher just asked him if he could assist him and graciously helped the man lace back up. It's a random act of kindness. Another customer at the store took a picture of his good deed and put it on facebook. The photo has been liked by 200,000 people and shared across social media. Desmond Tutu reminded us that "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that

overwhelm the world.” A mission plan doesn’t have to be a special summer time away activity or any specific community outreach project. What you can offer to others around you in your daily living can be a wonderful mission plan as well. I am sure that you have noticed different hair styles on me and my son Jacob. My wife did it! It is controversial and debatable whether she did a great job or not. The other night, Jacob clearly told me that he doesn’t like my haircut though! But it is true that she offered her act of kindness to us. There is a saying, “Be kind to one another even though you disagree on stuff!” The bottom line is that her act of kindness met our needs. This is the spirit of mission that Jesus taught us to do for others.

Let’s revisit our Scripture readings. Our Old Testament reading reminds us of God’s special mission for God’s people. God proclaims Good news to the poor, heals the heartbroken, announces freedom to all captives, and comforts all who mourn. The Spirit of God is not separating us from others, but feels for others’ pain and suffering, and embraces them as ours. It is the spirit of inclusion. The work of mission helps those who are in need feel they are not alone, but experience a sense of understanding, and belonging in a community. It is the spirit of outreach. In the New Testament reading, the Pharisees, the scholars, gathered to tackle Jesus with a difficult question. They challenged him and by asking him which command in God’s law was the most important. Jesus answered by saying, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest first commandment. A second was like it: ‘You shall love your neighbors as yourself.’ The point is that he warns us not to be stuck in a self-centered, self-pride world. He challenges us to move out of “All-About-Me World” and to move to “All-About-Us World”.

Mission has three characteristics. First of all, mission is not an obligated task, but a joyful task out of your willingness. Secondly, mission is the work nurturing and nourishing others for their growth. Lastly, mission is not controlling, but it is empowering others. Jesus proclaims and teaches us that we are all His people as precious children of God. There are no different levels or classes in God’s eyes. We Christians are called to carry out this mission in our daily lives. Consider any small mission plan for this week and practice it with your family members, friends and your neighbors. Even make a phone call, or send a card to your friends and share your thought and prayer with them. They may really need your support and long for your prayer. Let’s practice doing our mission from small things and get this to be a daily habit! Amen.