

2.6.2024 The sermon: Everyone III – You can't do anything without me.

We are finally at the finish line! The last sermon in the Christ - Community - Everyone series. But each of the three Cs is essential, and the power of our following Christ will only ever be as strong as we are in our weakest C.

The past two sermons we have talked about why one of the three key values of the Trinity is "Everyone" (He broke down the wall) and who "Everyone" refers to (Who is your neighbour?). Yes, Jesus teaches us to be a community that is "missional," that is, open to sharing Christ with whoever is near us. It is then that we experience the fulfilment of our mission as more people join Christ. But how can we fulfil this mission?

John 15,1-13

⁹ *Even as the Father has given me his love, so I have given my love to you: be ever in my love.*

¹² *This is the law I give you: Have love one for another, even as I have love for you.*

The simplest answer is, "Do it LIKE Jesus." Jesus' mission was to love us as the Father loved Him. Our mission is to love others AS Christ loved us. What pattern of love is Jesus passing on to us?

A. Leave your "Heaven" AS JESUS left His Heaven and entered your world.

I think we understand Jesus' example quite well - what it means to come out of our world and approach others by entering their world. Yet, the church still has a temptation to draw people into its world rather than to "come out" between the fences, into the real world, and leave our comfort zone.

What is stopping us? The greatest enemy of "leaving" is our selfishness. When the Apostle Paul observed the Church in Corinth celebrating the Lord's Supper together - he saw how they were hurting each other (1 Cor 11:17-22). Do you despise the body of God so much that you demean those who have nothing?"

Often at the Lord's Supper we dive into ourselves to examine whether we are holy enough to eat the bread and drink the wine, but when Paul urges us not to partake of the Lord's Supper "unworthily," he is not referring to our imperfection, but to our lack of concern for one another. He is thinking of our inability to step out of our world, to see the needs of others, and to show them love by giving up something for their benefit, just as Christ gave up His Heaven, for our benefit, and came down to earth, among us.

The Lord's Supper is a profoundly missional affair. Paul says, "I have delivered to you what I myself received from the Lord." It is then that we experience the "quickening body and blood of Christ" as we pass on the love we have received, just AS Christ did, and after him Paul, and after Paul, others, and others ... and us.

B. Live with the people in your neighbourhood AS JESUS LIVED WITH THE PEOPLE HERE ON EARTH

When Jesus was born, it was the fulfilment of the old prophecy that "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel. That's "God with us." God - Christ is WITH us, not "over" us, "outside" us or "beside" us. In the same way, we are to live with the people around us. Not to be "above" them, beside them, or even apart from them. When Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world" he is shouting directly with this image for us to be near those who need a taste of something special.

If we want to fulfil our mission, then this does not mean that we are to shut ourselves off from the world (though we may be concerned about it), but rather to live with people and fearlessly participate in the natural activities of our surroundings with holiness and detachment. Simply "to be like Jesus ...with those people that Jesus would be with". And to be with them in the way that Jesus was with them. With sincerity of heart, concern, and insight, without offense. Detachment is the ability to laugh, lighten up, or ignore

words, behaviours, and opinions that might hurt or offend. Detachment means that we understand that behaviour cannot change until the heart changes. Perspective allows us to be with people regardless of their lifestyles and opinions without judgment or criticism.

C. Listen to others AS JESUS listens to your voice.

It has always amazed me how Jesus treated each person He met in a completely different way. Whether it was the woman at the well, Nicodemus, Levi, Mary Magdalene, or his disciples. He listened to all of them and knew how to respond in a way that would affect their hearts.

Jesus was a great observer of life. Otherwise, I can't explain how he could be a simple carpenter for 30 years without attracting much attention. Then his three years of ministry were more powerful. Perhaps we should take a cue from him and devote 10 parts of our capacity to observing, listening, and perceiving another person, and one part to our own words.

No simplistic answers, no one-off offers. Jesus listened and taught us that the smallest element of society is the person as a person, with his or her own experiences, joys and pains, specific family background, cultural heritage, or experience of the church. All of this influences the way in which he explains his relationships and develops his faith. Whenever we neglect to listen, we make a big mistake and greatly narrow our space to express the love we ourselves have received from Christ.

D. Love unconditionally AS JESUS loves you unconditionally.

Abraham was once given this promise: "I will bless you and make your name great; you shall be a blessing." God's offer to share blessings with others is how we find the deepest meaning in our lives and the highest satisfaction.

Jesus put it in words: "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." This is not a call to slavery and painful sacrifice, rather it is Jesus' way of saying, "Understand this, if you really want to rejoice and be well, then free up some time and money and go please someone. Help someone who is in trouble, surprise someone with a gift.

The real essence of a biblical blessing is not that we do something for people, and they will be grateful, like us, or even become members of our church in return, but the essence of a blessing is that it is given unconditionally. It is important to learn to accept God's free and unconditional offer and then to live gratefully so that the blessing spreads to others without charge or expectation. I believe that as we walk in unconditional love, we will find that this is the best evidence of what our God is like. Unconditional love is a power that draws people naturally.

To be missional, to fulfill the third C, is not a task, but a lifestyle. It is not a "method" of hunting people, but a way of bringing Christ's Spirit of love into every relationship we have. Our mission is not to "evangelize" but to live as He lived. The rest is up to Him. This will not only lead to our lives drawing others to Christ, but we will also find that our own spiritual lives finally make sense, because each of these expressions of Christ's love breaks down our own selfishness and teaches us to truly love.

Being missional and fulfilling the third C is not just about how we behave outwardly. On the contrary, it is to know on the inside if we have the missional Spirit of Christ - if we are connected to the trunk and living out His love that flows through the branches into every leaf of the vine and spreads out into the surrounding area. If we live connected by Christ into one Community that is truly open to Everyone. If, LIKE JESUS, we leave our world, live with others and holy and insightful, perceiving and listening to others and giving them a practical experience of love without conditions or expectations.

If we pass on what we ourselves have received from Christ in these four aspects, we will not have to worry about other things. On the contrary, without Christ we can do nothing.