



Core Value: Mission

"Tending the Orchard"

Fall 2016 Sermon Series

"Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'" Matthew 25:34-40

We talk a lot about grace at our church. John Wesley, the founder of our denomination, shaped its character by his understanding of grace as a journey. He spoke of **prevenient** grace—the grace that comes before—as the grace of God that is with us, luring us to relationship with God. **Justifying** grace is the grace we experience as we find our dependence on Christ and the love we feel as we commit ourselves to him. **Sanctifying** grace is then the grace we experience as we grow in faith. It's the grace we experience when we are serving others, studying our Bibles, experiencing Christian fellowship. It's God's love that we feel when we take communion, and also as we build a house for someone in need. It's the grace that keeps us in love with God.

As we reflect on mission as a core value, it's helpful to see it as a way we stay in relationship with God. Through mission we experience God's sanctifying grace. When Jesus said that whenever we help another we are helping him, he was showing us how to stay in relationship with him. Of course, when we participate in mission opportunities, when we help others, we are not doing it for ourselves. Have you ever been serving and felt a tremendous sense of peace, or contentment? Has a feeling of joy washed over you? I would say that's the presence of Christ.

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Mission is a further extension of hospitality outside the walls of the church building. It is ensuring that all people are loved and treated as people of worth. It is following in Jesus' footsteps by coming alongside people, loving them, and helping to make life better. It is offering our best to those in need. In so doing, we take the time to build relationships and see the value and gifts of each of God's children as we build the kingdom.

When we are serving those in need, just as we are striving to be the hands and feet of Christ for them, they are in turn the presence of Christ for us. This can make mission mutual. It can help us to move from the idea that we are the ones with something to offer those in need and enable us to recognize that we too are in need. Those we are helping help us just as much. This is what I would call transformational mission. It creates experiences that enable all to be transformed as we encounter Christ together.

Questions for Reflections

- How does mission help you to stay in love with God?
- Have you ever experienced a transformational mission experience? If so, why was it transformational?
- How can our church live into a core value of mission?

Prayer

Holy God, open my eyes to the needs of your world. Open my heart to those who are struggling. Guide my hands and feet to serve you and your people. Reveal yourself to me as I love your people. Amen.