

June 18, 2017  
11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Matthew 9:35-10:23

## **THE WOW FACTOR**

Don't look at the front of your bulletin. Do you know what Fellowship's mission statement is? *"The mission of Fellowship Presbyterian Church is to glorify God, make disciples and serve our neighbors."*

Before 2011, Fellowship's mission statement was: *"The mission of Fellowship Presbyterian Church is to be a loving, inclusive family of believers in Jesus Christ that provides a nurturing center for worship, prayer, study, and fellowship, which ministers to the needs of our community and the world"*

In substance, they both say glorify God, make disciples and serve our neighbors. We changed it because we were participating in a three-year program called Acts 16:5, the point of which was to energize our church to go out and make disciples. There was a whole section of the program about mission statements. The new thing at that time was to keep your mission statement short and succinct. Glorify God, make disciples and serve our neighbor was one of the examples of a "good" mission statement. The curriculum had a lot of examples of both good and bad mission statements and the truth is all the good ones came down to the three elements and as did all the bad ones pretty much, they were just too wordy.

There are people who make a good living as consultants going around helping every kind of organization come up with their mission statements: giant corporations, hospitals, non-profit and charitable organizations big and small and, pretty much every church. But does anybody ever remember hearing about mission statements before the mid-nineties (I know some of you don't remember anything before the mid-nineties because you were a child or not born yet)?

Google "mission statement" and you'll get all kinds of guidance for how to

come up with one for your organization. To create an “effective” mission statement, you have to know your target audience. You have to know what the goals of your organization are. Your goals must be quantifiable. Most importantly, you must be able to identify the thing that makes your organization stand out among other similar organizations. What is your “Wow” factor?

I don’t have a problem with mission statements, I just don’t see why it’s such a big deal. I don’t think they do any harm, but I don’t see what is so great about them either, especially in the church. I mean really what do they even mean when they say you have or don’t have an *effective* mission statement.

Our target audience is everybody who is not already a disciple. There is only one church of Jesus Christ. He doesn’t call us to compete with each other by coming up with a wow factor that is going to bring people flocking to our church instead of the church they’re currently attending. Soliciting Christians to leave their church and join yours isn’t making disciples. Definitely we welcome visitors and hope they will want to stay. And we should always encourage friends and co-workers who are not committed to another church to join us. That just isn’t the same thing as making disciples.

But. You gotta look at what Jesus is doing here. He’s sending the apostles out on their first mission and he drafts the first mission statement ever. How effective would this be in our church today?

*The mission of Fellowship Presbyterian Church is to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons.*

We’ve definitely got some goals here, but I’m not sure they’re measurable. Who knows how many demons there are out there that need casting out. And what about lepers? Is the goal to cure every leper in every village or just a reasonable percentage? How do the followers of Jesus make themselves stand out among other, similar organizations?

Well that one's easy. I mean there were lots of miracle workers with Messiah complexes wandering around Palestine in those days, healing the sick and casting out demons. But raising the dead and cleansing lepers that puts Jesus' followers in a class by themselves. Definitely gives them the wow factor.

And who is their target audience? It's not everybody. It's the Jews. No Gentiles. No Samaritans. Wait. What? What about Jesus final words to the disciples that we read last week? <sup>19</sup> *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* <sup>20</sup> *and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* This sounds like the target audience is everybody—the whole world. Why is the earlier mission statement so limited in identifying the target audience?

We talked last week about Jesus' commandment to make disciples of all nations. The way you do it is heal the sick, feed the hungry, give to the poor, welcome the outsiders, love your neighbor. Share the good news of God's unconditional love and salvation through Christ. Share that good news by your words and your actions.

There is a lot of scholarly work about the fact that today's passage seems to conflict with last week's because here Jesus is quite definite that he is sending the disciples only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Only to their own kind. Which did he mean—evangelize only to our own or evangelize to the whole world. The scholars agree on one thing. His final words in chapter 28 sending the disciples out to all nations, expands the limited mission in Chapter 10. But there's more to it than that.

In today's passage, Jesus is talking less about *making* disciples and more about *being* disciples. *Be* disciples in your own community. How do you do that?

The same way you make disciples: heal the sick, feed the hungry, give to the poor, welcome the outsiders, love your neighbor.

So let's get back to Jesus' mission statement and see how it compares to ours:

Does it call the disciples to glorify God? Yes. The miraculous healing and feeding is all for the glory of God. Does it call us to make disciples? Yes. Again, the healing the feeding, the welcoming of strangers and loving of neighbor are the actions that will make disciples. Does it call us to serve our neighbor –healing and caring for others without demanding payment or even a commitment to Christ in return? Yep. That is clear from the plain language.

We've already seen how the Jesus mission statement includes a wow factor. But what about ours today? I mean not too many lepers around north east Tallahassee for us to cleanse. And really healing leprosy is hardly a miracle any more. We're sure not going to be raising people from the dead. Not going to happen.

How about this for a Wow factor: We are saved. We are given God's unconditional love and the guarantee of eternal life. And guess what? It's free! You don't have to pay for it. You don't even have to stand up here and say you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Of course we like it if you do. If you want to be a member of the church it is understood that you do accept Christ as Lord and Savior. And of course we hope and expect that you'll support the church financially. But that is not the same as putting a price on it. And: It. Is. Not. Required in order to receive God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. That is a no strings attached gift. You are not saved because you say you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You are not damned if you never say it. If that isn't a Wow factor, I don't know what is

