

We are the Church and we are called to Minister to our WORLD

Welcome to our **Final Week** of “**We Are The Church**”! As we have said each week our goal for this series is to help us understand why the church is to be such a vital part of our lives as followers of Jesus. Our hope is that you will have a newfound appreciation for the Church and that we all will change our mindset from thinking about the church as a place we GO, to understanding that the CHURCH is who we are supposed to BE.

In **Week 1** we took on the task of defining the CHURCH. We said that the **CHURCH is a local assembly of believers that desires to WALK with Jesus together, GROW to be like Jesus together and ultimately LOVE like Jesus together.**

In **Week 2** we introduced the first of THREE MINISTRY PURPOSES that the Church is to carry out as a vital part of helping you and I grow in our relationship to Christ. The first ministry purpose being the ministry of WORSHIP. **We are the Church and we are called to Worship GOD.** In fact this is what we were created for and it is worship that really sets the tone for the other two purposes. Worship is a demonstration of our love and devotion to God especially in light of what God has done for us. But as we also noted in **Week 1** our worship is not only to be based on WHAT God has done for us but it is also to be in response to WHO He is.

Last Week we introduced **Ministry Purpose #2 - We are the Church and we are called to Minister to ONE ANOTHER.** As we talked about last week, we are made in the image of God and created for community. Because we are, we have this innate desire to share our life and our love with other human beings. The CHURCH becomes a place where we are able to live as we were created to live.

And that brings us to this week and **Ministry Purpose #3 - We are the Church and we are called to Minister to our WORLD.**

If we have a relationship with Jesus we should care about and be concerned with what He is concerned with. And the Bible clearly tells us what it is He is most concerned with and that is - **Seeking and Saving those who are LOST and apart from God because of their sin!** We see this in Gospel account according to Luke where Jesus engages with the Tax Collector Zacchaeus.

Luke 19:1-10 (NIV) Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. In other words Zacchaeus was a big time sinner because he was a thieving Roman tax collector only concerned with material things and he made his fortune on the backs of his own people oppressing them with heavy tax burdens above what Rome required. **3** He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. **5** When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” **6** So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. Because of his interest in

Jesus he was extended an invitation to to draw nearer to Jesus and as a result it leads to a repentant heart and a desire to change his ways **7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."** **8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."** **9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**

God didn't create the church and give it a mission. God had a mission and gave it to the church. This mission of seeking and saving the lost, has existed since the very beginning. You see, We WORSHIP, not just for ourselves, but so that God can draw all people unto Himself. We SERVE ONE ANOTHER, not to be an exclusive community unto ourselves, but so that God can create a community that others may want to join. Our calling is not to a holy huddle where we are only concerned with ourselves. Our calling is to the WORLD and as such we are to have a VISION and MISSION focused on reaching the world with the hope found in Jesus. For Zacchaeus nothing, not even his riches, could offer him the hope of eternal life and the forgiveness of sin. But he found that HOPE in Jesus.

John 3:16-17 (NIV) 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. This is the HOPE that the world needs to know and receive.

That is why The VISION of Vertical Church is changing to **Sharing the HOPE of Jesus with our communities and the world.** This is a tweak to our original vision of **"Helping People Who Don't Like Church Meet God"**. We are making this change because we want our vision to extend beyond just our community and we want our idea of church to extend beyond thoughts of a building or a Sunday morning service. We have a responsibility to take the hope we have in Christ and share it with the world. Our ministry starts local but it is to go global. It is why we invest not only in our communities but we also invest in church planting in other communities and in efforts to take the Gospel to the world through our partnership with NC Baptists. We need to understand that people will not find hope unless they know Jesus.

How do we do this? We do this through our MISSION which is **Leading people to be passionate about Jesus so they can lead others to Jesus.** The mission of Vertical is the MISSION OF GOD. When you are passionate about Jesus you will be passionate about what Jesus is passionate about. And as we just read in **Luke 19** Jesus is really passionate about lost people becoming found people. About sinners who are apart from God becoming sons and daughters in the family of God. About those who feel hopeless finding hope in Jesus.

But what does that look like? How do we minister to our world? Since this is God's mission we are going to close out our series by looking at the **TWO WAYS Jesus to ministered to our world.**

The first way we minister to our world is THROUGH SHOWING MERCY and COMPASSION regarding PHYSICAL NEEDS!

The HOPE we are to give people is not just to be fixed on spiritual needs alone but must also include their physical needs as well. Jesus tells us that His main focus was seeking and saving people from their sin but we need to pay attention to the fact that He did so without neglecting people's physical needs. All throughout the Gospels we have 12 different accounts where Jesus expressed compassion for people's physical situation by seeking to help them meet those needs. Here is just a sampling of those encounters.

Matthew 4:23 (NIV) Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Elmer Thiessen in his writing on the "Ethics of Evangelism" says this, "*Ethical proselytizing (sharing the gospel in an attempt to convert someone to faith in Christ) that respects and protects the dignity of persons must always be an expression of concern for the whole person and for all of his or her needs – physical, social, economic, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. To care only for the salvation of the souls of persons is unethical. It involves an objectification of a part of the person, and as such violates that person's dignity.*"

Jesus ministered to the WHOLE person. He called them to salvation through repentance addressing their spiritual needs but He did so without neglecting their physical needs.

Mark 1:40-42 (ESV) **40** And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." **41** Moved with pity, The idea here is that Jesus allowed Himself to feel his suffering by having empathy for the man. Because of His love for people Jesus had compassion for his situation and he felt compelled to minister to him physically. **41** Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." **42** And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Matthew 14:14-16 (ESV) **14** When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. **15** Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." **16** But Jesus said, "They need not go away: you give them something to eat." If we love people and we want to give them hope but we are unconcerned with their physical sufferings that can be a huge stumbling block for them coming to Christ. **James 2:15-16 (NIV)** **15** Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. **16** If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? Sin is a big enough hurdle. Let's not create more hurdles by showing a lack of mercy and concern for their pressing physical needs.

Matthew 20:34 (NIV) 29 As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. **30** Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" **31** The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" Some were actually rejecting the blind men and dismissing their need probably because they were all too familiar with blind beggars and rather than see them as people needing hope they saw them as an inconvenience. Notice how Jesus responded to them **32** **Jesus stopped and called them.** "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. **33** "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." **34** Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Christian author and pastor **Mike McKinley** wrote an online article where he details 5 reasons that we the CHURCH should demonstrate mercy and have compassion for those who have a pressing physical need. Here is what he said:

Reason #1 - Deeds of mercy demonstrate the character of Christ.

An important part of our evangelistic witness is showing unbelievers the excellence of Christ, and one of the most beautiful aspects of our Savior's character is his kindness to those in need. When we show love and compassion to those in need, we display Christ's compelling love and character.

Reason #2 - Deeds of mercy show the power of the gospel to change us.

When we help our neighbor we give evidence that our message is true. If we claim that the gospel has the power to change lives, then our mercy is one thing that proves it.

In a world where most people keep to themselves and only take care of their own, Christians have an opportunity to stun others with our inexplicable love and selfless service. We want people to be perplexed by our care so that they realize the only explanation is that Christians have been genuinely transformed by the good news.

Reason #3 - Deeds of mercy model a pattern of discipleship.

The Great Commission calls us to make disciples and teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded. When Christians obey the Lord's instructions to love our enemies and be sacrificially merciful to our neighbor, we model what is meant by the call to take up our cross and follow Jesus. The recipients of our mercy are invited to join us in a life lived in submission to the Savior.

Reason #4 - Deeds of mercy acknowledge the human condition.

God created humans as physical beings. The state of our flesh greatly impacts our lives. Life is more difficult when we are hungry, cold, intoxicated, sick, or in danger. And so evangelistic

proclamation that doesn't recognize the physical factors at work in the lives of its hearers risks being tone-deaf and insensitive.

It's important that we recognize that there is an order to our needs, and that sometimes our greatest needs are not our most immediate needs. So we can say with confidence that the greatest need of every human being is to be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. But if someone comes to your door with a gaping head wound, that need, though lesser, is more urgent. First you must take care of the head wound, and then you should share the gospel.

Reason #5 - Deeds of mercy generate opportunities to share the gospel.

There's an old saying: if you want a friend, be a friend. We all like to be around people who are kind to us, who take an interest in our lives, and who demonstrate a desire to help us. So, showing practical care to others is an easy way to build bridges into your community.

We should all be sharing Christ with the people whose lives naturally intersect with ours, such as neighbors, friends, and co-workers. But moving towards needy people with deeds of mercy provides opportunities to build relationships with those with whom we might not otherwise come into contact.

I believe all 5 reasons sum up very nicely why it is that Jesus did not neglect the physical needs of those around Him. It was because He was concerned for them spiritually that led Him to care for their immediate physical needs. In what ways are we concerned for those around us? How can we allow God to use us to address some of the needs within our own community? How about in the world?

The first way we minister to our world is THROUGH SHOWING MERCY and COMPASSION regarding PHYSICAL NEEDS!

The second way we minister to our world is THROUGH SHARING THE GOSPEL and MAKING DISCIPLES addressing SPIRITUAL NEEDS!

Following Jesus and His resurrection and before returning back to the Father, Jesus gives his parting instructions to His disciples. The last words of instruction being His most important. **Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) 18** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples Sharing the Gospel of Hope and then teach them what it means to follow Jesus. Notice where this is to be done **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, In the world. baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Here we see that this was not just a command to His disciples on that day but they were to teach it to all those who would come to faith after this. **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This was consistent with Jesus and His teaching prior to His resurrection and a constant part of His early teaching with His disciples. In fact, here in Mark 13 Jesus is talking about signs

leading up to His return at the end of the age. Notice what must be completed before that happens. **Mark 13:10 (NIV) 10** And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.

It was a central part of Jesus' final prayer to the Father before being arrested and taken to the cross. **John 17:15-18 (NIV) 15** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

It was to be the main mission of the CHURCH once the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers. **Acts 1:8 (NIV) 8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Our VISION: Sharing the HOPE of Jesus with our communities and the world. Is accomplished through **Our MISSION: Leading people to be passionate about Jesus so they can lead others to Jesus**

If we are going to BE the CHURCH and not just GO to CHURCH we must allow this vision and mission to be the vision and mission for our lives. We are the CHURCH and we are called to MINISTER to OUR WORLD.

Invitation:

Over the last four weeks we have talked about the THREE Ministry Purposes of the Church:

- 1) WORSHIPING GOD**
- 2) MINISTERING TO OTHERS**
- 3) MINISTERING TO THE WORLD**

Today we want to challenge you with an opportunity to Join Vertical Church and help us accomplish these three purposes!

Read through the Covenant briefly with the congregation highlighting that it is simply a summary of all that we have been talking about over the last 4 weeks **(Make sure they are passed out when people come into service - have people raise their hand if they didn't get one)**

If you are already a Covenant Partner we are going to ask you to RESTATE your commitment by signing another Covenant (it has been slightly changed to include scripture references) because we are wiping the partnership roll clean and starting again fresh and new.

If you have been attending and are currently not a Covenant Partner we want to challenge you to consider becoming one (Emphasize the seriousness of the Commitment and the fact that we want something for them in their relationship with Jesus. Ask people to take home covenant and pray over the scriptures and ask God what He would have you do)

A Call to COVENANT PARTNERSHIP is a call to allow God to establish the three ministry purposes of the CHURCH in your LIFE personally. You are not joining the church, because when you trusted in Jesus, you joined the church (aka the family of God/body of Christ). We are asking you today to consider joining the MISSION of God through the LOCAL CHURCH! To reject the local church is to reject the mission and to say I don't want to grow in my relationship with Christ.

For some of you there may be some important NEXT steps you need to take before you are ready to commit to a Covenant Partnership: (Would you take one or more of these over the next 3 months)

- 1) Giving (Would you start if you never have before?)
- 2) Serving (Go by NEXT and tell them you are ready to serve and you need help getting started)
- 3) Joining a Vgroup (Let your location Pastor know you would like to join one)
- 4) Accepting Christ (There are people at NEXT ready to pray with you)
- 5) Baptism (Let us talk with you about Baptism)

What's your NEXT step? Would you take it today and join Jesus on His mission?