

Victory of the Lamb – December 2018 – Imitating God: Living Generously

Luke 19:10 - Joining Jesus On Mission – Pastor Bill Limmer

Apollo 13 – Houston we have a problem. This is a phrase that I will use when I call up Ron and something is amiss with one of our properties. This is not a property issue but “Houston, we have a problem.” We have a small group that is on steroids. It is like 20 people. 20 doesn’t fit the definition of a small group. This small group is so big that they meet in like three different rooms inside the one house. Maybe one day it will naturally fall back into the definition of a small group but in the meantime it is going to keep going on as small group on steroids because they enjoy each and love each other.

It sounds a lot like Jesus. Jesus enjoyed hanging out with people. He had a meal in the home of Matthew as well as Zacchaeus, he attended parties and celebrations like the wedding in John 2. He loved to tell riveting stories that kept people on the edge of their seats. He watched, listened, shared stories, and shared life. And when it was good, and when he had earned their trust, he let them in the greatest message of all, that he was the Savior of the world. **The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.**

What do you think, did Jesus hang out with people in spite of having a mission with little time or because he had a big mission with little time? Such a strategy seems unlikely to those of us who are goal-oriented people. It is so inefficient. We don’t have time to spare. So we pick up the kids from daycare. Scurry off to the grocery store, put the kids in the cart and pick up enough for supper and whatever the kids might sneak in the cart. We go to whichever line is going to be the fastest whether that means it is a self-checkout or with an actual person. The path of least resistance is where we are at. We live our life like it is a maze and we have found the way out and so do not deviate from the path. But Jesus spends time with people where they are at. Our mission here is to **share Christ’s victory loving people enough to meet them where I am at.** No . . . Our mission here is to **share Christ’s victory loving people enough to meet them where they are at.**

Jesus went to Matthew, Jesus went to Zacchaeus, Jesus went to the woman at the well, Jesus went to Mary Magdalene. Imitating God: Joining Jesus on Mission equals not just hanging out with people and enjoying people. But this seems to inefficient for us who grew up with big factories, and with the logistics of fulfillment centers, and analytics of social media. We feel we need to score a touchdown for Jesus. We can certainly try big things. God is way bigger than we think or get. But as we look at Jesus life in the Scriptures he was the one going to where people. Maybe God will accomplish touchdowns when we trust him to help us with each third and one.

I know a couple, I will call them April and John because those are their names. April was a student in the campus ministry I was serving. She and her husband John went to China to do mission work with a group called friends of China. While she was there the Chinese Gov’t was paying her to teach English at the University and well, she was there to share Jesus. And so while she prepped for her classes and was great teacher, she was looking for ways to reach her students with Jesus Christ. And one by one their house began to fill up with people who were interested in things like cooking, American culture and Christianity. Seven months after they arrived in China, they had a house full of people for Easter. Over 80 people showed up. She was going to work not just to work but to intentionally find opportunities to share Jesus one on one.

“Sinners” liked hanging out with Jesus. Do you think that Jesus loved people but he didn’t like them? Did he simply put up with them. Love enjoys neighbors and is a friend to them. So here is a question that most Christians have asked: How do we enjoy someone who is a sinner? We do what Jesus did. Draw on God’s grace. In order for Jesus to be our friend he had to have grace for us. Same then is true for us. Luke 6:32-35 **“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.** Grace enables us to see beyond social inadequacies, the strong opinions, the different views, and even the neighbor who has set us up at the enemy. By grace, Jesus sees the redemptive value in our neighbor. That is why Jesus gave up his life for our neighbor too. With such grace, we can do more than put up with our neighbor.

Author and theologian NT Wright says, “We’re called here and now, to be instruments of God’s new creation which has already launched in Jesus and of which Jesus followers are supposed to be not simply beneficiaries but also agents.” 2 Corinthians 5:20 **We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.** We are the ambassadors offering the best message anyone could here. We are Jesus hands, feet, eyes, and heart. When people experience us, they are to experience Jesus. So people receive Jesus through you and me. And so Jesus invites us to join him with mission we are to share a little joy, a little truth, a little patience, a little love.

So I want you to consider this: Acts 17:26 **From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.** If you ever wonder why you live now and not at the time of Christ, or not at the time of the Reformation, or sometime in the future it is because god has determined in his wisdom and love that this is the best time in the history of the world for you to come to faith. Pretty cool. And obviously this makes this true as well: this is the best time for your neighbor, co-worker, friend, fellow volunteer to come to faith. It is not a mistake that you live where you live, work where you work, go to school where you go to school, go to church where you go to church, etc., Because you have a life to share, a message to share, a Savior to share. **Now is the day/time to be linked to Christ, to one another and to our community.**

Join Jesus on mission. But we are often fearful aren’t we? So often we fear rejection, failure, embarrassment, that we will mess up God’s work. And guess what we will. We will forget to look on our neighbor with love. We will get self-centered. We will simply feel the tug of the Holy Spirit to say something and not actually say anything. We will on fail. God already knows all of this. And in the midst of our failing on the very most important thing that than any of us could ever do: God shows us grace and mercy.

God shows us mercy and grace but what do we do? How do we recover from the fail? When I am using google maps and I miss a turn, google maps doesn’t shut off, or make a comment like “you idiot.” It redirects us. When we blow it, we repent and try again. We may not be very good at sharing Jesus, but Jesus is very good at being the God of grace! God’s richest blessing to you as you join Jesus on mission and love and enjoy all people.