

Victory of the Lamb – October 27, 2019

Welcome to Victory – Mission – Acts 1:8 – Witness to . . . Love - Pastor Bill Limmer

Three and a half years ago, on a weekday evening, Jacky and I, were talking in the kitchen of our apartment in McFarland, which is just outside of Madison. I was currently serving as a campus pastor at UW Madison. And I had just turned in our 12 month lease for the apartment. The phone rang. It was Tim Johnson. Now I have known Tim for a number of years but what I didn't know at the time was Tim was president of Victory of the Lamb. When Tim told me that he was the president of Victory of the Lamb, I knew what that meant. When you are a pastor and someone tells you they are the president of a congregation, what that means is they are going to ask you to be one of their pastors. As the conversation progresses, Jacky can tell what is happening. She was super excited. And I was anything but. It had nothing to do with Tim. He was and is a great guy. I was just content where I was at.

I told Tim that I would call, Ben Kuerth, the founding pastor at Victory the next day. I literally had to pray so that I would not blow Ben off or be a dufus on the phone because I wasn't going to take the call. I prayed for like 6 hours off and on. And God the Holy Spirit led me to a really good spot. I was in a good place when I called Ben. I still wasn't going to take the call but at least my heart was in a good place.

As Ben and I were talking he shared with me that Victory of the Lamb was a church to reach the unreached, the outsider. That resonated with me, because I grew up in a multi-ethnic city and all kinds of people were considered outsiders who needed the love of Jesus. This was the Holy Spirit tapping on my shoulder.

Pastor Ben shared the mission of Victory of the Lamb which at the time was written out this way, "to share Christ's Victory with today's people, loving people enough to meet them where they are at." The Holy Spirit goes that's you isn't it? That is how I wired you. In fact, we named the Campus Ministry in Milwaukee, The Point of Grace. The point of grace is to meet people where they are at, just like Jesus met me. He didn't wait for me to act a certain way, do certain things, he just came with unconditional love. And so that was it, the Call of God. Within 18 hours, I went from no way to the Holy Spirit convincing me that this is God's way. And we are so blessed to be here.

What led you to Victory? Many of you are members and regular attenders. I hope that means you enjoy it and you get something out of the messages. Maybe it means that you think that both the songs and the breakfast rock! Maybe what you got here today is that you are serving and so for some it is fulfilling and for some maybe it is out of a sense of obligation. Maybe someone invited you and so you came. Maybe you are here out of guilt. If you don't go you feel bad. Or you came to use it as a bargaining chip down the road. Maybe you got dragged here by a parent or a spouse. Maybe you are here because you are an outsider and you are seeking out the God who says "It's ok to not be ok! I love you." There are a whole lot of reasons why we as a group are here today and so whoever you are welcome home. And I want you to know that whatever brought you here today God has a message for you.

Today we are beginning a message series called Welcome to Victory. And so here we are at 11120 W. Loomis Rd, just south of where it all began at Polonia Soccer Club and just south of where it transitioned from at Showtime Cinema. A few of you remember the smell of the bar at Polonia and more of you remember the smell of popcorn at Showtime. And more than half us don't remember anything about that because this building is all we have known.

But I want you to know that Victory is not just about Victory (picture of Victory from the outside). Victory actually fits into a much larger narrative of wonder, awe, glory, and grace. You see Victory exists to fulfill God mission which is Acts 1:8 **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.** That is a large mission isn't it?!

I want to unpack the setting of this God sized mission. Jesus is saying to his disciples, his followers, his believers, you will be my witnesses. When the first disciples heard this they were 40 days into seeing Jesus who once was alive, was dead, but is now alive again. First time, and last time in history, someone died and raised themselves back to life. The disciples were witnesses. Their lives were changed by what they saw. They saw Jesus alive after he was dead. They saw life from death. They saw the glory of God. You see it is not just that the words are in the bible. This is an eyewitness account. Matthew saw the new life Jesus. Mark saw the resurrected Jesus. Luke saw the death conqueror Jesus. John saw Jesus, the resurrection and the life. Paul saw the not even death can separates us from the love of God Jesus. Peter saw the victorious Jesus. And Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul could keep their mouth shut. Acts 4:20 **As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.** The mission of the church is to witness to Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And this is how we have summarized that mission for Victory. **"Our mission is reaching today's people with Christ's Victory."** What this means is that we are go where people are at, into the day, to day. Here is what happens when churches stop following Jesus mission to be his witnesses. The church stops being a movement and becomes a museum where people will come in and check things out. And then since it is a museum they start to protect three things – the place, the past, and the programs. And after about a couple of decades of being a museum the church becomes a morgue. Thousands of churches actually close every year.

Here is an example of the church being a movement from Jesus own life. Jesus in his ministry rarely carried out his ministry in the Temple or the synagogue. According to one study I ran across, the bible records 132 Jesus to people contacts. Six of these were interactions in the temple, four took place in the synagogues, and 122 happened in the mainstream of life. You see Victory isn't just about hearing the message of Jesus in a building but reaching our community and beyond with Jesus and his good news. Victory.

The good news, what we get to share is Jesus lived the life we were supposed to live and died the death we were condemned to die. We get reach people with Jesus who is the King of King, Lord of lords. He is sovereign over-all. He is available to the tempted. He is limitless in his love, impartially merciful, the centerpiece of civilization, the well spring of wisdom, the supplier of strength, God's Son, the sinner's Savior. His love never changes, his grace is sufficient, Jesus is the pathway to peace, the highway to hope, the road to righteousness. He is actually indescribable to the point that death couldn't hold him.

That is who Jesus is for you and for the whole. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are witness to Jesus.

I am not always a great witness of God. Sometimes I am a phenomenal witness to worry, to anxiety, to busyness, to personal agendas. And I can tell you that is the miserable part of my life. I am not always a great witness to God. There have been too many times when I have opted for being pc – politically correct than pc – proclaiming Christ. I need a Savior. And the more I realize I need a Savior the more it

motivates me to share Jesus with others. That is called gospel motivation. To be a witness we need the power of the Holy Spirit. **We are God's plan A, and the power comes from the Holy Spirit who is in us.** The Holy Spirit is the same power that rose Jesus from the grave! Rely on him to witness.

Here is a different picture of Victory. (picture of where our members live) All these houses dots represent where our members live. Now imagine the increase and spread of dots if we added all the places where you work and where you frequent for eating and for recreation. Imagine if you used your should media platform to share Jesus. What a difference it would make inn our school if Christian teachers saw each of their students as a divinely appointed mission field. Imagine if Christian doctors and nurses took the same approach to their patients? What would it look like n your place of business if your coworkers understood that you showed up each day, not because attendance was mandatory or to pick up a check, but because you genuinely believed it is God's will for you to do so? Imagine what our community will look like as we poor muscle and money into our community in the name of Jesus as a part of our linked Campaign! Imagine what it would look like if you were consistent sharing Jesus on social media. Maybe it is a post of a Bible passage like John 3:16 **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..** Maybe it is **"Can I pray for you."** Maybe it is "I'm not perfect but I am forgiven." Maybe it is "Jesus loves me and you." Can you imagine that Nigerian Prince who wants to put a million dollars into our bank accounts receiving the treasure of the good of Jesus across his news feed and into his heart!

What if your friends wondered what church was really like? What if your friends wanted to know what you thought about Jesus? What if your friend really wanted you to pray for them but they didn't were afraid to ask because they didn't know if it was ok for you to pray for them? What if your friends really wanted to at least try out church but you never asked. Studies show that if 87% of people who are invited to worship will say yes. Don't dismiss what God can do through your next interaction with a friend, family member, or complete stranger. It could be that he plans to use the smallest act of kindness to change someone's eternity. If we approach each day with the knowledge that the Lord can use us in ways we might not expect, and the willingness to allow him to do so, then we open the doors to endless possibilities.

And so among we will continue to reach out to our community through ministry opportunities like Blood Drives, Partnering with area schools like Country Dale, Habitat for Humanity, Hunger Task Force, Jingle Jams, Love Thy Neighbor, Operation Jesus Cares, Soccer Camp, Trunk or Treat, and more.

Do you know that estimates there will be another 2.2 billion people born in the next 30 years just like Zoe? She is Jacky's granddaughter. 😊 Jesus loves the little children all the children of the world. Jesus has called you and me to be witnesses, not of ourselves but of Jesus. I see in you a power so great, the power of the Holy Spirit. I see in you a witness to Jesus that changes people's lives day by day and eternally. I don't want you to miss out on the awe, the wonder, the glory and the grace of God working in people's lives. Where do we start with 2.2 billion people? Here is the starting point. Pray for the Holy Spirit. Pray for your neighborhood, your work place. And let the Holy Spirit give you power and you will be a witness to the love of Jesus Christ.