

Series: Side by Side
Message Title: **Warren: A Mind Set on Mission**
Date: Sunday, March 11, 2018
Scripture: Select passages
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

In 1752, an itinerant preacher named Daniel Marshall packed up his family in Windsor, Connecticut, and moved southward for missionary advancement among the Mohawk Indians.

While this effort involved a series of stops and ministry posts in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, Daniel Marshall and his family eventually came to Stephens Creek (about 10 miles north of Augusta) and started missionary work throughout the Savannah River region.

Once he crossed into Georgia, Marshall was arrested by the Richmond County sheriff for preaching contrary to the Anglican form, and he was forbidden to preach because he separated from the religious form of the church by preaching “the depravity of man, the atonement through Christ, consciousness

of a new birth, and the baptism of believers as an outward sign of a previous inward change.”

From these early conflicts and the seeds of faith scattered throughout the region came a crop of new churches among the churches that sprouted from this movement.

On Sunday, March 13, 1898, a small band of believers gathered in a blacksmith shop to worship God and formed a bond, shared a vision and committed their lives and futures together in what would soon be known as Warren Baptist Church.

That was 120 years ago this weekend. Do you think they ever imagined what we see today?

We are still here together (and there are many of us here), and ever growing in the mission that was begun so many years ago.

They did not set out to make history; they simply came together to affirm their testimony of faith and to unite their lives to fulfill the mission of God in their community together.

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Philippians 2:1-2 ESV).

They expressed this in the early documents of the church. Yet today, we are here, and we have a wonderful and powerful legacy of faith.

People we never met laid the groundwork for relationships, experiences, and ministries we all share and enjoy today because of their faith. What happened in and through them created a defining moment of faith and friendship for us. While that initial gathering was only twelve in number, God does great things from small beginnings.

March is and will always be a defining month in life for me. My parents were married on March 17, 1954. That was significant! But Connie and I were also married on March 3, 1979. We have recently celebrated our 39th wedding anniversary—I’ve had a blast and she’s carried a burden!

It's hard to believe—in the providence of God—the church where I serve as pastor today was turning 60 when I was born and it has doubled that age today. God has guided, provided and sustained this local church in this community through all these years.

I found it quite curious to learn what life in America was like in 1898:

- Period known as the “Gay 90’s”
- Spanish-American War
- William McKinley was POTUS when this church was founded (just trivia, but fun).

Today we are marking our heritage and history as we stand side by side, remembering our past and looking toward our future. In many ways, it is only appropriate for this day to be a day of “Thanks-giving” —a public thank you note for what we have received and all we enjoy.

As I have been thinking and praying about this day and moment in the life of our church, I have seen several Scriptural references in Philippians I feel reflect where we have come from and challenge us as we look ahead.

Looking back, Paul gave thanks and we give thanks for...



High-Value Relationships "partnership in the gospel"

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:3-6 ESV).

Paul looked at the continuance of this church in the gospel and growth with great joy and hope. For him and for us, the church was built upon high-value relationships.

One of the most important people in our church's history is Edna Verdrey Warren who deeded one acre of land in May 1898. She lived in the beautiful two-story house across the street from us today. Mrs. Warren owned a sizable tract of land on both sides of what

is Washington Road, part of an original land grant by King George II to an ancestor, Colonel Skinner. The Chapel at Warren sits on that tract of land today. Originally, a small wood-framed building was built there until 1934, when a brick building was established.

Another was J.S. “Uncle Johnny” Skinner. He was one of the first two deacons and the first Sunday School Superintendent, serving 48 years. He lived to be 96 and was the main pillar of support for Warren in the early years. The church might not have survived without his leadership.

The Apostle Paul loved the church in Philippi because this church loved Paul and they loved the gospel Paul preached. But beyond being a pastor who wrote to affirm theological positions—the sovereignty of God in salvation, the person and work of Christ, gift righteousness, faith, sanctification and our future hope in heaven—Paul loved people and it is evident in this book.

Paul loved the church as a whole, but he singled out of some individuals too:

- Timothy (2:19-22)
- Epaphroditus (2:25-30; 4:14-18)
- Euodia, Syntyche (4:2-3) more
- Greetings at the end of the book (4:21)

What was defining in this church was not just their affinity for one another, but their “partnership in the gospel”—relationships built upon and based upon purpose and promise of life together in Christ.

I think this is a hallmark of Warren from the beginning and continuing today. There are many unsung heroes in our history. We are made for relationships—and no relationships add to our lives more than those as we grow in Christ and give our lives to serve His mission.

High-Cost Risks

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them

of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have (Philippians 1:27-30 ESV).

“... for he [Epaphroditus] nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me” (Philippians 2:30 ESV).

It wasn't easy to follow Christ then in Philippi and it's not today. Yet, Christ is worth it! Jesus is worthy of the greatest risks of our lives and futures together. Paul talked about the “surpassing worth of knowing Christ.”

Jesus is worthy of our worship and of our lives. Paul and these believers risked, gave, sacrificed and trusted God's promise in their lives.

Who and what we are today is not because of a group of people who tried to do as little as they could, but because they sought to do all they could for the glory of God and the witness of the gospel.

Parable of the Talents: “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property” (starting with Matthew 25:14+ ESV)

“There is no return on investment without investing.” —@bretlegg

The cost of Christian commitment: nothing about being a Christian is convenient—adjust your schedule, travel somewhere, open your home, open your wallet, face ridicule, reduce friendships, and accommodate others.

“Salvation is free, but discipleship costs everything we have.” —Billy Graham

High-Priority Responsibilities

So many churches (like so many Christians) get trapped in distractions. Before long, they fall prey to division and dissension.

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights

in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:14-16 ESV).

Paul wanted them to know and understand just how vital their role was in living out the gospel and holding forth the word of life—shine.

Nothing so dulls the shine of the church as grumbling and dissension. Yet we have the “word of life” and this is our high priority to help distribute the light of life.

On March 13, 1927, the call was extended to Rev. Charles Schwall and he was Pastor of Warren until 1942. At that time, the church did not have a baptistry and Pastor Schwall wanted a place where he could baptize inside the church. Schwall tore out the platform and put a baptistry pool under the pulpit. The steps that were built to the baptistry are now in our Heritage Room. I love this reminder that “keeps it real” about seeing changed lives.

Schwall was also a pastor who had a great concern for missions and taught tithing—stability, growth and heart for the lost.

One more pastor of Warren I want to bring to your attention was a chaplain who came to "Camp" Gordon, A.H. Simmons. Simmons preached and baptized in a series of meetings because the current pastor, Carlton Dyches, was in declining health. God blessed the last years of Brother Dyches' ministry with 47 additions in 1944, 34 baptisms and gifts totaling \$2,734.85.

Brother Simmons was called as the first full-time pastor of Warren in 1946, and remained until 1981. The church grew substantially through these years. The hall that has been the birthplace of Warren Grovetown and the venue we use for added services bears his name.

There are so many more people I could mention, but the issue is not about the men and women who went before us, but the mission they never overlooked or forgot.

How do we maintain a mind set on mission?

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:1-5 ESV).

This is us, but this is not about us.

Practices (steps for us):

1. Greet all who gather.

Philippians begins and ends with greetings.

There are over 50 references to greeting in the New Testament letters of Paul. Greeting is a way of showing value, respect and honor to one another.

If there is an application of Philippians 2:3-4 in any gathering of worship, it is making every effort to greet one another. You may not think much about it, but the main reason many never stick at a church is because no one ever recognizes them. Casual encounters can be

significant encounters. Hospitality is vital for the church.

Greeting sacrificially vs. superficially—the difference between making people feel welcome and feeling wanted:

- Superficial greeting says thank you for being here; sacrificial greeting says we will miss you if you are not here.
- Superficial greeting gives up nothing but time to gain nothing but numbers; sacrificial giving is willing to give up everything to see Christ glorified by loving His creation (people).

“Our aim as the body of Christ isn’t to just make people feel welcome; we are to make them feel wanted. It is not enough to say, ‘We are happy you are here.’ We need to let them feel we will miss them if they are not here. That means we have to go beyond southern etiquette and instead, see every person as vital to our church, our lives, and our mission—to worship God.” —Andrew Skelton

Rules of Greeting:

- **Assume the awkwardness on yourself.**

It's awkward to meet new people. However, it is awkward for them as well. If you take the awkwardness on yourself by starting the conversation, asking the questions, and connecting them with others, you limit the guest's awkwardness and make them feel less so.

- **Get out of your comfort zone.**

Bring people to sit with you and your friends and family rather than trying to protect your "normal". If you are introverted, use your listening skills and sharpen your boldness. If you are extroverted, use your boldness and sharpen your listening skills.

- **Take responsibility for passing on the gospel message to a broken world.**

You are standing at the gates as ambassadors of hope and truth to a world in desperate need of both.

"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you... I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need" (Philippians 2:19, 25 ESV).

Just as Paul was willing to send those closest to him to encourage and support other believers, we ought to be willing to do the same—multiplying Life Groups and D-Groups, launching campuses, planting churches, impacting the nations.

2. Guard against the tendency to gripe/complain. The big picture can get lost in all the little nooks and crannies of life.

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing” (Philippians 2:14 ESV).

“Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord” (Philippians 4:1-2 ESV).

Some of the best in the church at Philippi had a tendency to go negative.

3. Give for the greater good.

Share together in the work of the ministry through the local church. Philippians was written in response to the visit of a man

named Epaphroditus who came to Paul in prison carrying a gift sent from the church to support and encourage Paul.

“I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me” (Philippians 2:25-30 ESV).

... “that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to

be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me" (Philippians 4:15, 18 ESV).

- Giving is seen as an act of service (... "for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me" Philippians 2:30 ESV). Gifts are gathered and distributed to meet needs through the ministry of the church.
- Giving is seen as a sign of partnership in the gospel.
- Giving is seen as a sacrifice acceptable to God.

At Warren, our church is supported through regular and faithful tithes and offerings of people who honor God and partner in ministry. We are not a church carried by wealth, but I pray we will always be a church known by generosity.

Giving for budget and buildings is not vogue in a day of personal giving preferences, but recognize today you walk in hallways, sit on pews, park in spaces and enjoy a great array

of life-opportunities because of those who have given for you.

See Philippians 4:10-20.

- The church did not give out of a call to, but out of a love for God, for Paul, and for God's mission.
- Paul does rejoice in the financial provision that the church in Philippi had provided him, not because of his need for it, but because of their need to give ("Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit" Philippians 4:17). God does not need our gifts to accomplish His purposes, but we need to give out of love for God to keep our own lives properly aligned in the correct order—God>Others>Me.
- God's greatest gifts come to empty vessels ("And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:19 ESV). Until we empty ourselves of every sin; every passion, hope, and dream and hand it all over to God, we limit our worship of Him.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies

as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Romans 12:1).

- Emptiness can only come through humility. (“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” Philippians 2:5-8 ESV). Just as Christ emptied Himself to serve others, we have to empty ourselves to serve Him—humbling ourselves even to put to death that which may not be bad, but is not God’s best will for us.

- The New Testament church knows nothing of a simple financial gift to check off each month to gain some kind of blessing. Those who are transformed by the power of the gospel message preached from the superiority of Scripture were led to give everything—money, comfort (Paul’s imprisonment), abilities, etc.

- The book of Philippians was written by Paul while he had given up His freedom, being imprisoned for the gospel (“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ” Philippians 1:12-13 ESV). Paul would soon give up his life for that same gospel message.

“We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for sharing.” —Billy Graham

This is what made Warren a tool and why, I believe, God has continued to use and bless this ministry.

4. Go forward by faith.

Example: Olympic torch relay through South Korea.

“...among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:15b-16 ESV).