

## North Park Mission Statement, Part 1 9-17-17

### Impact

Tuesday evening I will be visiting a woman who showed up in my little office in our little church in 1983 and told me about a vision she had for a crisis pregnancy center in our community, a ministry that would reach out to women in crisis, would bring them hope through the gospel, while, at the same time rescuing babies from death. As I listened to her I cried, wishing I could be strongly devoted to such a ministry myself, knowing my priorities were elsewhere. But, I was so thrilled that the Lord had given her that passion and that the Lord had given her gifts and opportunities to make it happen – which it did, to the glory of God and the joy of many. Why am I excited to see a ministry like that grow and flourish? Not just because it blesses many persons, but because it fulfills the mission given to His church by the Lord of glory.

Over the next three Sundays, I am inviting us to take a look together at the core elements of our mission as a church. The statement which we have adopted says that our mission is *To make disciples of Jesus who worship God passionately, connect with each other in caring community and impact the world by word and deed*. Our key words, the ones we most want you to remember are: Worship, Connect, Impact. Say it with me: worship, connect, impact. Now with the hand motions: worship, connect, impact.

We will get back to that later, but for now, let's begin to unpack what all of that means. And we begin, by way of introduction, with the phrase "make disciples." A disciple is someone who believes in and follows the teachings of a leader – in this case, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is perfectly appropriate that we should make this our mission because Jesus did. Matthew 28:**18b-19a** *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>"Go therefore and make disciples*. The verb in verse 19 that is in the imperative form is not the verb "go" but the verb "make disciples." That is precisely what we are to do. And if our goal is to make disciples, it is not to be just nice, or to be liked by those in our community, or to provide a social club for our members, or to increase our attendance and budget. Those things may contribute to our goal. They may. But the goal is to make disciples.

That leads us right into the body of our message for today, as we break down our mission statement which includes those three memorable verbs: worship, connect and impact. Those are

the three verbs which set forth what it is that we, as members of North Park Church, are to be doing to fulfill our mission. We are going to go through those three the next few weeks, but we do so in reverse order. We start today with our purpose to make disciples who will impact the world through word and deed. Do you know who we are? We are the descendants of the little group of ragged men and women who made up the early church. Here we sit, almost 2000 years later in a world that includes over two billion people who regard the Nazarene as the Son of God and worship Him as such. Think of that! Explain that. From this little band of fishermen and craftsmen and housewives. How many churches? How many hospitals? How many schools? It is unfathomable. I don't know if the little band of disciples there in Jerusalem had a mission statement about making an impact, but what an impact they did have! I love this little story in the middle of the book of Acts. It's in Acts 17 and speaks of two Christian missionaries, Paul and Silas, we pick up the reading in verse one. **1-4** *they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.* <sup>2</sup> *And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,* <sup>3</sup> *explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."* <sup>4</sup> *And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. I will just stop here to note the strategy of these missionaries. What was their primary tool for making an impact? Truth! And specifically, Scriptural truth. There was no military. The church did not conquer the world that way. It was Bible and testimony and sound reasoning. What a strategy! Oh, they did throw in some miracles along the way. But whatever they did, it worked outrageously. Read on **5-7** *But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.* <sup>6</sup> *When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also;* <sup>7</sup> *and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."* I just love verse six. From the mouths of our enemies - *These men who have upset the world have come here also.* The English Standard Version has it **6b** (ESV) *These men who have turned the world upside down.* That is making an impact. They say the church is turning the world upside down, but we know that through Jesus we are turning the world right-side up. The responsibility for world*

impact has been passed on through the generations of believing people. We now get to be those who turn the world right-side up. That begins with McCandless Township and goes to Zanzibar. You know what I want more than anything else I know? To see the grace of Christ impacting more and more people and nations to the glory of God. That is why I entered the ministry of the gospel. This is why I pray. This is why I preach. Listen, this means that we will not be content to build a fine institution. This means we will not be content to sit back in our holy huddle and say, “Isn’t this great! It’s us four and no more!” Some times, many times, churches are guilty of simply worshipping and connecting, preaching and *fellershippin* without ever striving to impact our neighborhoods, our businesses, our government, our community, our nation, our planet. We aim to do better than that. We believe loyalty to our Savior demands it.

Now, pertaining to this matter of impact. We see this happening in so many diverse ways. We see it internationally through our short-term missions teams and through our sending and support of career missionaries. Locally, we see this happening through the missionaries that constitute the membership of our church, in three ways. We want to make a difference in three ways. Proclamation, Invitation, Compassion. Remember PIC. Proclamation – that is the declaring of the gospel. That’s what Paul was doing in Acts 17 that stirred up the city and got him in trouble. This gospel is power. Do you know how to wield it? Ephesians 6:**15** says *Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*. Have you sought to be equipped and capable of personally speaking or sharing the gospel with a friend? Acts 1:8 tells us to be witnesses for Jesus, to simply tell others what we have experienced. Furthermore, II Corinthians 5:**19-20** *He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.* <sup>20</sup>*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ*. Obviously, we are preaching the word from this pulpit and in other venues, such as the internet and the senior centers into which our Sunshine ministry goes. But, there are so many ways to be doing this. Our new elder, Nabil Mikhael, along with his wife Mushira, are leading in Pittsburgh, a Bible Study in Arabic for immigrants, many of whom are Muslim. How cool is that? Last Sunday Kristen Smalley shared that she is helping start a Good News Club at Marshall Elementary. That is an after-school Bible club for kids, and a number will come who don’t go to church. My wife already does that ministry at Bradford Woods Elementary. What good does that kind of thing do? Well, consider Romans 10:**17** *faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ*. If you talk to somebody about spiritual things who is a skeptic, here is a question to ask them. Would you like to believe in Jesus and His message? Let that hang. I know you

don't, but do you wish you could believe in Jesus and His message? So many will say "yes" and then you can share Romans 10:17 with them and invite them into a personal study of the word of Christ. And, you know, Romans 1:**16** *I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation.*

Secondarily we also want to reach out via invitation. Invitation. This may sound a little more accessible for some of us. Being around the word of God changes people, but so does being around the people of God. I look out here on Sundays and see 400 folks who have cable TV, who can afford to travel and yet here you are on Sunday mornings. You must find some value in the preaching of the word and the worship of Christ and the fellowship of the saints. You say, "Pastor, thanks for your preaching! The worship today was great! Oh, I really like our church." And yet, most of us aren't bringing anyone new. But, you know what? I continue to meet people whose lives were changed because somebody invited them to church. Can you do that life-changing thing for someone? Hear God's word from I John 1. I love this passage. I John 1:**1-3** *What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life-- 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.* What I love there is the apostolic passion to not just enjoy fellowship with God, but to bring others in to it. John is saying, "Hey, we have something precious and rich and treasured, and we long for you to discover it too, to enter into fellowship with us because we know something that is mind-blowing and magnificent. We know the love of God in Christ." That love must compel us to invite others to experience it.

Now, I get it. I know that many of your unchurched friends are not really open to going to church. And they aren't for one of two reasons. One, they have already been and they found it boring and unhelpful, if not offensive. Or, two, they haven't been and they are just scared of putting themselves into an alien environment. In either case, we want, as a church, to provide alternative points of invitation. Instead of inviting to church, invite a friend to a men's ministry trap shoot. Invite a friend to a Christmas Tea, to a Chili Cook-off. Invite a friend to participate in Compassion Day. Hey... are those some ideas? And once someone gets around the people of God and discovers that they are relatively normal, but unusually positive, some of the barriers to

the gospel and to church are broken down. Time spent around the word of God and the people of God changes hearts. That is what God uses. Invitation. We have something special here. Let's invite others to enjoy it with us.

Our third approach to having an impact is through compassion. And this is why we speak of impacting the world in word and deed. We will be committed to, we will pray for people to see God's love through our service. We will be there, helping out in that poor neighborhood on the Northside, providing quality clothes for children and adults. We will be there at the Spina-Bifida House mending the facilities. We will be there at Light of Life serving meals to the needy. We will be there in New Jersey helping rebuild houses. We will be there in Haiti and Sierra Leone with ministries of word and deed. We will be there at the Joni and Friends retreat caring for individuals and families with disabilities. In May we had our Saturday Compassion Day. We seek out places of need in our community where we can go and bless others. The primary point behind it is not so much the work we do, but the connections we can make in our community, in hopes that you can find new avenues to express the mercy of Christ in a practical way. There are ways to do it here, within the body of Christ. We are needy people too and I commend you for your care and support of one another. But, as a missional church, we are committed to doing it out there as well. P-I-C – Proclamation, Invitation, Compassion make up the impact elements of our mission which is to worship, connect and impact the world through word and deed. Can I hear an amen?

Now practically speaking what this means is that you are to have a role in making this impact. The Bible tells us that our roles differ. Just as in an army, there are very different jobs contributing to the success of the mission, the church is just like that. You have one role, I have another, but who is supposed to be about the work? Huh?! You are! We all are. Each one of us is to have a ministry that is making a difference that is helping people see or hear the love of God in Christ. Does that make sense? The variety of ways we can make an impact is endless. Some of you are impacting the world by raising children who will be influencers for Jesus' sake. That is huge! Some of you are impacting the world through your vocation – as a teacher, doctor, engineer. Your impact may involve saving physical lives or constructing great buildings. Still others of you will impact the world through engaging in formal missions endeavors of some sort. If you pay attention around our church over the last months you have heard about so many of these. Mission trips to Haiti, to Sierra Leone, to New Jersey, to Mississippi, to a camp for the

disabled. North Park members have been commendably having an impact through endeavors such as these. You might call this formal missions and there are opportunities far and near. Closer to home in recent months we brought in clothes to help with the New Hope Clothing closet. We put on a vacation Bible school for local children and we held our GO Compassion Day that involved many different forms of making a difference for Jesus' sake. These are terrific opportunities in the way of "formal" missionary service. But then too there is the informal. We heard Ann last Sunday talk about how God used her while she was walking a dog. You can have an impact just among your neighbors, among those with whom you work, within your extended family. We often have a far too limited idea of missions. But God has called us to be salt and light where He has placed us. He wants you asking, *Lord, what are your purposes for me in this community, in this job, in this family?* And looking for ways you can make a difference for the kingdom of Jesus.

One of those ways we dare not overlook is financial. God has given all of us an invitation to participate in the work of kingdom advance through our giving as we support missions and missionaries that go around the globe. There are certain individuals among us for whom giving is their primary mission. This is biblical. Did you know that one of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament is that of liberality? Romans 12 speaks of prophecy, service, mercy, exhortation, teaching and giving with liberality as spiritual giftings from God. If you have the ability to acquire or develop wealth and a heart to give it with gladness – there is huge impact in that. Thank you. God bless you. Because of policies on privacy and not wanting to show favoritism to big donors, giving is actually one of those ministries that often is not recognized in the church. But God knows. And if your goal is impact, I hope you know you are having it.

I want to speak a bit directly to the global dimension of our mission. Our mission statement says we intend to make disciples who impact the world. We could have said, *greater Pittsburgh*. But, we said, *the world*. Now that includes greater Pittsburgh, but it obviously goes way beyond that. I could imagine that an outsider coming in among us would regard our goal to impact the world as rather pretentious. I understand that. It would surprise me if North Park Church ever gets into the history books – but who knows? And the reality is that we are just one of many thousands of churches seeking to impact the world. There are other organizations too, like the CCO. Their motto is *Transforming college students to transform the world*. And it has happened, is happening and will happen. I know this because Jesus said, *I will build my church*.

He uses folks like us, but He said He would do it. So, it is going to get done. And that church will be worldwide. The Bible has an abundance to say on that score. We go back to God's call on Abraham. We saw it last week. In Genesis 12, the Lord speaks to Abraham in this way: **2-3** *And I will make you a great nation and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*” From the very beginning of God calling out a special people for Himself He says this is going to go global. Psalm 2 describes this mysterious conversation between God the Father and God the Son, and the Father says there in Psalm 2:**7-8** *‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. <sup>8</sup> ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.* Isaiah prophesied that the nations who lived in darkness will see a great light. Jesus told His followers in Matthew 28, as we have seen, to make disciples of all nations. In Acts 1 He said you start your work in Jerusalem, but then go to the remotest parts of the earth. What a privilege! What a calling!

I wrap up today by bringing up the idea of the kingdom of God. Pastor Bobby is going to be doing a class on the kingdom of God this Fall during Sunday School, but I offer you three minutes-worth today. When we speak of making an impact, we are talking not only about a temporal, material difference, but a real advance for the kingdom of God in the earth. Kingdom advance. Don't you long for that Brother? Sister? Mark 4 quotes Jesus this way in verse **30-32** *And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, <sup>32</sup> yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.”* Jesus is so impressive. He is saying that the kingdom of God is the kind of thing that starts small, but it grows. You know plant growth is usually not very dramatic. You don't notice it from one hour to the next, but you eventually go, “Wow! That is pretty cool!” The kingdom of Jesus started really small. Twelve guys and a few ladies. But boy oh boy has it done exactly what Jesus said it would do! Impact! Has the growth of that kingdom made a difference in your life? I am sure it has. Did it make a difference in my life that a new Presbyterian denomination started a church in Ocala, Florida in 1975? Did it ever! And that was just one little offshoot of kingdom

advance. You have your own story of how kingdom advance has reached you. Now, it is time for us to pass it on and be faithful in our generation.

Some of you saw the Bible mini-series on the History channel in the Spring. I must confess that I almost never like movies portraying Jesus but there was one scene in this one that really grabbed me. It did not adhere strictly to the text but I think it captured the general idea of what Jesus said to His guys. It depicts the scene where Peter, after fishing all night without a catch reluctantly obeys the Lord and puts out his nets again. We pick it up there.