

Scripture:
Matthew 28:16-20

Commissioned

We are familiar with conversations about winds in this town. Perhaps that is why when we are considering our great commission I hear the “winds of change” in Jesus’ request. The Wind blows where it may and God directs us where God may. But there is no question that when God directs us he desires that lives be changed, our lives and the lives of all we encounter. So when the winds of the Spirit begin to blow we look to the triune God to help us see where her powerful spirit might take us

“As Christians, we only have three things that God requires of us: love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, love our neighbour as ourselves, and make disciples of Jesus Christ. To make disciples means to be witnesses of Christ in order to bring others into a relationship with Christ.”

Rev Charles Reeb preaches in his sermon “The Great Omission “At the end of Matthew before Jesus ascends to the Father, Jesus' last words to his followers were not, "Go and find a comfortable church and have covered dish dinners." His last words were not, "Go and sing the songs you like in worship. Jesus didn't say, "Try to do some good every once in a while." Jesus said, "Go and make disciples!" This is called the "Great Commission," not the "Great Suggestion." The church is the only institution in the world that exists for those outside of it. Unfortunately, many churches don't even see it as a suggestion. Instead, it has become the "Great Omission.”

Reeb a United Methodist pastor continues with his critique. “As the church has turned inward over the last 30 or 40 years, it has lost sight of its mission to make disciples. This is one of the reasons why the mainline church is struggling to grow. The stats don't look good. The mainline church overall is not replenishing itself with a new generation of disciples. We are not reaching the younger generation. Fewer and fewer churches are bringing even one new person to Christ in one year.

What has happened? Why can't the church today be like the early church? The answer comes through something that AW Tozer said long ago: "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the Church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament Church, 95% of what they did would have stopped, and everybody would know the difference.”¹

¹ Reeb Rev. Dr. Charles (pastor of Pasadena Community Church (United Methodist) in St. Petersburg, Florida The Great Omission Matthew 28:16-20 Trinity Sunday -June 15, 2014

“Is the Holy Spirit the driving force of the church today? If we are to reclaim the fire (*and wind*) of the Spirit the early church had, if we are to share our witness effectively, we must get back to fundamentals--what we believe and what we practice. We must be willing to open ourselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit! That's what the early followers of Christ did! They were not sophisticated people. They hadn't been to seminary. They hadn't read books on church growth and marketing the church. They simply made themselves available to the Holy Spirit. And look what happened in Acts chapter 2, verse 6: "Each one heard them speaking in his own language." Now this was not the gift of glossolalia or speaking in tongues. What happened on the day of Pentecost was that a bunch of people from all over the place, all speaking different languages, all coming from different cultures, heard the gospel in their own language. The good news of the saving love of Jesus Christ was communicated to them! It was clear! The Holy Spirit did it through them because they were simply willing to be used! The Holy Spirit broke through communication barriers and the gospel translated.

Now isn't it interesting that here in 2014 with all of our miraculous communication technology we still have communication problems? Isn't it interesting that in spite of our advances in Bible translations and production of gimmicks that people are still turned off by religion and the church? It seems we are good at information but not communication.

Will Willimon wrote a few years ago, "To many outside the church, the Church is like a football huddle. You know that something important is being said there, but you can't understand a word of it, and all you can see is their rear ends."²

When Jesus left his disciples he prayed that they and followers to come would do even greater works than he. He prayed that we would passionately know and love God and one another. Jesus longs for us to live the ‘upside down’ kingdom of God, just as he did.

I think that if we lived those commandments and the ‘great commission our lives and church would be very different. Reeb continues to speak of how the early church understood one another even if they did not speak the same language. He writes “ when you forgive when everyone else wants revenge, that translates. When you are loving when everyone else is hateful, that translates. When you don't give up on people when everyone else wants to, that translates.”

That is the wind of the change the spirit is calling us to.

Let's be honest, some folks think we are a little strange when they hear we are church goers. People get down-right scared when they hear I'm a minister. And my hope is that they would see us as off-kilter because we are too kind and generous and giving.

I watched a part of the memorial service for the RCMP officers killed in Moncton last week. There were a lot of things I noticed and I was intrigued by the different forms of faith and spirituality that were spoken of and highlighted. But let me tell you that when I first began to hear about the life of Const. Dave Ross I was intrigued. His brother-in-law spoke of a man that would stop to help anyone he saw. He reported trips home in storms that would take three times the length because he would stop to make sure everyone was ok, and assist in pulling cars out of

² IBID

the ditch. Immediately the story of the good Samaritan came to mind. And I confess I thought to myself, I hope this guy was a Christian (because let's be honest, we Christians could use some good press from time to time). It turned out he was, and although the pastor probably spoke a little too long he spoke truth of what God and Jesus desire of us.

You see, "the Church ought to be a... little off-kilter. If people come to the church because the values of the world have diminished them and they are looking for something different, why would they be attracted to us if we are like the world? So if we are a little odd, a little weird, that's good. It is as if we are saying, "What you are looking for, you will not find in the world!" People respond to real people who have a real love and passion for God! The gospel does not have to be dressed up, dolled up, souped up, or given a make-over. The gospel does fine by itself.

The early church knew this. The power of the early church was rooted in prayer and discernment from the Holy Spirit. If the church today made itself more available to the power of the Holy Spirit, believe me, people would notice. The church would be led to speak to the real spiritual needs of people. And when the church starts doing that, people will listen.

I like the story Wayne Cordeiro tells about a bakery he knew about. It was located in a bad part of town. The bakery was small, rundown, and nondescript. Yet at 5am every morning the aroma of delicious bread emanated from that bakery. People would line up around the block to get their hands on that bread. That is a parable for us as the church. It is not about appearances or gimmicks; it is simply about offering the bread of life. People are so spiritually hungry that all we have to do is offer the bread of life with passion and authenticity, and they will come from all over to taste it."

And so I wonder. What would it look like for us to get caught up in the Wind of the spirit? Which way would the Windvane turn? Where would our kite fly? What new ministry and mission would we offer? Do you have a dream or a vision for our congregation, do you feel God calling us in a certain direction? Do you feel God calling you to something new, something more?

Francis of Assisi said "Preach the Gospel, use words if you must."

If this frightens you a little or a lot for that fact remember Jesus said, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." Jesus is always with us, helping us and empowering us to share the good news.

Deep down you know there are people all around you who need the love, forgiveness, grace, power, strength and comfort of God in Jesus Christ. Deep down you are a person of faith because you know God, Jesus and the spirit have more for us and our world.

I want to invite you now to engage the spirit in a way the early church did with their visions and dreams. In your pews you will find some pieces of paper I would like you to take a moment and write on them something that you believe God is calling you or this church to. Perhaps its a dream or vision that seems reasonable, or even one that seems impossible. I want us to engage the winds of change of the spirit as we rediscover who and whose we are.

You may hear the spirit calling you to give to the man you see on the street everyday, or take care of some children for your neighbours while school is out. You may feel this congregation is being called to a new ministry, you may feel we are being called to return to something we have lost. You may just feel a prayer being released for yourself or others - what ever it is if it fits in the categories of Love God, neighbour and self, or sharing the good news of God's love then it is a part of the call of the spirit. Please take time to pray and place your visions, dreams and prayers on the string of the kite, symbolizing the wind of the spirit.

While we do so we will sing and pray together.