

## **THE MISSION FIELD NEXT DOOR: The Call: What's Next?**

One of my earliest memories is being with my dad, pulling up to the fire hall in the 5th ward of Meadville, Pennsylvania. I was about 3 or 4 years old and my father, a young pastor of a church plant was about to do some street ministry. He set up on the red brick driveway to the firehall, got out his Bible and some tracts, and called to the men hanging around the Silver Dollar Saloon across the street and he started preaching. This was 1950s street ministry, and the church building was in our living room every Sunday morning. I can also remember helping to set up folding chairs for the service as people crammed into our modest home. Another early memory is standing on a street corner handing out tracts to passersby. I recall feeling good that I was helping people know that Jesus loved them.

We “do” church a little differently today here in North America. We have nicer and more comfortable facilities; we have bigger budgets, and we can put on big extravaganzas with lights, smoke machines, top line sound systems, even drones. And I’m not speaking against any of these things; we are blessed to have technology. But the truth is that the gospel we are called to share is the same gospel of Jesus Christ His followers have been called to share in since the early days of the disciples and the early church in the book of Acts. Every generation finds new or different ways to share the gospel; the biggest concern we need to be focused on is that the message doesn’t change even when the medium does! It’s never about the show; it’s always about the Saviour.

Over the past two weeks in this series on the Mission Field Next Door we’ve explored some of the landscape - issues that exist here and now in our own environment; we’ve also looked at some common excuses that some of us are all too ready to use and some scriptural refutation of those excuses.

This evening, I'd like to go over a few things you probably already know. If you, like me, need regular reminders, this is one of those times! We will look at three missions that need our attention: Our homes; our community; and our church family.

First, let's look at John **13:33-35**, just before Jesus was about to be crucified. He's speaking to his disciples, believers, preparing them. **33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'** **34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.** **35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

We will come back to this text a little later. One of our mission fields is:

## 1. Our Homes

**Psalm 127:1-5** puts some things in context: **" Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate."**

The psalmist reminds us that the Lord is the builder and unless He watches over this "city" the watchman is wasting his time trying to stay alert. There is a lot in these 5 verses; tonight I'd like to remind all of us here and those watching later, that having God

at the centre of our home life is part of spreading the gospel, not just to your family but to those others who enter your home. We need to prioritize. It's so easy to get caught up in decorating, or being mom's taxi, or going out to earn a living that we can relegate family devotions or good spiritual discussions to "later" when we're not so busy. Once again I remind you that Jesus told us to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness". It **always** comes back to putting first things first.

Is your home a place of worship? I hope so! When others come to visit, would they experience the presence of God there? If you have young adults in your house, do you engage them in rigorous but cordial debate when they bring home opinions or ideas that are counter to God's Word? Can you do this with curiosity, warmth, and love? A reminder: yelling or dogmatically pounding the table, proclaiming to one of your kids that God loves them, is not helpful; it's destructive. The same goes when speaking with any other loved one. Be curious; listen; ask questions. As long as there is open discussion, there is an opportunity to witness and to show God's mercy, grace, and love in action.

While this is a big topic and we could spend hours on it, this evening I ask you, how can you spread the Good News more effectively where you live? Are you doing everything you can?

## **2. Our Communities.**

Do you work in a secular environment? Do you have neighbours who don't know the Lord? It may be that some people you know are actively hostile to Christianity; they might be caught up in the woke-ism that is so prevalent today. Perhaps you're pressured to buy into the gender ideology that's out there, or to take courses about your privilege or your preferred pronouns. The list goes on but you get the idea. If this occurs, how are you going to respond? Do you meekly comply, thinking that, after all, it's just a seminar or a workshop? Or do you stand firm in your faith not only in word, but in deed? Recently, I spoke with someone

who chose to speak up, to take a stand because of some of the political correctness that had been demanded of him. After some prayer and discussion with his wife and with brothers in Christ who listened to his concerns and gave their thoughts, he went to his boss and expressed why he was unable to comply. He was asked to resign. He liked his job but loves his Lord more and left, praying for an opportunity to serve and earn a living. A couple of months later he got employed by a Christian organization and even though his income is lower, he delights in being able to share the gospel with others without censure. Jesus told us that we would have obstacles and difficulties. There would be opposition to us and our Christian stance. But it's not the opposition that is the issue; it's being prepared and willing to march ahead in spite of opposition.

There are many challenges in our communities. I live in Bradford. Within walking distance of our home there are 8 cannabis outlets; drugs with know problems for young users and older ones too are now being sold legally. More recently a "magic mushroom" store has opened about 150 metres from our door. They are selling preparations made with psilocybin, an hallucinogenic, which is illegal in Canada. This outfit has several stores in the GTA. Interestingly enough, as I was preparing this message on Wednesday, there was a raid on this establishment. A young woman, 37 years old, has been charged with possession and trafficking but I don't know the end result. I do know, however, that the enemy is afoot in our communities and we need to be more vigilant. Speak up; educate your kids; lobby your councillors and mayors. Drugs are a major issue in Canada today; approximately 20 people die per day in this country from opioid overdoses alone. As Christians we need to be vocal and take a stand against the legal and illegal drugs and the politicians that are not enforcing laws that are on the books. And pray; always pray!

Another major challenge to us in our communities and in the world at large, is homelessness. It sounds so vague, but these are men, women and children who, for some reason, have no home and nowhere to lay their heads at night. They are hungry, frightened, and frequently friendless. While many of these folks may be mentally ill or addicted, they are human beings, image bearers of our Creator. Christians have an opportunity to witness in word and deed to these folks. When you are able, why not stop, offer to buy them a sandwich or a coffee, and take the time to visit with them. Ask them questions about their lives and about their beliefs. There are valuable ways to engage, to plant a seed, to reap a soul for God's Kingdom. The kindness you and I show to the indigent, the broken, the hurting and the lost is not wasted! You may be surprised how this enhances your life as well! (Story about Janet praying for Steve).

We need to remember the words of Jesus in [Matthew 25:31-40](#)  
**“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you,**

**as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ “**

A friend of mine keeps a few \$10 Tim Horton’s gift cards in his jacket pocket and in his car. He also has some small Gospel of John booklets. When he sees someone who looks like they need some help and encouragement, he gives them a card and some scripture and engages them in conversation. I like this idea. I know that for those of us who live in comfy homes, can shower as often as we like and either do our laundry regularly or get someone to do it for us - the homeless or needy seem dirty and unkempt and somewhat unapproachable. But every single person, even those living on the street, is loved by our Lord. Remember, we all need love and kindness, particularly when we appear most unloveable. One thing that really helps me is to remind myself that everyone I meet was once a baby, and someone loved them. Be compassionate for their pain and suffering, and remember that you know the ONE who can redeem and transform their lives. You can’t share that good news by crossing the street or looking the other way.

There is lots more I could say here but let’s move on to another specific mission that calls to all of us:

### **3. The Church**

There are huge opportunities for us to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ right here at Cedarview Community Church. There are ministries here from the Nursery to Prime Timers and every age in between. Many of these groups need volunteers so there are lots of opportunities to serve!

Earlier, we read from the Gospel of John, chapter 13. Let’s have a closer look at this. **John 13:33-35:**

**33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you,**

**‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Jesus is speaking here to his disciples; he knows he is soon to be betrayed and crucified and that he is leaving them physically. In his beautiful little book, “The Mark of the Christian”, only 60 pages long, Francis Schaeffer focuses on this text and reminds us that Jesus is giving his followers, which includes you and me by the way, some important instructions. When we love one another the way Jesus loves us, we are showing the world and those who don’t know Him what it means to be a Christian; it’s a litmus test for our faith to those who don’t know the lord..

I know that sounds lovely and we like to hold forth about the love of God; nevertheless, living up to this and showing the same love for fellow Christians (even different denominations!) is sometimes much harder than simply spouting the words. Loving others in theory is great but when someone irritates me or offends me or gets me angry.....

So how do we make this love visible to others? I think there are some things we need to stop doing and some that we need to start doing or do more of!

We need to stop:

**-Gossiping.** It seems to be a habit for us Christians to think that if we blab something to another that has been told to us in confidence, it’s not gossip if we say, “I’m sharing this because I know you’ll pray for them but don’t tell anyone else.” Gossip can be toxic; many people, including Christians, have trust issues; violating another’s trust, even if you think your intentions are good, can cause damage to another and build barriers instead of

bridges. Ask yourself before you divulge someone else's personal information, will sharing this with another help or hurt the situation?

We also need to stop **forming little cliques**. I understand that we feel most comfortable being with family and friends. We like to sit with them, chat with them in the lobby before and after church, make plans for lunch, look after our social responsibilities. While this isn't inherently wrong, how much time do you spend looking for the new person, couple or family in the lobby on Sunday morning? How frequently do you walk over and introduce yourself, engage them in conversation, let them know that you're glad to welcome them to the house of the Lord and you'd be happy to direct them to a Christian ed class, or Blast or the prayer room? I know, someone is saying to themselves right now, "Isn't that what the welcome team is for?" I ask you, as a Christian and as someone who attends Cedarview regularly, isn't that what you're for as well - welcoming newcomers into the body of Christ? "I'm shy", you might say. and I say, "So what?" It's not about you; it's about that other person or family and showing the love of God to them; it's an opportunity to meet friends you don't know yet and show the love of God in action! (John and Ruth story; lunch)

We also need to **stop self righteousness and the critical spirit** that goes with it; a good scripture to remember is this: **Psalm 14:1-3** and echoed in **Romans 3:10** -"**There is none righteous, no not one.**" You and I are as flawed and broken as the next person. When a brother or sister falls or struggles, rather than giving in to that critical spirit, pray for them; don't be a Pharisee; be a friend and be a light to them!

I could add to the list, but I also want to remind us of some things **we need to do** to express the love of God for one another in the church:



**Do apologize;** if you have wronged someone, caused some dissension, hurt, or misunderstanding, don't wait for the other person to come to you. Instead, simply go to them and say, "I'm sorry." Sounds so easy, doesn't it? It's not, is it! The words, "I'm sorry" hold great weight, particularly when they aren't qualified or rationalized.

Secondly, **go directly to your brother or sister** if you have something that concerns you about another. Instead of complaining about them to everyone else, just go to them and kindly and graciously let them know what's concerning you. Someone came to me recently to speak to me about something that I had done that had upset them. While I don't like being reminded of my failures as a human being, I was grateful to this person for having the courage and spiritual maturity to come to me instead of gossiping or back biting. And I'm sure this person didn't find it particularly easy but did it anyway, and did it graciously.

Thirdly, make it part of your ministry to **step outside your comfort zone;** invite others to church; greet newcomers and get to know them; invite newcomers to join you for lunch; volunteer in some way here at the church; and if, as I say this, excuses start popping up, go watch last Sunday evening's sermon about excuses; Pastor Chris says it's up on YouTube!

As we wrap up this series, there are two important things to keep in mind and we serve the mission field next door. First of all, numerous times in the Bible Jesus is described as having compassion for those around him, those to whom he ministered. Importantly, each time, he acted on it!

For example, in Matthew **14:14** it says, "**When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd, had compassion on them, and healed**

**their sick."** You may recall that later he made sure the 5000 folks there also had something to eat!

Notice that compassion IS NOT a passive emotion; it is completed in effective action. As Christians, we need to keep this in mind. Otherwise, we are deluding ourselves with nice, fuzzy feelings and nothing else. We need to be compassionate and act from it.

Secondly, remember that we are helpless to change anything by our own will or strength, no matter how much compassion we have and how much we want to serve; only by the power of Jesus can lives be transformed for His glory. Jesus reminds us of that in **John 15:5**. He says,

**I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.**

Jesus calls us to serve Him daily and we can only do it through the power we have through our relationship with him. What are you willing to do? Where is he calling you to serve? Will you take action? Friends, I beg you, start today!

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