



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 21, 2018

So, What Do You Think?

Mark 1:14-20

When was the last time you answered a call? "Hello!" Or, the last time you checked your mobile phone to see if you were missing anything? Therapists have coined a new diagnosis --- FOMO=Fear of Missing Out. The anxiety producing fear that, in the midst of your days, someone is saying something or doing something that leaves you "missing out."

God's people never miss out! So, what about your commitment to be at worship on this Lord's Day? What are your expectations? What do you want to be your "take aways?" If you weren't here, would you have FOMO? Or, is worship just one more commodity to have or experience to be sure the kids get in life?

Consider the words "Call," "Culture," and "Congregation." Especially is this new year and season of annual meetings in most congregations.

1. **Call.** I love the Jonah Story. Call came and he had to have a second; he was a reluctant prophet, but he went. Three days across the city, an 8-word sermon, and the whole city repented and turned to the LORD. A Call is a deep thing which engages relationships like the ones rooted in the words of Jesus in His Upper Room Prayer. Before He sends them out into the world and He begins to move every closer to Calvary and the Cross.

Listen to John 17:14-19 --- Jesus is praying to God. *"I have given them your word, and the world hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in the truth."*

Words prayed over those who were first named along the Sea—Simon, Andrew, James and John—they followed IMMEDIATELY. No 30-day test drive, check the paper work and benefits. And in a room where they gather and were encouraged, Jesus equipped them.

These are His words for you, for me: "In the same way, Father, that you gave me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world...So they'll be truth-consecrated in their mission."

So what do you think? Each year the annual report is about our mission! A CALL we share in mission, a community which is vibrant, growing, clear in participation at every level. I invite you

to read it and see where you have been involved, where you are committed to grow and to serve. Locate a new place to grow in the truth that is ours in Jesus---with one another! To have a call is to have a responsibility for a response through which Jesus equips His own to receive one and to be in one, a Call!

[This is not the Charter Members' Church, Pastor McEachran's Church; we are Christ's mission in the world. Each of us called into our cultures.]

2. Culture. The Call we share is a risky thing as we live in a culture of entitlement. In times of way too many choices, in a 24/7 social media driven world where we constantly hear the chatter that the church is not doing much, losing market share, has a message which used to be relevant but maybe not now, where language can be intrusive, harsh and divisive, and we sometime hear words like Nathanael's of Jesus in last week's Gospel, "Can anything good come out of... Nazareth?"

As the arena of mission, the world is the landscape for us to live and to share the gospel of Jesus --- transforming love, gracious forgiveness, where reconciliation happens at the foot of the Cross in every time of our life together! With a kaleidoscope of gifts given to live the Christ-Life, truth-life different than the bad news of the world. A world where many seek truth by saying "Hey, Google", or "Siri," or "Alexa!" Listen to 1 John 4:4-6 --- John is writing to a congregation some 60 years after Jesus death, resurrection and ascension.

"Little children, you are from God, and have conquered (the evil spirits), for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listen to them. WE ARE FROM GOD. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whose is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." In the world, but not OF the world.

To be called leads to equipping for mission. Read the Annual Report not as an icon or idol of the past, but as a grace note, one more deep breath for MISSION FORWARD.

Looking back is seldom helpful or whole. Rather, a renewed platform of trust renewed as the people of God sink their lives deeply into the love of Christ, the power of truth, and the justice that bring s joy and hope to the world.

So what do you think? In the context of the world, we live our lives as an adventure in stewardship of the manifold gift God gives us. Where is your stewardship of God given truth and ministry in the places God places our feet in the world?

[Leadership is bold. Life in mission is bold.]

We are no mere club along the way, or topping off station to get us through the week. Not a mere gathering of comfortable folk, but Christ people who have learned that relationships of mutual respect and love are hallmarks of all who call Jesus, Lord. And we are in it as a...

3. Congregation --- Together!

I have been reading a new book! Written by Silas Weir Mitchell. He was a physician who created *causalgia*." And he wrote about it in his book "Wear and Tear Hints for the Overworked." Kind of a how-to book, self-help along the way. The book was written in 1871! Yup, you heard me correctly, 1871. And his diagnosis "*causalgia*" was cured by a remedy he called and prescribed "rest therapy." Time to gather which is calming. To still the sense of crisis that likely does not exist.

Net result: a generous calming, sense that all is and will be well, never fearing missing out, some silence, some solitude, and knowing that together we are strong...a peace...with God and with one another.

So, what do you think? All in for Jesus, with one another, in the mission we share in this place, in our families, our communities, to the ends of the world!

Jesus came with a very clear message---“Time is full and new! The place of God has come near; turn (repent), turn around, trust the good news for YOU, for US, for all people!”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are the people of God, living in Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our first prayer, our first words need always to be “Lord, what would you have us to do, where would you have us to go?”

[We are not what we were yesterday. We are what we are becoming? We must not become those who think in terms of deficit, waning energy, but in terms of God’s provision at every point of our life and our lives together.]

Paul has it...the grace of God in Christ Jesus...“*for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and in knowledge of every kind---just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you---so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you way for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Here is what I think! Our lives in Christ begin anew every Lord’s Day at worship. Where we hear anew the CALL, to live as Christ in our CULTURE(S) God’s world, together a CONGREGATION of the renewed to love and to serve.

And our Lord asks the question that defies every fear---“Will you come and follow me?”