

McCabe United Methodist Church
Move!
1 Samuel 3:1-11; Matthew 5:1-12
Pastor Ray Baker
06-23-13

My first Sunday at McCabe was on July 4th, 2010. When I stepped into the pulpit I was terrified. I hadn't served in the local Church setting for 14 years. I didn't know if I still knew how to write and deliver a sermon. To make things a little more awkward, Pastor Rick was still in Minot. But I knew he would be here soon.

When Rick arrived he asked the same question over and over again: "Will this help us grow the Church?" One of things we did in the early months was to work with a group of people to write a new mission Statement: Christ Calls Us to Worship, Grow, and Serve.

This statement became the cornerstone of everything Rick and I have done at McCabe. We have made numerous efforts to help everyone understand we fall in Love with God through Worship, prayer, and devotion; we Grow in our understanding of God through reading, studying, and Christ centered conversations; and we show our Love for God by Serving others.

Of course, it's important to remember we're using the word Love as a verb: Love is an action given on someone else's behalf. If we're content to say we are Christians, but just sit around at home or at the lake or if we only express our faith by sitting in a pew...then we are not showing Christian Love!

Jesus didn't call his disciples to be in ministry and then say Go home and take a nap. NO! Jesus sent them into the world...two by two...giving them authority... and saying: Go, take action, and through you I will "Move" people to have faith in me. The good news is we are not doing it alone, Christ is acting through us.

I believe God is calling you...Right here...Right now. God is calling you to "Move"...to act on someone else's behalf. Everyone here is being called to create a safe place for someone who needs Jesus in their life; someone who needs encouragement, support, or forgiveness; someone who needs to be accepted for who they are today, trusting God will help them grow tomorrow.

Today's Old Testament reading was about the boy Samuel who heard a voice calling him. Samuel was serving the Lord by working with Eli. The scripture contains a wonderful phrase to say Eli was still alive and able to serve God even though he was old.

“At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out....” (1 Samuel 3:2-3)

Samuel heard a voice and thought it was Eli calling him. Three times he ran to Eli's side and said: “Here I am.” But Eli sent him back to bed, saying: I didn't call you. Go back to sleep.

A number of years ago the United Methodist Church was compared to a sleeping giant. Our denomination is strong in numbers. We have all the necessary resources to make meaningful contributions to the world. As the second largest Protestant Church in the USA, we are poised to take action, but metaphorically speaking, our eyesight has grown dim. Fortunately, the lamp of God has not gone out of our denomination.

Another author named Bill Eassum, recently said something like: The United Methodist Church is perfectly positioned to make Disciples of Christ...in the year 1950. The majority of our Churches are still positioned to receive new members who are willing to walk in the door, go to Sunday school, and join a committee. We are prepared for the day when the calendar roles backwards. But it is no longer 1950.

The third time Samuel ran to Eli's side he realized there was something else going on. He realized God was calling this young boy to ministry. He told him to go back to bed and listen. When God called him again he was to answer: “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

God is calling everyone in this room: young and old alike. So, like Samuel we respond: “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

We experienced God's call on our lives through the sacrament of baptism. “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

We accepted God's call by becoming a member of the Christian Church. “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

We reinforce our call from God every time we receive the bread and wine of Holy Communion. “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

I have NO DOUBT that God has called each of you by name. God wants each of you to participate in the Church of today, the Church of 2013. There is much to be done inside our doors and beyond our doors.

Pastor Rick and I have preached a few difficult sermon series in the last two years. One of the most difficult was titled: When Christians Get It Wrong. That series was a stark reminder of how much our world has changed since 1950. The young adults of this era think differently and ask different questions.

“When young adults talk about the problems they have with Christianity and the Church, they often name certain attitudes and behaviors they believe are practiced too often by Christians: judging others, condemning people of other faiths, rejecting science, injecting politics into faith, and being anti-homosexual.”
(Promo for: When Christians Get It Wrong)

You might say to yourself: These were not the questions and attitudes I grew up with. Why should we be concerned about them today?

Why, because the Church of 1950 is 63 years out of step with the young adults in our communities. Like it or not the Church of 1950 is gone...forever.

In the New Testament we learn Jesus offered a new understanding of what it means to be “Blessed by God.” It had nothing to do with the law or purity, or being clean. These blessings are found in the Beatitudes. They aren’t popular in our political and economic culture. In fact, they are often mocked by the beliefs and everyday comments of many people.

Jesus wanted us to have a different vision of the world and a strong understanding of the Kingdom of God.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit...rather than those who are self-righteous.
- Blessed are they who mourn...instead of those who are callous.
- Blessed are the meek...not the arrogant.
- Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness... instead of those who abuse power.
- Blessed are the merciful...over those who are abusive.

- Blessed are the pure of heart...instead of those with no heart.
- Blessed are the peacemakers...above those who wage war.
- Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness...rather than those who strive to save only themselves.

Young adults don't find meaning in legalism or being judgmental. But they do find direction and meaning in the Beatitudes. Young adults are attracted to these ideals and to the people whose lives are a shining example of these attitudes and attributes.

This is good news for the Church. When we live Blessed lives...when we exemplify the teachings of the Beatitudes...and when we do so others will experience Jesus presence through us.

Today young people are looking for a community of people who are living Blessed lives. They aren't interested in sitting in a pew or serving on a committee. They are looking for a body of believers who are active in the world.

People of McCabe...I believe "...the lamp of God had not yet gone out..." in you. I believe God is calling you to do great things in Bismarck and the surrounding area. God is calling McCabe to be the Church by Worshiping, Growing, and Serving in Christ's name.

It's time to for us to...MOVE...to live a life of Discipleship.