

Uncomfortable Faith: Uncomfortable Mission  
Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8-9  
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This has been quite a series: Uncomfortable Faith. So far we've seen that knowing God isn't always comfortable. We put away our convenient notions of God – as one who always agrees with us; who backs our political agenda, who feeds us candy and never vegetables. And take out that at the heart of Christianity is the uncomfortable reality of the cross, the uncomfortable call to holiness and its accompanying uncomfortable truths. It's a faith based on the paradigm of love and it asks us to rely on the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.

But, why go through all of this? Is it necessary? Haven't you heard me say that God loves us just as we are? We confess our sins and proclaim Jesus our Lord and Savior ~ we are saved and will have a place with him in heaven.

Then why face all that uncomfortableness? Is it necessary?

It all points to one thing: not our place in heaven – but mission. To what God calls us to and what God calls us to do with our saved lives.

We endure the uncomfortableness for mission and to serve God's purpose.

We live in a consumerist society. And sometimes we see Christianity or church turned into an inward-looking country club. But, that isn't the church Christ calls us to be.

We are called to uncomfortable mission *beyond* ourselves. We push away the question, “*What’s in it for me?*” and instead ask “*What can I do for you?*”

Like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Esther, Ruth, Deborah, or Paul... the people of God are to be a blessing to the whole world, shining God’s light, living a righteous and holy life so others might see the kingdom of God, and to invite still others into a relationship with Christ.

It’s challenging, at times emotionally & physically draining; it can be uncomfortable. It’s a high and costly calling. Being in mission for God.

We die to our dreams and our comfort so that we can be a part of something bigger – part of God’s plan and bring hope and faith of Christ to all in this world.

Rather than to say this is the mission we should be involved with as a church; I want to share some uncomfortable attributes that come with the cost of mission.

### **Mission includes Holy Living.**

What I mean is: we can get very excited and amped up for **a mission trip out there!** I’ve been to Alaska twice, Cleveland OH, South Dakota as well as numerous local missions including feeding the homeless in several cities, providing clothing for those in need, and spiritual counseling for cancer survivors.

Each of those mission efforts and trips were times of great enthusiasm and excitement. We were going out there; into the field. This is what it means to be a follower of Christ!

And, that’s no lie! To some extent we find excitement because that also provides an escape from the rest of our mundane lives. It gets my mind off a messy marriage. It takes me away from my bad habits of Friday night binge drinking. It

serves as a reminder, albeit temporarily, of the need for daily prayers and regular worship.

But mission is as much going to ... Alaska, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Madison, Janesville, Racine or Kenosha as it is going out from worldliness.

This means taking up the mission of living (spiritually, practically and attitudinally) for Christ and leaving behind the worldview of *what's in it for me?*

Many years ago a friend of mine, a co-worker, who was active in her church, showed me some pictures of her grandchildren. And I asked about “great-grandma and grandpa” She told me they hadn’t met their great-grandparents.

When I asked why she told me they had retired, sold their home and moved to South America to be missionaries. And they hadn’t come back since. This was pre-FB, Zoom, Live Chat... They found God’s purpose for themselves, made their decision, and followed it. Even at the cost that comes with such change and commitment.

Mission is faith and risk, but also obedience. How are we living our lives in relationship to God. What goes on after this service and before the next? What’s our prayer lives like; our serving; our tithing? How is it with your soul? Your marriage? Your relationship with your children? We can’t be church planters, gospel proclaimers, sharers of the good news of Christ, teachers of Christian values if our own holiness is a wreck.

**Mission includes all of Creation.**

The good news of Christ's resurrection is for all creation. Christ reconciles all things (big and small) to himself. And as people of the resurrection we are called to be stewards of the physical world God has given us.

Farmers are some of the best stewards of this world that I know. Not only because their livelihood depends on good soil, clean air, clean water; but, I believe because they work so closely with the earth and nature.

In the early morning out on the tractor as the sun is coming up – they see the deer and fawns, the pheasant and their chicks, the turkey and their poul.

They see the miracle of life with newborn calves or piglets as well as the end of life when their favorite milking cow dies.

What if we decided as a church (the people) to live more simply, with more gratitude and attentiveness to creation. And to change our habits and reduce water consumption, use public transit or carpool, recycle, and turnoff unused lights?

It's not coincidence that our Bible begins with a garden story in Genesis and ends with a garden story in Revelation 22 with reference to the river of life-giving water: the tree of life: twelve crops of fruit: tree's leaves used for the healing of the nations.

### **Mission requires us to serve and speak.**

For many of us the “serve” part is doable, enjoyable. I can work in a soup kitchen; I can cut fleece and stuff pillows. I can serve – but you want me to talk about my faith?

Charles Spurgeon – The Prince of Preachers as he was known in the 1800's – began preaching and leading his church (Reformed Baptist in London) at 19.

Within a year or two he was preaching to 10,000. And by 22 preached to 24,000 at the Chrystal Palace in London.

He said, *“if Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself... It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about him.”*

Sharing our faith can absolutely be uncomfortable; but doable. To help get past the fear and awkwardness think about these things:

- 1) Ask yourself the question ~ why is my faith worth sharing in the first place? It's not just good news, it's the best news!
- 2) Don't take the burden of conversions and salvation upon yourself. You are called to do the speaking; but God does the saving.
- 3) We don't have to speak like Charles Spurgeon, or speak perfectly and have all the answers. We have to speak from the heart – and be open to the Holy Spirit empowering us.
- 4) We have to pray (intentionally and daily) that God *can* use us and to open the door of possibility that God *will* use us today to talk about our faith.

God wants to use us for his mission; but we have to be willing, attentive and **open** to God working through us.

20 years ago I woke up on a very early January morning. I lived in a home in the country; I worked for the state of Wisconsin; I had plenty of money; and an awesome Saturn SUV and there was very little I couldn't do or have if I wanted.

But very early that morning I went outside, letting my dogs out to play in the snow and I stared at the stars in the clear sky. And I felt this urge to pray.

And I did. I told God I did not want to be in charge of my life. I wanted him to be. I invited Christ into my heart, asked him to forgive my sins. And in my prayer I said that I am an open vessel ~ fill me with what you will; I am a tool use me as you would.

It was a couple of more years before pastoral ministry became clear. But in that time I became more active in church: mentoring confirmands, going on missions trips, liturgist on Sunday mornings, hired as church-staff, and then was asked to preach a Lenten series on Wednesday evenings. And then, called to pastoral ministry.

Pastor Dave told me when God calls you, you can't say no. Well, you could but you'll be miserable.

I gave up my home in the country, my high paying job, my ability to have or do whatever earthly kind of thing I wanted, and went to seminary and became a student pastor in Kentucky.

But, I found Brenda. And God was working through me. I was serving *and* speaking. It wasn't always comfortable.

And yet Isaiah, Matthew and Acts tells us something important:

The listener, the disciple, us... we're called to serve in mission *and* called to speak.

Proclaim peace and salvation; bring good news.

**We do and we tell others about God.**

Go, make disciples, teach them to obey everything I've taught you. Baptize and teach. **Go, do, speak so others know the goodness of Holy Living.**

Receive the power of the Holy Spirit and share the great news! **We are empowered by the Holy Spirit. We go. We tell others of the kingdom of God.**

The church is imperfect, messy and maddening. But, its the entity God chose to manifest Jesus to the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our mission of doing and speaking can be challenging, exciting, mundane. But showing up at church, week after week (online, drive-in or in-person) is giving ourselves to the building up of the body Christ. This my friends, is a revolutionary act of Mission!

Let's go be revolutionaries for Christ and God's kingdom!