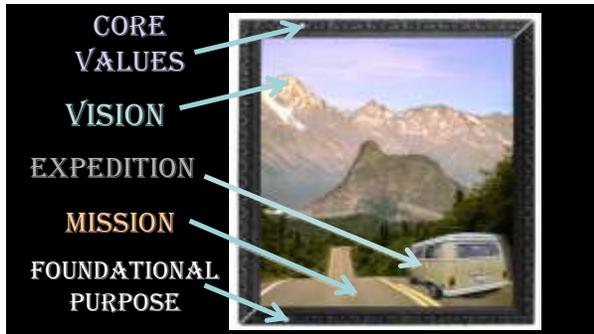


iFocus on Ministry Core Value: Engaged in Ministry

This is the last message in our series thinking about who Knollwood is, where we are going and how we are going to get there. The first week included an overview of the series and focused upon a picture showing the relationship between the parts. Take a look:



We are going up the mountain. At the top of this mountain is our **Vision**. This is a compelling and vivid picture of the future. It describes the view from the top of the figurative mountain we are climbing.

Mission is what we do in order to achieve our vision. It is the road we take to climb the mountain in our picture. That mission includes plans, strategies, and equipment necessary to progress towards the top.

Core Values are the frame around our adventure. They shape all we are going to do on the road to the top.

Our **Foundational Purpose** is the bottom-line reason why our church exists. It is also part of the frame, encompassing our journey. It is the ultimate why of what we do, and must govern all that we do. That foundational purpose of Knollwood Community Church is the glory of God. All we do must be to his glory, his honor, his praise.

Finally, we noted that it is an **Expedition**. It's not a lone hiker or biker. It's a van that we all pile into. This journey towards the vision is not just for the church corporately; it is also for each individual who joins us in the van. So, this is what we have looked at over the past six weeks:

Vision: To see lives changed by Jesus Christ.

Mission: Helping people grow into disciples of Jesus Christ. It involves both the Great Commission (make disciples) and the Great Commandment (love God and love others).

Core Values:

- 1) Passionate about Truth
- 2) Pursuit of Excellence
- 3) Committed to Grace
- 4) Involved in Community
- 5) Engaged in Ministry

This morning we focus on the fifth Core Value: *Engaged in Ministry*. When God in his infinite love and by his marvelous grace called you into a relationship with himself, it was for three primary purposes (apart from his glory). In reality, they are three parts of a whole, but it helps to separate them to see their emphases.

1) To be saved (salvation) – that you might be saved from the just condemnation and judgment for your sins. Even though by nature you are a sinner, because of Christ’s work on the cross on your behalf, God declares you righteous – “in the right.”

2) To be sanctified (sanctification) – God begins a process of transformation in your thinking, feeling and acting. He begins to effect a change in character that results in a change of conduct. Having declared you to be righteous, God embarks on a process of making you righteous.

3) To serve (service) – God calls you to serve him. This is a calling for every believer, not just a few special folks. It isn’t just for the clergy – “after all, that’s what they get paid to do!”

So many Christians have a country club mentality regarding church. What I mean by that is that so many of them think that becoming a member of a church is like becoming a member of a country club. They apply to join, their membership is reviewed, they may have to go through a membership class, they are interviewed and, if they pass, they are accepted into membership, and they start paying their dues. After they are members they can then be as active as they decide they want to be. Some are very active, whereas others are non-active.

But Christ has far greater expectations than that for his body, the church. He

expects every Christian whom he has saved to be actively using the gifts and talents that he has given for ministry.

There is a shocking statistic in a recent Gallup survey which discovered that only 10% of American church members are active in any kind of ministry. Does that seem right? But what is even worse is that the survey said that 50% of church members have no interest in serving in any ministry at all. Think about that! Half of all church members say that they simply want to remain as spectators. When asked to serve in a ministry, they say, “I just don’t feel led to get involved.”

We are all called to the work of ministry, to the work of service. What does that mean? What’s involved?

One night a teenage girl brought her new boyfriend home to meet her parents. They were just appalled at his appearance – leather jacket and pants, motorcycle boots, tattoos, pierced nose and ears. Later, the parents pulled their daughter aside and confessed their concern. “Dear,” said the mother diplomatically, “he doesn’t seem very nice.”

“Mom,” replied the daughter, “if he wasn’t very nice, why would he be doing 5,000 hours of community service?”

Today, we are going to focus on service – not community service, but the Lord’s service, the work of ministry. Paul writes in his Ephesians letter about the gifted men God has given to the church and the purpose they are to serve.

And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastor-teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ....

– *Ephesians 4:11-12*

Note that this equipping is for all the saints, all believers, not just those with special abilities, not just those who have the time, not just those who have “the calling,” not just those who have the inclination. It is for all!

That word “equipping” is an interesting one. It’s a word that was used in several different ways:

- As a medical term – used in surgery for setting a broken bone or for putting a disjointed limb back into place;

- As a nautical term – for fitting out a ship for a voyage;
- As a military term – for equipping an army for battle;
- As a political term – for bringing opposing factions together to facilitate the work of governing;
- As a vocational term – for example, in Matthew 4 and Mark 1 to describe the “mending” of fishing nets; and
- As a restorative term – Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians:

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.... – *Galatians 6:1*

You can readily see the applications of this term to the ministry of believers to others: ministering to the wounded, fitting people for the voyage of life, equipping for battle, bringing people together, mending and restoring. This is the breadth of what we call ministry.

I want to look at a passage from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter four. This is Matthew’s starting point in his record of the public ministry of Jesus Christ. At the age of 30, Jesus moves out of the shadows and into the public light. It begins with his public baptism in the River Jordan – Matthew 3.

Here we have one of three instances recorded in the Gospels where God the Father speaks audibly from heaven commending his Son. Immediately afterwards, Jesus is led – Mark says “compelled,” literally “thrown out” – by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to face off against the Tempter – Satan himself.

From Satan’s point of view, it is his opportunity to derail the redemptive mission of Christ – to disrupt/circumvent Jesus’ mission. The temptations revolve around the authority of Jesus: “If you are the Son of God – prove it!” For Jesus, in his humanity, this is the defining moment of his trust in the Father and dependence upon the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

His public ministry begins in Galilee. He returns to his hometown, Nazareth, where he declares his ministry manifesto. Look at this significant event recorded in Luke’s Gospel, chapter four. **Luke 4:16-21**

Jesus was offering the interpretation of this Messianic prophecy from Isaiah, chapter 61. He stops in the middle of the passage. Remember, there were no verse markings, no punctuation. Jesus declared a separation in the prophecy – between the Messiah’s first coming and his second. One was a declaration of good news – the Gospel – redemption. The second – a day of vengeance after which comes the blessings of God’s covenants with his people, Israel.

Matthew, in his Gospel, picks up at this point as Jesus moves his base of ministry to the city of Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. Look at Matthew, chapter four – **Matthew 4:12-13**

Even here, we see the fullness of time – the exact conformation to the prophetic Old Testament Scriptures – **Matthew 4:14-16**.

The quotation comes from one of the greatest of Messianic passages in the Old Testament – Isaiah, chapter nine. Handel captured this section in his musical masterpiece “The Messiah” as we sing:

For unto us a child will be born, unto us a Son will be given; and the government will rest upon His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

And Jesus announces: “The time is now! Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” That which was declared through the prophets hundreds of years before – looked for with great eagerness, being waited for with great anticipation – was now present – here!

Let me suggest to you four aspects of the nature of ministry that are revealed in this passage – culminating in this great proclamation: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” These are four defining characteristics of this fulfilling mission.

1. First, it was **Incarnational**. God didn’t send the message by telegraph, by email, or through an appointed messenger. But God stepped out of eternity into time in human flesh and declared: “Here is the kingdom.”

The Apostle John captures this truth when he writes in the Prologue of his Gospel:

In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his

glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. –
John 1:1, 14

This is the glory of the Incarnation!

2. Second, it was **Relational**. This is God relating to men and women. I am so struck throughout the Gospels by the personal, relational work of Christ. In verses 18-22, Matthew tells us of Jesus' call to some of the disciples.

What is significant to me is the statement in **Verse 19**. Note that they were first called to a person; the task would come later. "Follow Me!"

We see it everywhere throughout Jesus' ministry – care for and attention to people as individuals. **Verses 23-25**.

Don't let this summary obscure the reality that each was a unique person with unique needs to which Jesus ministers. Comparing the Gospel accounts, one reads in this ministry time frame of Jesus casting out the demon of the possessed man in the synagogue, his healing of the paralytic whose friends had to lower him down through the roof of a house, his healing – physically and psychologically and emotionally – of the leper; the healing of the nobleman's son. These were individuals to whom Jesus related personally.

3. Third, it was **Transformational**. The need is stated prophetically –

Matthew 4:16

- Darkness; shadow of death – a description of people without God, without hope, without light and life, without forgiveness, without redemption.

Jesus came preaching the gospel of forgiveness – of redemption.

4. Finally, it was **Proclamational**. "Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand." There was a message – verbally delivered. Jesus left no opportunity to chance. It wasn't: "Just look at my life and believe." There was propositional truth to be communicated.

The ministry and message of God today is defined by these same four characteristics.

1. Ministry is **Incarnational**. Jesus told his disciples in the Upper Room: “I am going away, but it is to your advantage. For when I go, I will send another (Greek word means ‘another of the same kind’) and he will be with you and will be in you.” This was fulfilled at Pentecost with the giving of the Spirit.

God the Spirit, yet today, dwells in the heart of every believer. You see, as we relate to others the reality of the Gospel, it is incarnational. The apostle Paul describes it as:

...the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. – *Colossians 1:27*

Gordon Jensen wrote a song years ago that I think speaks of this truth.

If not in you, I wonder where –
will they ever see the One who really cares?
If not from you, how will they find –
there’s One who heals the broken-hearted and gives sight to the blind?

If not in you, I wonder who –
will show them love, and love alone can make things new?
If not from you, how will they learn –
there’s One who’ll trade their hopelessness for joy in return?

‘Cause you’re the only Jesus some will ever see;
and you’re the only words of life some will ever read.
So let them see in you the One in whom is all they’ll ever need;
cause you’re the only Jesus, some will ever see.

2. Ministry is **Relational**. The work of God is accomplished (on the human side) by the people of God. He chooses not to engage angels in the task of loving, caring, communicating the good news, but instead uses us – you and me!

Most people come to faith in Christ through the ministry of a family member or a friend. It’s not coming to hear a stranger preach or going to some evangelistic outreach. But it is through a person with whom they have a relationship. Couple of questions for you:

- How many of you came to faith in Christ through the influence of a family member or friend?

- How many non-Christian friends do you have? The fact is that the longer one is a follower of Christ, the fewer non-Christian friends they have.

God uses many different means and avenues to draw people to himself. But he most often uses people to reach people.

3. Third, Ministry is **Transformational**. God still changes lives; he brings light to those living in darkness; he brings the message of hope to those in despair; he brings redemption to those living in the mire of sin; he brings transformation to those enslaved by self and sin – that’s the good news of the Gospel!

And it occurs at different levels – at the macro/eternal: our position and legal status is changed forever; at the micro/temporal: progress in change in character and conduct.

Remember our mission? Helping people grow into disciples of Jesus Christ.

4. Finally, Ministry is **Proclamational**. There is propositional truth to be proclaimed – the message of the Gospel. God has called us to proclaim the eternal truth: The kingdom of God is at hand.

In the short New Testament book of Jude, we read:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. – *Jude 3*

There is content to the Gospel. Yes, we need to live our lives in such a way that people see Christ in us. But there is a message that has to be communicated verbally.

Ministry is multi-faceted. It involves “being,” “saying,” and “doing.” Ministry is serving others. It includes the witness of our lives, a verbal proclamation of the good news of the Gospel, helping others, discipling others, serving others with attention to issues of justice, care for the widow and orphan and the poor, etc.

Ministry is both broad and focused. The Scriptures often instruct us in broad, inclusive aspects of service (which is ministry). These are things that all of us should be involved in – for example: the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of encouragement, the service of prayer, the ministry of giving. Even if we don’t

have the “gift of evangelism,” we all are to be witnesses for Christ; even though we don’t all have the gift of giving, we are all responsible to God to be responsible givers, etc.

Focused service reflects those things that are part of your individual calling in ministry as a believer. Paul writes about this focused service in Ephesians. He begins by stating that God saves us by his grace through faith – that it is a gift from him, not a result of things that we do that somehow earn his favor. Then he says:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
– *Ephesians 2:10*

Conclusion – Benefits of being engaged in ministry:

1) God is glorified – Above all else, God is pleased with your service. Be careful here, though, that you don’t begin to serve out of a desire to gain God’s favor. We serve because we have God’s favor.

2) You are blessed – You will experience the joy of obedience –the satisfaction of doing what you know God desires. Look what Jesus told His disciples:

When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father....When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! – *John 15:8-11*

This is the blessing of service. Someone has said:

We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.

And we are the better for it.

3) Others are helped. Through service, through ministry, we become the hands and feet of Christ to others. In this way, ministry is incarnational. God, who lives within us in the person of the Holy Spirit, touches lives through our service to them.

The reality is that as you begin to minister to others, there is no end to its potential impact. In fact, you may never know the full measure of the fruit of your ministry. This video graphically illustrates this fact.

Video: *Strangers*

Well, this ends our series on Vision, Mission and Core Values. If we embrace these things and seek to live them out in our lives, our church will be changed; we will be changed!