

Vision 2020: Mission

Lead-in

This year our vision is to conquer St. Clair County and the nations for Jesus Christ, one gospel conversation at a time. If you could only use three words to describe our heartbeat for 2020 it would be substance, authenticity, and mission. Today we look at the third pillar of this vision, **mission**.

One of the most unique sporting events in the world did not begin as a sporting event. Each year riders and their dogs race more than 1,000 miles for several days through the Alaskan snow from Anchorage to Nome for Iditarod, the famous dogsled race.

But the genesis of Iditarod was something very serious. In 1925, hundreds of children in Nome had been exposed to diphtheria. The only serum to combat the disease was far away in Anchorage. To get the serum to Nome quickly, teams of riders (known as mushers) and their dogs, strategically placed along the path, carried the serum to Nome via a relay. More than 150 dogs and 20 mushers were involved in the heroic efforts, which became called "**The Great Race of Mercy.**" With passion and intensity, the mushers hurtled the 300,000 units of life-saving serum across the Alaskan countryside, arriving in Nome in only 127 hours— a record that has yet to be broken.

While the Iditarod had an amazing origin, it is now just another sporting event. The teams race a similar path, but the **motivation is different**. They still tie sleds behind dogs, but they are not racing to save lives anymore. I believe this can describe the people of God. Have we lost our mission and now Jesus is simply a Sunday sporting event?

What would happen if you recaptured a daily life saving mission to live so that others might have life in Jesus? The race is on, and the stakes are high.

Vision 2020: A Life Saving Mission Acts 2:42-47(pg 968)

I can't think of any better place to start for any church, than to look at the very first church. Jesus ascended, the Holy Spirit descended and indwelt, Peter preached and 3,000 people believed and were baptized. The initial characteristic demonstrated by the first church, indeed the introductory word used is **devoted**. Most scholars overlook the

word devoted and jump immediately to the **outcome**: teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer. However, don't miss the primary foundation of the church's mission: they were devoted.

Devoted προσκαρτερω *means to continue in; keep close company with* (Ac 8:13); *be a personal attendant* (Ac 10:7); *be in attendance* (Ac 2:46); *be ready* (of a boat). The expression has the idea of persistence in something and out of its 10 NT occurrences, **six** relate to the early church. Clearly devotion was and is the bedrock of Christian community. Does this describe you? **Are you devoted (to the Iditarod) because someone's life is at stake or is it a sporting event?**

Devotion to Jesus Christ is not a moment; it is a lifestyle. In one moment, 3,000 were saved, but the same momentary crowd immediately devoted themselves to the Messiah. Often we put so much hope in the large moments of life. However, devotion does the **little things**. Devotion does the **daily things** (every day vv. 46, 47). Are you ready and willing to daily set your eyes upon Jesus? Does your daily rhythm include Jesus? Devotion is a lifestyle.

Devotion does not require talent, it requires heart. Who are they? Not Peter, John, Apostles, or Billy Graham. They are you. They are me, ordinary people gripped by an extraordinary Messiah. Listen to what Michael Jordan, the greatest basketball player had to say about his career:

"I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot... and missed. And I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." Devotion is not "look at my championship ring!" Devotion says, "look how many times I fell, and He picked me up."

Devotion does not take talent, it requires heart. Have you fallen? Have you failed? He see and knows your heart.

Mission requires devotion to the right things. *Fanaticism and extremism is devotion void of substance.* For the Christian, ethical and practical teaching is grounded in the central promise of his Word through Christ. This is why we have committed in 2020 to hide His Word in our hearts and reflect upon Gospel-questions. **How much Word is in you?**

Devotion is powerful. You can't fake it and you can't manufacture it. A life of faith sold out daily to Jesus Christ grows like a giant **Sequoia offering shade to the forest** and spreading gospel seed throughout the region. Grow in Christ, one day at a time. This local church has gathered since 1832; I pray that Jesus' legacy through Bethel lasts another 188 years.

Devotion never happens alone. The people of God must commit themselves to fellowship. There is no solo mission. The earliest church got it; Yahweh never designed you to live without community and fellowship.

God's mission through you will never happen without others. The Bible uses a word fellowship that describes the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage. The entire Christian life, including spiritual growth, battling sin and Satan, serving God, are done in community.

This is why Life Groups are vital for your spiritual well-being. *Satan can't sneak up on you if someone is watching your back.* We would love to help you find a group. Use the connect card and we will reach out to you. This is why we serve in groups. When I serve Jesus, *I feel his presence reflected in my life.* Where are you serving? Can you shake a hand? Organize a pew? Watch a young child? Invest in a student? Prepare a Bible lesson? Facilitate a group?

Bread. God's mission is accomplished in you when you open your home and life to others. The first church would go house to house eating and celebrating the Lord's supper. *What would happen if you committed to invite someone to your house once/month, and you devoted that time to the Lord?*

God's mission takes prayer. A church at prayer is emphasized in community life. God desires a church who seeks God's direction and is dependent upon Yahweh because the Lord's family does **not work by feelings or intuition** but by actively **submitting themselves** to the Lord's direction.

What would happen if our worship was filled with people praying for others? John Chrysostom defined prayer as *"conversation with God."*
What would it look like if you committed to praying for one person a week in 2020? Instead of "all I can do is pray," we declare "ALL I can do is pray!"
21 Days of Prayer

Mission Involves Everyone (2:44). Every single person here today is important to God. Every single covenant member at Bethel is essential for the mission of the Holy Spirit within us! At least 8x in this short passage the words everyone, together, all, or some variation is used.

God is saying, "I want to use you!" The power of God's saving message and mission was so strong within every person that they **shared what they had.** There was no rule about common ownership of property like the men of the council of the Qumran community; rather, the community so loved one another that they were generous and compassionate. What part are **you playing** in God's redemptive plan? How are you making a difference?

What happens when **everyone** begins to live out the **everyone** mission? Awe and wonder overwhelms. Everyone probably refers to those outside the Christian community. The community on the outside saw the power of Jesus working in every person and caused all to take careful, respectful, even nervous notice of what is happening inside the church. Wow! *The Holy Spirit's presence and witness was infectious and the church enjoyed the favor of all the people.* **Mission Involves Everyone (2:44).**

The Power of Mission (2:47). I do not want to mislead you. A devoted life is a powerful life. A prayerful life is a powerful life. A compassionate community committed to one another and to the Lord's table is life changing. But, **the power is not in you.** Every day, the **Lord** added to their number daily.

In that God-ordained response to the gospel, the Lord himself was continuing to draw people into the fellowship of his church. *The power of Christian community is Jesus Christ.* We are jars of clay, to demonstrate that the all surpassing power is within us but it is not us! And when we declare this message, we will see the Lord adding to the Kingdom daily, one gospel conversation at a time.

13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Rom. 10:14 How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? Who has heard because of you? Who will hear the message of redemption because of you? I have a goal of seeing every person living and serving on mission here and going on mission to the nations in 2020. **Mission's Table.** I will be leading a trip in March for those who want to join me.

2020: Substance, Authenticity, Mission

We have a desire to conquer St. Clair County for Jesus Christ, one gospel conversation at a time.

Response

While the Iditarod had an amazing origin, it is now just another sporting event. The teams race a similar path, but the **motivation is different.** They still tie sleds behind dogs, but they are not racing to save lives anymore.

Church, the race is on, the stakes are high! Did I show up today knowing someone's life would be changed? Maybe it's you

Maybe you have looked in the mirror and realized that you're not a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. Did you know that God put you here to listen to the good news that you can be saved today!

*Now that you have heard this good news, God wants you to respond to Him. **Peter's message** was simple, repent and be baptized. You can talk to him using words like this:*

*Jesus today I **recognize** it is because of my (sin) bad actions that I need you.*

*I **believe** Christ came to live, die and was raised from the death—to rescue me from my sin.*

***Forgive** me. I turn from me and put my trust in You.*

*I know that Jesus is Lord and King of all and I will **follow** Him.*

Church, the race is on, the stakes are high! Live on mission

Notes

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

Devotion

The expression has the idea of persistence or persevering in something. Of its 10 NT occurrences speaks six times in Acts (ECNT, 149).

προσκυτερεω *devote oneself to, continue in; keep close company with* (Ac 8:13); *be a personal attendant* (Ac 10:7); *be in attendance* (Ac 2:46); *be ready* (of a boat)

Pesch has suggested that in fact only two things are really mentioned here, teaching and koinonia, with the latter further defined as involving the breaking of bread and prayer. (BW3, 160).

Teaching

For the Christian, ethical and practical teaching is grounded in the central promise God had given in Jesus (Bock, 150).

The Greek term *didache*; the centrality of Jesus and the preparation of members to share in the new life and witness are key community concerns (ECNT, 150).

Fellowship- Same word that was often used of the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage (ECNT), 150). Luke points to fellowship to underscore the personal interactive character of relationships in the early church at all levels. There is a real sense of connection to, between, and for each other.

The 19 occurrences of koinonia in the NT suggest that the church used this word for the unique sharing that Christians have with God and with other Christians (NIV, 120).

See 2:44-46. True fellowship focuses on God and helps people remember the good things he has done, which, in turn, causes praise (NIV, 123).

According to the Bible the entire Christian life, including spiritual growth, battling sin and Satan, and serving God, are intended to be done in community (NIV, 125).

Breaking Bread- probably denotes more than the regular taking of food together: the regular observance of what came to be called the Lord's Supper seems to be in view (NICNT).

Note the other three features of 2:42 are spiritual activities which suggest that this fourth one is also a spiritual activity (NIV, 121).

Christ's Last Supper was part of a festival meal (NIV, 128).

It is unclear here whether the phrase refers to the Lord's Supper or is a reference to taking some meals together, of which the Lord's Supper was a part (Bock, 150). What makes the choice difficult is that communion was part of a larger meal in the earliest church.

Prayer- A community at prayer is something Luke emphasizes about community life. It seeks God's direction and is dependent upon God because God's family of people do not work by feelings or intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord's direction (ECNT, 151).

4th century Bible expositor John Chrysostom defined prayer as "conversation with God."

As for the prayers in which they participated, the primary reference is no doubt to their own appointed seasons for united prayer (Bruce, 73).

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A community at prayer is something Luke emphasizes about community life. It seeks God's direction and is dependent upon God because God's family of people do not work by feelings or intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord's direction (ECNT, 150).

Acts 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles.

Everyone- probably refers to those outside the Christian community who were awed by apostolic miracles (NAC, 120).

Awe

The fear described here is likely to be similar to that seen in Acts 2:37, where divine activity is associated with the group. Such activity causes all to take careful, respectful, even nervous notice of what is happening inside the community (ECNT 151).

The apostolic preaching and the response it generated had an ongoing effect in Jerusalem: an enduring sense of awe inspired by the consciousness that God was at work in their midst, so that they were witnesses of the final drama, and indeed participants in it (Peterson, 162).

Signs

Apart from Jesus and the apostles, only Stephen and Philip are said to perform signs in Acts (Peterson, 162).

44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. **45** They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house.

Believers- they members of this new community are called believers because of their response of faith in the preached message.

Togetherness- the sharing of material things in common is not a required communalism but a voluntary, caring response to need (ECNT, 152).

This phrase is notoriously difficult to translate. It seems to depict the gathered community, with a strong emphasis on their unity (NAC, 120).

There was no rule about the common ownership of property such as was found among the men of the council of the Qumran Community (Pillar, 163).

Motivation- they are motivated by concern for the needs of the community. The picture is of a community that cares for all of its members, even those in material need (ECNT, 153). The sharing of material things in common is not a required communalism but a voluntary, caring response to need, as the end of verse 45 shows. That a community is really functioning with appropriate love and compassion is evident when material needs are also a concern and are being generously provided.

Every day – this fellowship, like Jewish practice, extends beyond the sacred space (ECNT, 153). If the temple was the place of witness, homes were the place for fellowship (NAC, 121).

House to House

This fellowship extends beyond the sacred space (ECNT, 153).

The expression every day is in the emphatic position, at the beginning of the first sentence.

They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The good reputation apparently impacts their witness (ECNT, 154). .

Favor

Witherington observes that the community's presence and witness were infectious.

The church is to be a place of spiritual growth and praise, a place that is relational enough to meet needs, engage the culture, and share Christ (ECNT, 155).

With acts ending as it does, Luke wants to leave no doubt that there is an important connection between community life and the favor the community experienced with outsiders.

Their gracious attitude was a significant factor in the turning of man more to Jesus as Lord and Christ (Pillar, 164).

Lord Added

In that God-ordained response to the gospel, the Lord himself was continuing to draw people into the fellowship of his church (Pillar, 164).

Illustration

One of the most unique sporting events in the world did not begin as a sporting event. Each year riders and their dogs race more than 1,000 miles for several days through the Alaskan snow from Anchorage to Nome for Iditarod, the famous dogsled race. But the genesis of Iditarod was something very serious. In 1925, hundreds of children in Nome had been exposed to diphtheria. At this point in history, children around the world died from the highly contagious disease because widespread vaccinations had not yet been introduced. The only serum to combat the disease was far away in Anchorage. To get the serum to Nome quickly, it was first carried by train to Nenana. Then teams of riders (known as mushers) and their dogs, strategically placed along the path, carried the serum to Nome via a relay. More than 150 dogs and 20 mushers were involved in the heroic efforts, which became called "The Great Race of Mercy." With passion and intensity, the mushers hurtled the 300,000 units of life-saving serum across the Alaskan countryside, arriving in Nome in only 127 hours— a record that has yet to be broken. By combining the right medicine with radical effort, hundreds of lives were saved.

While the Iditarod had an amazing origin, it is now just another sporting event. The teams race a similar path, but the motivation is different. They still tie sleds behind dogs, but they are not racing to save lives anymore. The same is often true of our churches. If we are not intentional,

what was once a life-saving mission can become much less. As a church we can gather people and go through the motions of Christian discipleship without a sense of the life-giving message and mission we have been given. The race is on, and the stakes are high.