

Sermon: Getting to the Heart of the Matter - Mission Living

Text: Ephesians 2:1-10

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First Baptist Church, Jefferson City

Home-ownership is one of those mixed blessings. On one hand, we are fortunate to have a roof over our heads and a place to call home. A place to entertain friends and family and a place that reflects our individual style and personality. Owning a home is usually a wise investment. On the other hand, home-ownership also comes with its challenges. Maintaining a home takes a lot of time and money. Owning a home means that sometimes while you are sitting in the recliner enjoying a game, you are painfully aware of the unfinished paint job on the walls around you or if not, your spouse will make you painfully aware. Owning a home means that when you pull into your garage after a day at the office you pretend to not see the foot-high grass that you once called a lawn. Owning a home means that when you see water where water shouldn't be

For many years, we have heard a great deal about "mission statements". Businesses, schools, department stores, churches, individuals . . . many are creating mission statements to clearly state why they exist so that they have purpose in their doing. Sometimes identifying your mission statement

can be a little challenging or can be at odds with those around you.

(Show cartoon). Both for customers as well as a constant reminder to that individual or organization as to why they exist. First Baptist has a mission statement. It's printed in your bulletin on the last page: "First Baptist exists to honor and worship God by being an inclusive and diverse family of faith, sharing the love of Jesus Christ and empowering disciples." This is what FBC has determined is our God-given mission as a church. Our special assignment

Mission Living is living with a clear mission. As followers of Christ, we have been given our mission.

Before we can go anywhere this morning, we need to clear up some confusion. Before I can begin to get to the heart of the matter of mission living, we have to take a few moments to unpack some baggage that I believe Christians carry around and that often gets in the way of mission living. So, if you are here this morning and you are not a believer in Christ, please forgive me for excluding you for just a moment but I need to address the Christians. But I would graciously invite you to listen in on our discussion. I think you'll find this helpful as well.

Christians – people who have accepted the gift of God’s grace through Jesus Christ – listen with new ears to the words of Ephesians 5:1-3:

***You were dead** through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. **All of us once lived** among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of the flesh and senses, and **we were** by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.*

The emphases are mine. As Christians, we have an old nature; we have a way we used to live. A way of living where we did what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it. A way as the Message paraphrase says where “we let the world, which doesn’t know the first thing about living, tell us how to live.”

BUT ... one of those words in Scripture that should move us to the edge of our seats in anticipation. BUT ... verse 4 *God, who is rich in mercy, out of great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us slave together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For*

*by grace you have been saved through faith, and **this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God** – not the result of works, so that no one may boast.*

In an old Dennis the Menace cartoon, Dennis and his little friend Joey are leaving Mrs. Wilson's house, their hands full of cookies. Joey says, "I wonder what we did to deserve this." Dennis answers, "Look, Joey. Mrs.

Wilson gives us cookies not because we're nice, but because she's nice."

Christians – many of us have forgotten or never really got the message that God gives us cookies not because we're nice, but because God is nice. God saves us not because we are good, but because God is good.

Now, why did we have to start there this morning? Because mission living is dependent on the right foundation.

First – Doing things out of the wrong motivation. How can God make us new when we continue to cling to the old? When we cling to the old life and refuse to see ourselves as new creations, there is a tendency for works-oriented faith to creep into our lives and to taint mission living.

Secondly – It robs us of the freedom in Christ that is suppose to be ours.

Thirdly – It makes our living self-oriented instead of God-oriented.

"While it is true that we are saved not by our good works but by the good works of Jesus, it is also true that we are saved *to* good works. The gospel is not simply about getting my sins forgiven and then sitting around until Jesus returns. The gospel compels us to participate with God in culture we live in. Any gospel that does not compel us into mission overlooks both the duties and delights of being a Christian."¹

In his book, *Future Church*, Jim Wilson writes, "Ever since I was a child, I've had a heart for missions and have been willing to go overseas if God calls me. Certainly my wife knew about my heart for missions and that I'd go if God calls me. But what she didn't know was that I'd been praying he would open that door and that he'd lay it on her heart to want to go too. I prayed that if God gives me the desire, he would give it to her too -- not just to go with me because I was going but also to go because God was moving her to go. We never talked about it. Not once did I ask her how she felt about going overseas. I just prayed and asked God to speak to her.

"During the summer of 2002 it happened. Susan initiated the conversation and said the words I'd longed to hear: 'I believe God may be calling us to

missions, and if he does, I'm willing to go.' I didn't tell her about my prayer at that time; instead, we just held each other and wept."

Wilson continues, "Later I went on a 'praise walk' -- just me and God. 'Thank you, God for speaking to Susan,' I said. 'You are an awesome and powerful God. Our answer is yes. You point the direction and we'll go. We're ready.' I'm not sure what I expected God to say in the silence that followed, but certainly not what he said. 'I'm glad you're willing to go and be a missionary,' I sensed God saying. 'Too bad you're not willing to be a missionary right where I've put you.'"

As a result of that prayer, Wilson went back to school to learn Spanish so he could begin to proclaim the gospel in the language of the people that live around his church. He learned the important lesson that being a missionary isn't a matter of geographic location, but of attitude and approach. Wilson doesn't know if the Lord will ever relocate him overseas or not, but he does know that he is called to be a missionary wherever he is. ²

Let's look at the cartoon again. The "all about me" syndrome is pervasive in our culture – even in our faith expressions. Think about our prayers concerning God's will or purpose for our life. We pray for God to show God's will to us – why am I here? What am I made to do? People who

become obsessed with finding and doing God's will right before they have to make big life choices often miss the point entirely. We've become in name a very purpose-driven culture but perhaps in the midst of this we have forgotten an important point.

¹ Mark Driscoll, *Radical Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004), 60.

² Jim Wilson, *Future Church* (Littleton, CO, Serendipity House, 2002), 231-232.