



Building Community

Changing Lives

Bringing Hope

Being Jesus Christ to the World

SUMMIT
CHURCH

Transform

Text: Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:15-16; John 15:1-4

These past several weeks we have been in a sermon series titled “Church Relationship: It’s complicated” where we have been exploring our vision and mission as a church and what that might mean for us during this season with COVID-19.

I think I can be pretty confident in saying that for all of us, 2020 has been a doozy!

I mean, how many of us could have imagined all the ways this year was going to pan out and all the complex issues we as a world, nation, and city would be facing. It’s like 2020 snuck in, but then wham...as if it is saying “this is going to be a year unlike any you have ever experienced before!”

Summit Church

Summit Church exists to be Jesus Christ to the world...and I can’t think of a time where that statement is more important.

Our mission, or the way we believe we are called to Be Jesus Christ to the world is through:

1. Building Community
2. Changing Lives
3. Bringing Hope

Last week we gathered together in person for the first time since mid-March,(photo/video – without noise - of gathering?) and while not everyone was able or comfortable joining us – which by the way, we completely understand and in no way want anyone to feel any pressure to be a part – it did feel pretty good to gather and talk about Bringing Hope, specifically bringing hope when we are at the end of our Rope.

Today

Today I would like to talk about the second part of our mission, changing lives, and invite us to explore what transformation means, why it’s important for us today, and how we can participate in the formation of our inner lives.

Rafting as image of the spiritual life

A few weeks ago our neighbors – Marc and Jill Beaur – invited us to join them on a rafting trip down the Animas. It was a Sunday afternoon, the day after a good rain so the river was up and flowing well. Now, this was the first time our boys had ever gone rafting, so we were full of anticipation!

Photo

Here’s a photo of us, just after we had gone through the first part of smelter rapids. Our boys were sitting in the front, and the ice-cold water had just splashed over the front of the boat, soaking both of them with the coldest water they had ever been immersed in. Needless to say, they had a blast!

Our spiritual lives are a lot like rafting. There are obstacles to avoid, things we can get hung up on, and sometimes we find ourselves stuck in an eddy.



The question I want to invite us to wrestle with today is this:

How to we keep ourselves in the flow of the river of God?

In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 4, the author writes about the beginning of what people call Jesus' public ministry. It's the story of how and why Jesus started to do what he did. In the first part of the chapter, the author gives the story of Jesus' temptation in the desert which afterward launches Jesus into a new season where he begins to preach the gospel. The author of the gospel of Matthew tells us the following:

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Matthew 4:17

Repent - the word in Greek is *metanoia*, means to change the way you see, to see differently - for God's way of living and being is available right here, right now.

Jesus then does something very interesting...but we often miss the importance of this because we are so familiar with it.

The author continues by writing:

¹⁸ As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. ²² Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

Matthew 4: 18-22

The thing Jesus does that is so brilliant, I mean completely genius, was he gathered together a close group of 12 people and said, "Want to learn how to enter more fully into God's kingdom? Come, follow me, learn from me and see how I do it!"

Notice how the mission of Jesus wasn't to give people a list of rules to follow, or first to tell people what to believe, Jesus came to embody what it looked like to live in connection with God, each other, and the world around him and then find a few people who might be open enough and brave enough to spend several years following him all around the region to learn how to live in a similar way.

Running a marathon

Let's say you wanted to run a marathon. You don't just wake up one morning and think to yourself "today I'm going to run a marathon!"

You make a plan right?

You signed up at a gym where they go through all the steps you will need to take in order to work your way up to a long distance run. You get the right shoes, you start showing up weekly to the gym because you are inspired as you sit and listen to people give motivation speeches and talks about their experiences of running a marathon. You feel inspired, and tell others



about how passionate you are about running a marathon, but you never start a practice of running.

They day of the marathon comes. How do you think you will do?

Yet many view faith in the same the way.

- We show up for weekend gatherings, we read books and watch videos by inspiring authors and speakers. We are amped! We eat it up! We even tell others about our faith and about all the things we are learning. But we never start spiritual practices of our own such as prayer, reading Scripture, serving others, and giving generously.
- Is this what faith is all about?

Transform

I believe the core of Jesus' message is about transformation.

Transform – to make a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance, or character.

- In other words, you don't look the same. Something changes.

Jesus didn't come just to make converts. Jesus didn't come to pump everyone up and give inspirational teachings. He came to bring about a whole different way of being. Jesus came to teach people how to be fully human.

- But it's easy for people of faith to miss this.
 - It's easier to think about how great it would be to run a marathon, to watch inspirational talks about running, then it is to actually commit to a running practice.
 - It's easier to be a fan of Jesus, even believe all the right things about Jesus, and yet remain unchanged.

To highlight this, philosopher Dallas Willard once said,

"The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as 'Christians' will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence."

- Dallas Willard.

Those are potent and challenging words are they not?

To learn how to bring the life of the kingdom into every corner of human existence!

Into - education, business, art, leadership, psychology, health care, construction, human resources,...into every corner, impacting every aspect of life.

What I take away from Dallas Willard's writing, this quote and other books he has written is that he is arguing that many who claim the title "Christian" haven't become students, apprentices, and practitioners...but rather remain relatively unchanged and untransformed. How can this be the case?



Let me suggest to you it's primarily because **growth is uncomfortable**, and let's all be honest, we don't like to feel uncomfortable! As humans we tend to move toward whatever is most comfortable and move away from whatever is uncomfortable.

Just think about when you feel hot. What do you do? You look for a cool place to try to escape the heat. It's human nature.

What I've been really noticing in my own life is that **disruptions create discomfort, and thus are invitations to grow.**

Spiritual Practices

Once we are aware that Jesus really invites us not just to be spectators, converts, or consumers, but he invites us to move toward spiritual formation, to be transformed into Christlikeness, and we recognize that spiritual formation involves some amount of discomfort, we can open ourselves up to commit to spiritual practices.

- In order to commit to running a marathon, you have to commit to a running practice.
- In order to increase the distance you can run, that running practice will need to push you past what feels comfortable.

Let's talk about spiritual practices as we look to the life of Jesus as a guide.

¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:15-16

What we learn from his life is that **Jesus created rhythms of silence, solitude, and stillness.**

Jesus did this frequently. In fact, on the night Jesus was betrayed, the night he needed the most courage, bravery, and strength, what was he doing?

- He was spending time in solitude, in nature, in a garden.
- What allowed Jesus to do what he did wasn't determination, perseverance, or good old fashion American hard work, it was disconnecting from the crowds, the noise, and the hurry of life to connect more deeply to God.

Let's read from the gospel of John 15 together. Jesus says:

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. – John 15:1-4

Spiritual formation is about creating rhythms in our life where we disconnect from the craziness of everyday life in order to remain connected to the Vine.

Everything you and I do forms us. Everything. Now some things are minor, like if you decide to eat at McDonalds instead of eating a salad. Not a big deal every now and then, but taken to a larger scale and eating McDonalds every day for a year will most definitely impact you right?



Same with money.

Where we spend our money forms us. This is why I believe that generosity and regular giving is important, because if we spend 99% of our money on ourselves, how does that form us? Does that practice form us to become more generous and selfless?

Understanding that all of our decisions form us, think of the many ways the world, our economy, our ego for more drives and forms who we become. Like waking up one day and deciding to run a marathon without practice, being transformed into the image of Christ won't just happen. Spiritual formation is a process, but it takes intentionality and planning. It takes thinking through what rhythms in your life you want to set up in order to shape you into the kind of person you want to be.

I recently sat down with Jake Forsythe who is on staff at Summit Church as the program ministry director, and talked to him about the idea of how to create rhythms by designing what some people call a rule of life. I invite you to watch with me as Jake shares from his own experience.

Video – Jake

I absolutely love the idea of creating a rule of life. The meditation moment this week are meant to help guide you on creating your own rule of life.

Rule of life quote

Tale of two wolves – photo (can it be left up until I say... "the grandson thought about it...")

One evening, an elder told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said "my son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all. One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is good. It is joy, peace love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "which wolf wins?..."

The elder simply replied,
"the one that you feed"

The ancient book of Genesis teaches us that God's creation, including humanity, is good. Yet the Christian tradition also teaches us that we tend to get off track.



Engaging in regular spiritual practices and creating a rule of life is deciding to feed the good wolf, and starve the bad wolf.

Here's a truth.

If we don't intentionally set up rhythms and spiritual practices, we will tend to feed the bad wolf.

Our human nature and society will tend to lead us toward selfishness, not becoming unselfish. It will tend to lead us toward greed, not finding ways to generate money to help others. When my family rafted down the Animas, there were rocks to avoid, ways to enter into a rapids, and eddy's along the path that kept you "on the river" but not "in the flow."

- Spiritual practices are simply practices that keep us in the flow of God.
- Yes, you're already in the river, but without practices in our lives we can get stuck in an eddy or hung up on a rock...and sometimes we're not even aware of it.

Close

I will end our time with this.

The greatest obstacle facing our spiritual lives isn't fear, isn't evil, isn't tv or social media. Dallas Willard once said that

"Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life in our day. You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." Dallas Willard.

- Jesus seemed to embody this by withdrawing often from the noise and the crowds to a place of solitude and silence.

Let's be honest, this seems difficult if not almost impossible in the 21st century. But, if we are to eliminate hurry in order to create rhythms in our lives of silence, solitude, and stillness, it will require planning and determination and time.

I hope you take time this next week to follow in the steps of Jesus and withdraw to an isolated place to connect with God, pray, and think strategically through what a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly rule of life might look like for you

- so that you remain in the flow, not just in the river
- so that you feed the good wolf

so that we may continue to be transformed into the likeness and image of Christ.
Amen.