

“WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BE?” – PART II

by Rom A. Pegram (6/26/16)

Folks, the section of scripture we spoke about last week, as well this week, was a pivotal time in the life of the new Church. They could not get this wrong. Their future depended on them following what God was asking them to do—what God’s Spirit was leading them to do. And so it is today... Our future depends on whether we will choose to be about the business Christ called us to—the making of disciples for his sake, and for God’s transformation of the world...

Let’s take a quick look at our scripture once again, as we get into this Part II of “Who is God Calling Us to Be?” And I’m adding part of Verse 4 today, too... Would you join me (Acts 13:1-4a, NLT)?

Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. ² One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” ³ So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way. ⁴ So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit....

God does not leave his work to chance, or just to the thinking of human beings. Did you know that? Oswald Chambers says (Nov. 7, MUHH), “In the life of a saint there is no such thing as chance.” The Holy Spirit still speaks and tells us what to do. Our part is to listen—to take intentional time to do just that. Prayer is not what we do when all else fails; prayer is the work that God has called us to first and foremost ... that we might know his direction for our lives. It’s talking and listening—the two ears and one mouth scenario...

Let me take just a moment to review what we talked about in Part I of this message, then I’ll move on to today’s main theme. Last week, as we got into Acts 13—where Barnabas & Saul were commissioned for missionary work, we discovered these things:

- **HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD USUALLY COMES THROUGH PRAYER & FASTING—A CONCENTRATED TIME OF INQUIRY WITH GOD.**
 - I, and several others in this congregation—I know, have been praying for the future of this church; we’ve gone to our knees in prayer asking God to show us the future he desires for us. We also learned that...
- **HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD INVOLVES OWNERSHIP.**
 - One of my greatest concerns, as an ‘under-shepherd’ of Jesus Christ, is that people might think what I receive in prayer is just for Rom ... but when God gives a vision to one of his leaders, folks, it is *always* given in the sense that ‘this is for my people’—not just for the leader. But I had to take ownership and accept and lay hands on this vision before I could pass it on; and that’s what I’ve been doing for the past several months ... asking God for the right time to

begin to share his vision for ministry; I believe with all my heart that *this is God's time for Trinity UMC!* Finally...

- **HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD INVOLVES ACTION.**

- And that's exactly where we're at today, so let me share with you my story of the past few months...

A short time after I moved here and I'd been praying about God's vision for this congregation—the way God wanted us to be about making disciples here at Trinity, Heidi Zingsheim came into the office with an idea. She had found a logo with three little words on it ... that she wanted to use for the Christian Education department here at Trinity UMC. Folks, knowing full-well that God speaks through others, I listened carefully as Heidi explained (probably in an email) about this logo and how she wanted to use it for her department.

I'll be the first to say that I hi-jacked her idea/logo for use with the entire church! God spoke to my heart almost immediately ... and the more I prayed about it, the more I was convinced that this is how we can be about the Great Commission here at Trinity. This is how we are going to make disciples for Christ for the transformation of the world (U.M. Mission). And so it began ... and then Teresa took over the logo and we started tweaking it and adapting it for use throughout the ministries here at Trinity. And we've actually been casting this vision God had given us for the past several months. Maybe you've noticed this graphic (show graphic—slide #9) during the past months...

So, there are 3 components to the VISION God's given us ... to *be* disciples of his ... and to *make* disciples for him (Great Commission); and they are these...

LOVE. *God is calling us to be a people of LOVE!* And, folks, what this means first is this: We will be ... *a people who LOVE GOD* ... in all that we do! But, here's the way we're going to do it...

Folks, **the primary way in which we're going to teach people how to love God ... is through worship!** The Apostle Paul reminds us what our attitude toward worship should be when he encourages us in this way (Col. 3:16, NLT): "Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts." So, *it's through our worship together that we're going to be about teaching people to LOVE GOD first...*

- Through *music* ... and singing together (which we're going to get better at if it's the last thing I do!)...
- Through personal *stories* told in worship—learning to love God through testimony...
- Through *God's word* ... as it's read in worship; it's through God's word that the Holy Spirit convicts us about our relationship with God—nudges us to grow where we need to grow...
- And through *the foolishness of preaching*, as the Apostle Paul called it...

Through all these ways, we're going to learn and then teach about how to LOVE GOD...

We will also be ... *a people who LOVE PEOPLE* (including each other)! In John 13:34-35 (NLT), John records Jesus saying: "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." You know that person who goes to your church who just drives you absolutely crazy? You know, the one who you'd go to a different entry/exit door to avoid? God's calling us to love them, too! So, in a nutshell, *God is calling us to be a people of LOVE*—the most powerful force in the universe, the very power of God! Secondly, God is calling us to be a people who...

GROW. *God is calling us to be a people who understand the importance of constant growth*, as disciples! There will be no attitudes in this place where we tell ourselves ... *we've arrived!* Disciples of Jesus understand the importance of constant learning ... so that we will GROW as disciples! The writer of Hebrews 6:1-3 (NLT) reminds us: "So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. ² You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding..."

The primary way we will grow is through growth groups (small groups), where learning more and more about God (and thus our relationship with God) can take place in a safe place... But, this is a process, so getting things like 'growth groups' in place will take some time and, eventually, all members of this church will be invited to take part in these growth opportunities. Again, this is going to take some time, but I think you understand that *if you're not growing ... your dying*. Whatever is not in some state of growth in this world ... is usually dead. And we want to be a church that is absolutely alive—so much so that when people think of Trinity, they know *we are a people who are about God's business...*

The Apostle Peter ends his second letter (2 Peter 3:18, NLT) in this way: "Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen." So, we need to GROW and that's why—to *the Glory of God...* And lastly, God is calling us to be a people who...

SERVE. *God is calling us to be a people who put our faith into action* (and you're going to see this part of God's vision for us in action this week)! To say it another way, *God is calling us to serve him ... by serving others!* Peter in his first epistle (1 Peter 4:10, NLT) reminds us: "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another." The Apostle John records Jesus words in Chapter 12:26 (NLT) of his Gospel: "Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honor anyone who serves me." And finally, in Matthew (23:11, NLT), Jesus tells us simply: "The greatest among you must be a servant." And **the primary way we will teach people how to**

serve is to present them with opportunities to serve and encourage all to take part ... *in something!*

So, folks, God's vision for us—how we're to carry out his commission to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world—is to learn to LOVE, to GROW, and to SERVE ... and to live our lives based on that vision. But *I want you to consider this, as we move forward in ministry together...*

George Barna explains in another of his books that, "Receiving God's vision is like being elected to the presidency: Once you've got it, there's no turning back." It's a TOTAL COMMITMENT kind of thing; that's what discipleship really is...

Once you've heard the voice of God, there's no turning back! Once God's given you his marching orders for your life or for the life of your church, there's no turning back. We need to understand that... But *there's one more question to ask today...*

At the end of the movie, *The Untouchables* (the story of Elliot Ness), evidence that would convict Capone fell into the hands of a Treasury agent played by Sean Connery. Ultimately, he would give his life for the evidence or truth that would convict the criminals. As he gave this evidence, or truth, to Elliot Ness—knowing that he was taking his last breaths, he simply asked Ness, "Now, what are you going to do with it?"

It strikes me that that is what's happening to this church today. God has given us a vision (or a part of his vision) to live by; God has given us his blueprint for our future. We have our marching orders for our ministry. And, it has not come without a price. So, the question for us now is ... *what are we going to do with it?*

Folks, the vision statement you have in your hands is where we're going. And may God bless us, now, as we learn to live it...