

Becoming ... One in Ministry

May 28, 2017

Scriptures: Acts 1:6-14

⁶ While the apostles were still with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, are you now going to give Israel its own king again?" ⁷ Jesus said to them, "You don't need to know the time of those events that only the Father controls. ⁸ But the Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. Then you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and everywhere in the world." ⁹ After Jesus had said this and while they were watching, he was taken up into a cloud. They could not see him, ¹⁰ but as he went up, they kept looking up into the sky. Suddenly two men dressed in white clothes were standing there beside them. ¹¹ They said, "Why are you men from Galilee standing here and looking up into the sky? Jesus has been taken to heaven. But he will come back in the same way that you have seen him go." ¹²⁻¹³ The Mount of Olives was about half a mile from Jerusalem. The apostles who had gone there were Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon, known as the Eager One, and Judas the son of James. After the apostles returned to the city, they went upstairs to the room where they had been staying. ¹⁴ The apostles often met together and prayed with a single purpose in mind. The women and Mary the mother of Jesus would meet with them, and so would his brothers.



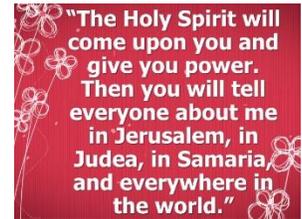
Today we come to the third message in our "Becoming" series. It is the natural extension of the first two messages. The first message in our series was "Becoming One with

Christ” and the second was “Becoming One with Each Other”. As this congregation of the United Methodist Church, becoming one with each other naturally flows out of our deepening relationship as we become one with Christ. In the same way, becoming one in ministry flows out of these first two stages. As we explore becoming one in ministry today, we will look at how we are in ministry together currently and at how we as a congregation can continue to grow as one in ministry together. Let us pray.

To begin, I would like to share a success story about being in ministry together. Just this past week, a team from our church went out into the community to share the love of Christ. It was a plan that was hatched at a training in Pierre back in January. The plan evolved over the course of the past few months and it went into action last Monday. A team of three ladies from the church descended upon Main Street businesses with this weapon. This small card reads: “Have a great week! We will be **U**plifting you in prayer all **7** days!” On the back of the card is information about the church and an invitation to worship with us. It is awesome that these ladies offered a thank you, some prayers, and a little encouragement to those businesses along Main Street and along Highway 18. But here is the cool part of the story. They came back to the church and they were like little school girls – all giddy with excitement. As they told me about the positive reactions and the genuine gratefulness that the business people expressed, they could hardly keep from giggling. There was an excitement in their voices and a twinkle in their eyes. It was so cool to see how much God had touched them as they offered His love to the community. Awesome job ladies!



In our scripture reading today, the key verse is verse eight. It reads: "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you power. Then you will tell everyone about me in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and everywhere in the world*". This is what these three ladies did here in Winner, SD. They allowed God to lead and guide



them and the Spirit's power came upon them as they were in ministry to the world. This is what can happen to each of us as we become one with Christ and one with each other. As we grow in our faith, we will come to seek ways to allow the love of Christ that grows within us to be a love that leaks out in to the world. It is dangerous and contagious and can leave you giddy too!



When we think about becoming one in ministry, does your mind wander to being in ministry within these walls or does it drift to ministry out there? I truly believe that it should be both. I do not see this as an either/or question. Whether we are talking about being in ministry together here at Winner United Methodist Church or whether we are talking about being one in ministry out there in the world, I think there are challenges and barriers in both that we all face. It is important to understand these so that we can move beyond them and to enter into ministry.

Becoming one in ministry within the walls of this place is more comfortable for most of us. We share a lot of similarities and familiarities here. We are at ease in our own space. We feel more in control here. For many of us, this is our reality. It is also our first challenge or barrier. In our ministries, one of the biggest challenges or barriers is our own limited vantage point. Our world view

and/or our exposure to others who are not like us gives us a limited view of ministry and constrains what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Put another way, often we can only see what we know and what is familiar. We recognize the things we know from our own experience. Therefore, we may struggle to see the needs of others in our community and we may have a hard time relating to their situations or to the struggles they face in life.

Honestly, it has always been a challenge to move beyond the walls of the church and to engage the broader world. Despite this fact, it is our call to go forth and make disciples of all nations. But, it is hard. It always has been. Jesus spent lots of times with the disciples modeling and teaching by example. Over and over, Jesus ministered to the least and the lost. He did this so that the disciples could one day go forth and carry on the work of building the church. In today's passage from Acts, Jesus commissions the disciples to tell everyone about Him - to go to the ends of the earth, as a matter of fact. He also promises them that the Holy Spirit will come upon them and will give them power to carry out this task. This same promise is true for us. The commission to go forth and tell the whole world about Jesus is for us too. But it is a challenge. For centuries, we have built great cathedrals and beautiful churches to worship God in. We have also created amazing pieces of art and worship experiences that point us to God. But along the way, it did not take long for us to confine God to our buildings. It became about what happens inside the walls instead of being the church out there in the world. This video, called "Cannot Contain", is a reflection on how we try to contain God into a nice, clean, comfortable, safe box. Please watch the screens.

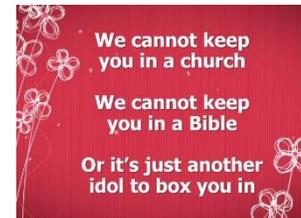


In the video, we see the beautiful churches. And they are beautiful. But did you hear the words to the song? They say this:

*They tried to keep you in a tent
They could not keep you in a temple
Or any of their idols, to see and understand*



*We cannot keep you in a church
We cannot keep you in a Bible
Or it's just another idol to box you in*



*They could not keep you in their walls
We cannot keep you in ours either
For you are so much greater*



Is our God greater than this building? Is our God outside of these walls? Of course, the answer to these questions is "Yes!" Yes, our God is so much greater than these walls. But God is inside these walls as well. Therefore, there are always opportunities to serve God and others within this place. In fact, there are many short-term opportunities to be one in ministry right here at our church.



Next week, Vacation Bible School is a great opportunity to become one in ministry together. About a month after that, our church will host the Iowa VBS program, providing yet another opportunity to serve. Throughout the year, there are other opportunities to serve and become one in ministry. Again, in the fall, there will

be the “Trunk or Treat” event and then in the winter months there will be the “President’s Day Dinner”. Both are great outreach events where we welcome hundreds into our building to experience the love of Christ. Many of you are involved in these events and that is awesome. And, of course, some of you are not involved in any of these opportunities to serve. But they are not the only opportunities.

Indeed, other opportunities to serve are on the horizon. Coming soon, in July, we will begin hosting a fellowship meal once a month on a Sunday evening. This will be a free meal, open to the public, served in Fellowship Hall. We will target those outside of our church who are in need of a safe, warm, welcoming place to come and sit, to enjoy a good meal, and to be in fellowship with one another. Maybe something like this is the opportunity that will allow you to be in service. To make this event happen, we will need cooks and servers and we will need people to welcome people in and to just sit and talk with our guests. Maybe this is up your alley. To me, this is a good ‘middle ground’ event. It is still here at the church where we feel most comfortable. And it is also by spending time with others that we can begin to see through their eyes and to begin to gain an understanding of our larger community. It is by sitting with them at the table and sharing a meal together that we expand our limited vantage point and begin to understand their needs and struggles.

Or perhaps you are drawn to getting outside these walls and engaging others out in the world. The 7-Up event that I described earlier would be one such event. If you think that was a great idea and think you would enjoy doing

something like that, then there are some short-term opportunities to serve that may be for you. On the evening of August 13th, we will host a worship service and meal in the park. The Praise Band will lead music, there will be prayer and scripture, and we will offer a message of hope. We will follow our worship time up with a picnic supper and a time of fellowship. We will also have games for all ages - a bouncy castle for the children and bean bag toss games too. There are many places to plug into this great opportunity to serve as we share the love of Jesus with our community. As always, it is my hope and prayer that one of these events are an opportunity for every one of you that calls Winner United Methodist Church "home" to serve.

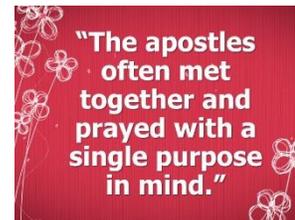
It is through events like the community worship service and picnic and through the monthly fellowship meals that we begin to see outside these walls and begin to become more comfortable with going outside these walls. When we rub elbows with others, we come to see them as more and more like us. When we spend time with others, we come to see that we are more alike than different. So even if you are not feeling led to serve at one of these upcoming events, we hope that you will join us and simply be a part of what is happening. Worship with us, share in the meal, and sit and talk with someone you do not know. Come to a fellowship meal and get to know someone new. Simply by your presence you will help us in becoming one in ministry together.

Think back to the video I shared earlier. It ended with these words from Ephesians: "*You too are being built to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit*". This line ties back



into our scripture passage from today. Jesus' disciples had received the commission to take Jesus out into the world and have been promised the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is through the power and the presence of the Spirit that these disciples would continue the work of Jesus. After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. Verses thirteen and fourteen read, *"After the apostles returned to the city, they went upstairs to the room where they had been staying. The apostles often met together and prayed with a single purpose in mind"*.

What do you think their single purpose was?



The disciples gathered back around the table. They entered into a time of prayer and the Word tells us that they had a single purpose in mind. I believe it was to be one in ministry together. The disciples continued to gather around the table and to pray together with this same purpose: to fulfill the great commission, to make disciples of all nations for the transformation of the world. This too is our purpose.

The song from the video we watched earlier is by a band called Gungor. The song's lyrics continue with these words:

Who is like the Lord?

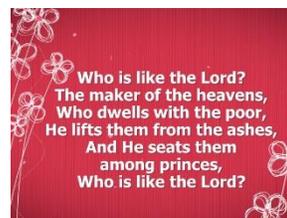
The maker of the heavens

Who dwells with the poor

He lifts them from the ashes

And He seats them among princes

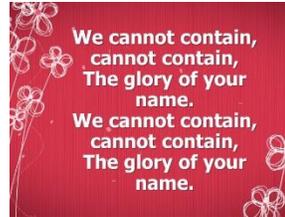
Who is like the Lord?



For those that we are called to serve, for those who are outside these walls, for those we are called to be one in ministry with, there is much truth and hope in these words. God is among them as well.

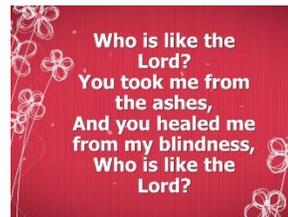
The song continues with these words:

*We cannot contain, cannot contain
The glory of your name
We cannot contain, cannot contain
The glory of your name*



There is much truth in these words. We love and serve a big God. Just as surely as God is in this place, God is out there as well. We cannot contain our God within these walls. God cannot be contained out there either. The song transitions in the last verse and it focuses in on us.

*Who is like the Lord?
You took me from the ashes
And you healed me from my blindness
Who is like the Lord?*



The reality for you and for me is this: God raised us up from the ashes. We were all once lost in sin and death. But Jesus got ahold of us and brought us into relationship with Him. And through this relationship, Jesus healed us of our blindness and opened our eyes to see as He sees. For most of us, we are a work in progress. But we are in progress. May the Lord continue to work in and through us as we seek to be one in ministry together and one in ministry to the world. Let us pray.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) Are you more comfortable ministering within the walls of the church or outside of the church? How can either one lead to more of the other?
- 2) Who or what type of person are you most passionate about sharing Jesus and your faith with? What ministries of the church help you to do this?
- 3) What barriers or challenges do you feel inhibit you from serving Jesus? Pray for the Holy Spirit to work within you to help you overcome these!