

Sermon: *I was made for a Mission*
Text: *Acts 1:8*
Date: *November 16, 2008 AM*
Place: *Jesup First UMC*

God loves us and He has a purpose for our lives. In fact, God has five purposes for us. We were planned for God's pleasure; that's worship! We were formed for God's family; that's fellowship! We were created to be like Jesus; that's discipleship! We were shaped to serve God; that's ministry! And our fifth purpose is: we were made for a mission! Jesus said: **"In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world, I gave them a mission in the world."** Each of us has a ministry in the church and a mission in the world.

Jesus told His disciples: **"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."** Now, as followers of Jesus, you and I have been sent out to share the Good News with others. Paul said: **"The most important thing is that I complete my mission, the world the Lord Jesus gave me to tell people the Good News about God's grace."** And there's a theological word for this; it's called evangelism and **evangelism simply means: sharing the Good News.**

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. Now, in Acts 1, just before Jesus was taken up into heaven, He said to the disciples: **"But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** Now, notice: Jesus isn't looking for a defense attorney; Jesus isn't looking for a salesperson. He's simply looking for witness, ordinary men and women like you and me who will tell others what God has done for us.

So, how do we do that? How do we get started?

First, I must share with those in my own world!

One day, Jesus healed a man and said to him: “Now, go back home and tell people how much God has done for you.” And so, the man went all over town telling everybody he met about Jesus. And that’s what Jesus wants us to do – go back home, not necessarily to Africa or Tim buck to. Start where you live, where you work, and where you play.

There are over 65 million people in the United States who have no church home. Over 60% of Wayne County is not in church on Sunday morning. They are your family, your friends, and your neighbors; and we’ve got to talk to them about Jesus and invite them to our church. And when they don’t come the first time, we’ve got to keep inviting them until they do. Listen: these are the people God loves; these are the people Jesus died for. II Peter 3 says: “God doesn’t want anyone to be lost, but He wants all people to change their hearts and lives.” And so, we’ve got to love them enough to witness to them and invite them.

If you want God to bless you, you’ve got to care about the things God cares about. And the thing that God loves most is people – your friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers! Somebody asked me a while back: “*Tucker, don’t you think our church is big enough?*” No! I don’t! I don’t care about how many people are here; I care about how many people aren’t here. As long as there is one person in Jesup who doesn’t know Jesus, our church is too small. We’ve

got to reach one more person for Jesus Christ. That was the driving force of Jesus' life; it's the driving force of Rick Warren's life; and it's got to be the driving force for our church!

And it all starts at home, right where we live.

Second, I must dare to reach beyond my world.

In John 4, Jesus was passing through Galilee when He came upon a woman, a Samaritan woman, drawing water from the well. Now, what does a Jewish man have in common with a Samaritan woman? In almost every way, they were worlds apart. And yet, Jesus stopped, and reached beyond His world, and changed her life forever.

Jesus reached beyond His world and He taught the disciples to reach out too, to build bridges and reach out to people who were different. Paul told the church at Corinth: "*Whatever each person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him.*"

You know, the United States is a melting pot. There are people in Jesup, Georgia that are not White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. They're different. Their world is different, but our mission is still the same. Paul said: "*Reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens and so complete the law of Christ.*" What is Christ's law? Love your neighbor as yourself. You can do that right here in Wayne County. The Bible says: "*Real religion, the kind that passes muster with God the Father, is this: reach out to the homeless and the loveless in their plight.*"

You know, one day Jesus is coming again. And the Bible says we're all going to stand before Him to give an account of our lives. Matthew 25 says God will separate the whole world into two groups: the sheep and the goats. And He'll say to the sheep: "*I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you cared for me; I was in prison and you visited me.*" And they'll say, "When did we do that for you, Lord?" And He'll say: "*When you did it for the least of these, you did it to me.*"

You see, when you do something for someone else in Jesus' name, you're doing it for Him. Now that takes time; it takes energy; and it takes resources, but Jesus said: "*Let me assure you that no one has ever given up anything for love of me and to tell others the Good News who won't be given back a hundred times over.*"

It starts at home, but we must also reach out to those who are beyond our world.

Third, I must care about the whole world. Jesus told the disciples: "*Go into all the world and tell the Good News to everyone.*" Now, this used to be impossible. Can you imagine what the disciples were thinking when Jesus said that? It blew their mind. But today, you can sit at your computer, push one key, and communicate the gospel to someone else on the other side of the world. Today, the United Methodist Church has ministries and missionaries on every continent and in most countries of the world.

We can take the gospel to place the disciples never knew existed. And so, we ought to give generously to support missionaries. And we ought to be putting together short-term mission trips ourselves, because we need to care about the things that God cares about. And God cares about people.

One day, Rick Warren had supper with a Professor Joe, a professor at Peking University, where all the communist leaders are educated. And during the meal, he learned that Professor Joe's father was dying of cancer. So Rick said: "*Professor Joe, my daddy is dying of cancer, but he's not afraid because he had made peace with God. He knows where he is going when he dies.*" And the professor said: "*How does he know?*" So, Rick told him a story. He said there was a man who took his son to the fair and he bought a roll of tickets and every time they came to a ride, he'd count off the right number of tickets and give them to his son and the son would ride. This went on for a long time – ride after ride. And then, they came to the next ride and he started counting out tickets and he looked and there were two hands waiting for a ticket. So he looked down and saw a boy he didn't know and he said: "*Who are you?*" The boy said: "*I'm your son's new best friend; and he said if I was his friend, you would give me a free ticket.*" So, the dad gave the boy a ticket too. Then Rick said: "*Professor Joe, your Heavenly Father, has a ticket for you. It's a free ticket and all you have to do is be best friends with His Son, Jesus.*" And with tears flowing down his face, Professor Joe said: "*Give me one of those tickets.*"

Listen: that's the kind of thing that happens every day, all around the world when ordinary people like me and you care enough to share the gospel with others. Everybody needs Jesus. Steve Green recorded a song a few years back; it's called *The Mission*.

To love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our mission,
the seed from which our service overflows.

Across the street or around the world, the mission's still the same:
proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' name.

We must begin to care about the whole world!

Listen friends, do you really want to start living? Jesus said: "*Only those who throw their lives away for my sake and the sake of the Good News will ever know what it means to really live.*" If you want to live a blessed life, share your faith with somebody else. Start at home; then, reach beyond your world; and then, reach around the world. Tell somebody about Jesus. You're going to heaven; so take somebody with you. That's the mission we were made for.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!