



Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

The Future of the Church: Living Stones

12/6/2020

I work for a hospice company that has eight different offices. Each office has a chaplain or spiritual care provider. One of my jobs is to train the new chaplains and prepare them to feel confident and competent to go out and serve our patients. The training starts with a theory of care and moves to learning skills and interventions to effectively care for people spiritually that are at the end of their life. There is a lot to learn and the new chaplains are often hesitant and apprehensive to go make their first spiritual care visit all by themselves. The hospice patients, however, will not be served or blessed if the spiritual care provider stays in the classroom, and, although the provider can continue to learn, the head knowledge is of little good if they don't put it into practice.

Our experience as disciples and followers of Jesus is not so different. We feel the need to be confident and competent in our service and sacrificial love to others, we want to do it right, we don't want to mess up. We may feel that we might misrepresent Christ if we don't know what we are doing. With this desire to make sure we have the knowledge and right thinking about what he wants us to do, we can easily become passive learners who never put our knowledge into action.

The big words for this are "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxy." Our deep desire to focus on orthodoxy, the right thinking, can keep us from the orthopraxy, actually doing the right practice. But Jesus didn't call us to this kind of inward thinking and focus, but to outward practice and mission. Our fear of doing it wrong can paralyze us into not doing anything but soaking up more knowledge.

Owen Mullenax once said: "Sitting in a church pew does not make you a Christian, just as sitting in a garage does not make you a car." I don't know who Owen Mullenax is, but I know that there is not much action when sitting on the bench. Passive fascination with orthodoxy obscures undeveloped potential, unrealized identity, and untapped power.

God sees us in the success and victory of Jesus on the cross and does not settle on what we think is the best version of ourselves. We have direct access to God from whom our potential, identity, and power already exist within us.

Each of us has a unique role in the kingdom of God and we all have the same Spirit within us. We have undeveloped potential within us waiting to be unleashed and awakened. There is untapped power already deposited within us waiting for us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. Our identity is rooted in that potential and that power that comes from Jesus Christ and our place in his kingdom.

Simply put, you are ready today to put into practice what you have learned so far - you will continue to learn more as you act and do. You do not need to wait for someone to give you permission to step out and put God's love into action, you are called, equipped, commissioned, and empowered to love and care for others with the sacrificial love Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

So Consider...

1. Reflect on what acts of sacrificial love you have done in the past week.
2. Ask God to open your eyes to needs in the lives of the people you encounter everyday.
3. Be. Act. Go. Do. Unleash the latent potential and power of sacrificial love that exists within you.

Take Action: Reach out to our pastoral leadership and explore ways and opportunities for you to love on, serve, and minister to others. Consider opening your home to a Community Group or offering to lead one. Contact info@northendcollective.org.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ~Tess