

## **“BECOMING BRIDGE BUILDERS”**

Proper 8B June 28, 2009

Mark 4:35-41

### **Introduction:**

In the Gospel lesson we read about a woman who had “heard about Jesus”, and found enough faith and courage to touch the hem of his robe hoping for a healing. There are many people in our community who have “heard about Jesus” but have never met Him. What can we do about that?

In two weeks – July 11<sup>th</sup> , between 11:00 am & 2:00 pm - we are hosting “The Garden Party”; a major outreach effort aimed at the Garden Grove neighborhood. This morning I want to remind us “what” we are going to do; and “why” we are doing it.

First, let’s examine

### **“Why” We Are Hosting The Garden Party:**

In explaining the “why” I want to draw your attention to page 11 in your worship folder. You’ll find there a copy of our “Vision, Value, and Mission” statement.

At the top of the page you’ll find a statement from a former Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple. It reads: ***“The church is the only society in the world that exists for the benefit of those who are not yet its members.”*** The reality of the Church is that we are a

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missionary society that exists solely to spread the Good News about what God has done for the human race through the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

We spread this Gospel message through various means. Sometimes, it's verbal: through preaching and teaching, and witnessing. Sometimes, our spreading the Gospel begins with doing things for others that meets needs in their lives. We should always do these 'works of righteousness' supported by prayer. Why?

Because, we are not just doing good things for people as ends to themselves; we do good things with an ulterior motive. The motive is to earn the right to tell people of God's love for them, and introduce them to Jesus Christ.

It is in this spirit that we are hosting the Garden Party. We are offering food, and fun experiences for children in order to meet people who live in the neighborhood. We want to have conversations with them, and from those conversations learn about needs that exist in this community that our church might address.

Ultimately, we hope to establish relationships with people that might result in their learning about Jesus Christ, and worshipping God here at Holy Cross.

The truth is, that Holy Cross has lost touch with

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the historic neighborhood we were launched to serve. In the beginning many of our members lived in this Garden Grove neighborhood. The community was new. The church was new, and we served each other. In those days, the church was filled with young families. My hope is that we might again be the church for this neighborhood, and again have young families gracing us with the joy of children.

So, we are hosting a Garden Party as a first step, a way of 'get going', of gaining momentum toward fulfilling the vision God has given us. What is that vision? I now refer you to page 11 in the worship folder.

**Our Vision:** *That one day everyone in our community will worship God.* Think about that for a moment. What greater gift could we give our community than to help usher in a day when everyone is worshipping God. They don't all have to worship God here at Holy Cross. They can go wherever God leads them; but how much better a place to live will this community be when everyone is worshipping God – some where?

To make such a vision even possible depends on have a core value for people that sees them worthy of worshipping God, and having their sins forgiven.

Therefore,

**Our Core Value:** *We value each person as worthy of having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.*

I truly hope you will allow yourself to agree with this core value – that every person is worthy of having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Not every Christian thinks so. There are any number of Christians who hold that only certain people are worthy of Christ.

I know there are some very evil, awful people. There are people who have done despicable things – things clearly opposed to every sound teaching in the Bible; and most people would agree their actions are not worthy of heaven – Hitler is always an example of that kind of person. However, I'm not talking about being worthy of going to Heaven based upon how good a life one has lived, but rather being judged worthy by God who offered His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ as the sacrifice for every human's sin.

That's what makes us worthy; it's not our own goodness, it's the goodness of Jesus Christ. Many people are living lifestyles that are sinful; yet, they are worthy of having a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, because Christ has already paid for their sin. Now, if we

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can just get them to realize they need a relationship with Jesus, and invite Him into their lives. If we train them to be serious disciples of Jesus, the Lord, He will make the changes needed in their life-styles.

That's the challenge God has given us. It is not to judge other's souls. It is to consider them worthy of the efforts we should expend on their behalf to try to introduce them to Christ.

But, how can we do that if we consider them unworthy of our efforts. We, therefore, need a motive that comes from God's heart, not ours.

**Our Motive:** *Love.* When I say "Love" I'm talking about the highest quality of love possible. It is the kind of love God has for us and is holding out that we might grow into for others.

Having this kind of love is so important that Jesus made it The Great Commandment: (Mark 12:30-31), <sup>30</sup>*and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.* <sup>31</sup>*The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* *There is no other commandment greater than these."*

If this kind of love were easy everyone would already be motivated by it. However, it is not easy

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because it cuts across our fallen human nature, which is much more concerned with 'self' than 'other'. But, through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ we have a chance to become 'Agape' People.

St. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14, *<sup>14</sup>For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.* This says it clearly: Jesus died for all; Jesus' love operating within us compels us to offer everyone a relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

So, you say: "OK, I get it. Jesus' death on the Cross made it possible for everyone to have a relationship with God; and thus everyone is worthy; but to be able to go to everyone we need to be able to love them as God does, right?" But what are we suppose to do, just walk up to people we don't know and tell them God loves them, and Jesus died for them?" Well, yes, you could do that, but long-term there is a better method.

**Our Method:** *Personal Relationships.* What is that expression: "Don't tell me how much you care, show me you care for me, then you can tell me anything".

In the Garden Party we hope to establish personal relationships with people we don't now know. Over time, in a relationship, friendships are established;

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God's love is demonstrated through many acts of service and kindness. Then, one day, the Holy Spirit prompts us. The time is right. A soul and mind is ready to hear about God's love through Jesus Christ. When that happens another soul is saved and the church continues in mission. This is the Ministry of Reconciliation you've heard me say so much about: <sup>18</sup>*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;* (2 Corinthians 5:18) Our method is personal relationships in order to achieve our mission of reaching one child, one person, one family, and one community at a time for Jesus Christ.

**Our Mission:** *Make Disciples.* The mission of the Christian Church is to Make Disciples for Jesus Christ. That is our job description, our reason for being. That is the Great Commandment Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. We place the mission last because without a vision, a core value, a motive for ministry and a Biblical method, the mission remains words on paper, but never shapes our life together.

The image we have for what we are doing – the slogan we adopted is this:

**Our Slogan:** *“Building Bridges Between Us and others, and to God”*

## **BECOMING BRIDGE BUILDERS**

Holy Cross is a Bridge Building Church, and The Garden Party is a bridge building event.

We have a vision that one day everyone in our sphere of influence will be worshipping God. We value every one of those people as worthy of having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Our motive for reaching them is the great love of God through Jesus Christ operating within us. Our method is through personal relationships because God is a personal God, and Jesus dealt with people up close and personal. Our mission is to make disciples for Jesus Christ; and we see ourselves as a bridge building people – building bridges between ourselves and others, and to God.

The Garden Party, when seen in this context of Vision, Value, and Mission is more than an event. It is also a training event for us as God builds us into the congregation He needs to impact this community and our world.

Frankly, we need everyone to participate. Some will need to help with set-up. Some will need to supervise the Bounce House or the Water Slide. Some will need to help Donna in the Children's Story Telling Room. Some will need to help James cook. Some will need to serve food, some will need to clean off tables so others can sit.

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Some will need to be Table Ambassadors and talk with people. Some will need to invest in serious intercessory prayer. Some will need to greet people and make them feel welcome. Some will need to process the survey forms filled out at the tables.

There is something for everyone. Will you commit?

From the Vision Sheet there is a prayer from the BCP, p. 101: Let us pray together:

*“Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.”*