

“OUTSIDE THE BOX (CHURCH)”
Pastor Mike Corwin

TEXT: ACTS 5:12-16

I – OUTSIDE:

What a wonderful day! It's a day we are going to worship outside and then have fellowship together over lunch. I think it's a wonderful day because we are outside that building not only worshipping but doing outreach ministry as well. I asked the band to be loud enough that they can be heard inside the semi's going down the street. That people walking or driving by or living in one of the houses/apartments around will be able to hear the word of God this day because it's not shut in by brick walls and stained glass windows. It's only fair isn't it? We've had no trouble blasting polka music from the stages in town loud enough for all to hear. Yet we are timid in proclaiming the Gospel outside the church. They just did it for three whole days and we're only doing it for one. For three days the presence of greasy sausage smoke has filled the area and left its mark on sidewalks, streets, buildings, and the people. Why aren't we ushering in the presence of God into this community to do the same?

Now...before you think I'm bad mouthing the church as a building let me point out that I'm not. I like and appreciate that building. I am trying to help you make it appealing to future generations and to be a symbol of God's presence in this downtown area. But I do want to change your thinking about the church today. I want you to realize that the church is a place we come together to celebrate and worship, we do need it. Its main use is to bring believers together, no matter what stage of their faith they are at, and then disciple them in the faith. Teach them to Word of God so they can lead others to Jesus Christ.

The majority of ministry – bringing others to the faith – is done outside that building. To reach the people, to spread the Good News of Salvation we need to not only think outside the box but go outside it too.

II – IT'S OUR HISTORY – GREAT COMMISSION:

This has been our story since the beginning of the church. Jesus gave us the model himself. As we read the Scriptures we see that he did go to the Temple to hear the reading of the scrolls that he did go there and worship. But the ministry we see him do was outside the Temple. His greatest sermon was on the side of a hill. He called his disciples from their fishing boats and tax collection booths. His potlucks weren't in the church basement, they were on a grassy hill with fish and bread. He healed blind and lame people beside pools and along the road. The people in the Temple were already ingrained in their ways and they wouldn't let those who were even step foot inside. Jesus came for those who had no faith, or didn't think they were good enough to have God in their lives. The non-believers who needed to hear about the

Kingdom of God, the blind-crippled-and crazy were outside the walls of the Temple and that's where Jesus spent all his time...outside with them telling them about the Kingdom and how to be a part of it.

And after Jesus finished his ministry, after he was murdered and then resurrected, he gave his disciples and us the order to continue this outside ministry. As he was leaving for heaven he said:

Matthew 28:18-20 (CEB)

¹⁸ Jesus came near and spoke to them, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

Jesus commanded his followers to "GO" to all the world and make other believers. He didn't say to put up billboards with catchy slogans. He didn't say to build great cathedrals that looked like castles with the drawbridges up to keep the riff raff out. He said GO. Go and tell people about me. Go and build relationships. Go and love others. GO outside the box and bring in new believers!

III – THEY WENT – PENTECOST:

And they went. They followed his model and directions and because they did the church was born. They watched him ascend into heaven and then they went to Jerusalem and hid out in a room together praying and waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit as Jesus told them to do. It was in that room that what we call Pentecost took place. In Acts 2 we read that they were there praying when the Holy Spirit arrived like a tornado ripping through the room and fell on and empowered them all. The city was filled with people from all over for the festival and all the followers of Jesus started talking in the various language of the people outside. I don't know if the windows were open or if they were just loud but the people heard them outside and claimed they were all drunk.

It was then that it says Peter went out. He didn't go to church to celebrate the Spirit's arrival. He didn't build a shrine. HE WENT OUT and spoke to the people telling them all about Jesus and the church was born. It tells us that about 3,000 people came to believe, got baptized and joined the community of believers – the church – that day. All because Peter stepped out and took the message to the people!

And they didn't stop there. They continued to go out and do their new ministry among the people. In the very next Chapter of Acts, after the story of Pentecost it tells us that Peter and John were on the way to the Temple to pray but along the way they did some ministry.

They got stopped along the way by a crippled man. He was begging for money but instead Peter healed him in the name of Jesus. Because of their actions they got to tell all those who had witnessed it about Jesus and were later able to tell the religious rulers about him too when they called them on the carpet for doing ministry in the name of Jesus. And they told them Jesus was the only way to God (look at Acts 4:12).

IV – TEXT:

The whole book of Acts, which is the history of the early church, has story after story about this outside ministry Jesus sent us to do.

Acts 5:12-16 (CEB)

¹²The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. They would come together regularly at Solomon's Porch. ¹³No one from outside the church dared to join them, even though the people spoke highly of them. ¹⁴Indeed, more and more believers in the Lord, large numbers of both men and women, were added to the church. ¹⁵As a result, they would even bring the sick out into the main streets and lay them on cots and mats so that at least Peter's shadow could fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶Even large numbers of persons from towns around Jerusalem would gather, bringing the sick and those harassed by unclean spirits. Everyone was healed.

The Apostles did their work "Among the People." They didn't do it in the Temple – but outside the Temple on the porch. The unbelieving Jews didn't come too close for fear of being chastised by those who believed. But they though highly of the disciples and stood back and watched and listened. Through the actions of the disciples and the Good News they were telling the people, those who stood back finally came up close and joined the church of Jesus Christ. It says "large numbers" of people came. Men came, Women came, Jews came, Gentiles came, slaves came, prostitutes came, ex-cons came. The people who didn't feel welcome inside the Temple came.

And as their actions in the streets became known, it brought even more people from the city and surrounding towns to them to hear about Salvation and to be healed. They took it outside the box...they took it to the streets where the people who needed Jesus were gathered in large numbers.

V – OUTSIDE THE BOX:

We are still called today to follow the model set by Jesus and the disciples. We are still called to take our faith to the streets. I help you become disciples by preaching to you and teaching Bible study. But I do ministry at a table with coffee at Pelican House or Bob Evans. I do

ministry at the bedside of those in the hospital who have no pastor. I do ministry at the Crawford County Jail, at weddings for nonmembers, and funerals for people whose families have no community for faith to fall on in their time of need. I do ministry talking to people in my office. Just like Jesus I do ministry by going to where the people are...not waiting for them to come to where I'm at one day a week. And you are called to do the same.

Just like Peter and the other Apostles you have the greatest story that has even been and can ever be told!

- God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born in a stable and live among us.
- Jesus traveled the region of Galilee for three years preaching, teaching, and training his disciples to carry out his ministry when he was gone.
- Jesus was abused and crucified for the Salvation of humankind, for the forgiveness of our sins.
- Jesus was resurrected to show that there is life after death and his sacrifice defeated sin and death for everyone who believes in him.
- And Jesus did it for all. Not just his original disciples and followers, but his disciples and followers now and till the end of time.

That's the story you have to tell! That's the story this broken and sinful society needs to hear and grasp. You're not called to lead people to church...you're called to lead people to Jesus. You are called to save souls...not fill pews. If you do it right, the church will fill itself.

That is our heritage. The founder of Methodism wasn't out to start a church...matter of fact he got kicked out of the one he had. He couldn't preach there anymore, so he took this wonderful message of Salvation to the other people who weren't in the church.

He stood at the top of hills and preached to coal miners as they dug into the rock. He stood on top of a tombstone and preached to the people gathered at the cemetery. He went to the bars and told the alcoholics about Jesus. He not only went to the prisons, but rode the cart with the condemned people so he could tell them about Jesus before the noose was put around their neck. He said "The world is my parish."

We already do this in things like back to school carnival and food/clothing pantry. We're doing it today but we have to think outside the box and then take our faith outside the box/church until everyone hears the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its saving power. We ought to show Jesus in this community more than we show a German sausage!

AMEN

God is Great...and he's still working all the time. As I was finishing this message on Tuesday Pastor Becky was leaving to do ministry outside the box and I want her to come and share that with you this morning. (Becky tell story of baptizing a sick infant in the NICU unit at Mt. Carmel Hospital).

