



## Go Home to Your People

Mark 5:18-20

### I. INTRO

- A. Today we are **beginning a new series** that will take us up to Palm Sunday followed by Easter Sunday. Our series is titled: **Becoming Salt and Light: Making a Difference in Your World**. (Just to provide some context, we've been very intentional about our sermon series' beginning last Fall. Becoming salt and light comes from Mat 5 where we spent some time studying the Beatitudes, which is the introduction to the SOTM. Our intention is to go back into the SOTM after Easter. More about that in the coming weeks...)
1. Also, at some level, this Lenten series is a continuation of the Back to Basics series that we just completed last weekend. And more specifically, it's a natural continuation of Pastor Chris' sermon last weekend "Caring for the Lost, Poor, Sick, and Broken Hearted."
  2. We would like to begin a conversation with you today about personal evangelism.
  3. Now, before the cold sweat comes or you begin to sink into the quicksand of guilt (Catholic or otherwise), I will say that our aim is to take **a little different approach** than many—if not most—contemporary churches.
  4. We want to ask the question, "**What does the New Testament say about how God's church impacts culture?**" For some of you this may be a review but for many of you we are expecting that this will be a whole new paradigm.
  5. The big picture overview that can be seen in the NT is that we don't want to launch a program, we want to (re-) initiate a **lifestyle perspective** regarding the people that God has already placed in our lives.
- B. Before we jump in I'd like to review **two theological perspectives** that have already been introduced (or, re-introduced) over the last 6-months...

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1. Sometimes we confuse the fruit for the goal...

- a. Church is not the goal, it's the fruit. So, what IS the goal? The goal is to perceive, live into, and expand the KOG. The KOG and the Church are not the same thing.

- 1) Jesus came to establish the KOG on the earth. Let's look for a moment at what Jesus said:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME,  
Because HE anointed ME to preach the gospel to the poor.  
HE has sent ME to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
TO set free those who are oppressed,  
TO proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."* --Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 61:1-2ff

- 2) Most Jesus followers stumble over the word "preach, yet it simply means to "announce good news" (e.g., a herald, "hear ye, hear ye...").
- 3) When you get a chance, read all 11 verses of Isaiah 61. It is a beautiful description of how the KOG will spread and eventually prevail.
- 4) So, the GOAL is to continue to propagate the KOG on the earth and the FRUIT of that propagation is the Church. And the capital "C" Church has been multiplied into millions of smaller **social units** we call **local churches**. And every local church, like individual believers, is **distinctive** in its manner and **calling** to love and serve the surrounding community (Summit #1).
- 5) Here's a way to think about it: **We serve a missionary God. The Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit sends us.**
- 6) In this sense, we are all missionaries. In fact, here's what I would tell you... No matter what we do to earn a living, our real vocation, our TRUE vocation is that of a missionary. (And there's no such thing as retirement, only reassignment.)
- 7) So, the Church is the fruit of a kingdom focus and kingdom endeavor.

b. A second way we tend to **confuse the fruit for the goal** is thinking (or believing) that the Great Commission (Mat 28:19-20) is the goal of the Church – *“go and make disciples...”*

1) But the Great Commission is NOT the goal, it’s the fruit. So, what’s the goal? The goal is the Great Commandment found in Matthew 22:37-42...

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”*—Matthew 22:37-42

2) Jesus sums-up the whole OT Law and Prophets into two commandments: **Love God and Love People**. THIS is the primary calling of the active intentional follower of Jesus. (It’s simple but it’s not easy...there are so many things and people that vie for our **undivided attention**.)

3) The Westminster Confession<sup>1</sup> (which took pastors and theologians 5-years to write, and was finished in 1647) got this right when it asked the 1<sup>st</sup> question: “What is the chief end of humankind?” With the answer being: “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

4) So, the GOAL of the Christian life is to pursue a passionate love for God and people – and the FRUIT of the loving God and loving people is that we are to GO, and make disciples...”

5) **There will always be EGR’s in our lives** (Extra Grace Required)

C. **This** is where we—our staff and elders—want to lovingly challenge you this Lenten season...**In holy anticipation of Resurrection Sunday, let’s petition God to increase and expand our insight and understanding of the beauty and the power of the gospel AND to grace us with an increased awareness of and love for the people that God has already placed in our lives.** (This is NOT a program; this is a lifestyle. This is our discipleship ministry.)

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<sup>1</sup> A church confession, or catechism, was written as a discipleship tool used by churches to provide a basic overview of the essential truths of the Christian faith.

D. So, **after the longest introduction in sermon history**, let's take a look at our text for this morning...I would like to read Mark 5:18-20 (p. 833) [stand?]: *"As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. <sup>19</sup> But Jesus said, "No, go **home** [oikos] to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been."<sup>20</sup> So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns [Decapolis<sup>2</sup>] of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them."* –Mark 5:18-20 [This is the Word of the Lord, pray with me...]

## II. BODY

A. I've titled this sermon "Go Home to Your People." My goal for my remaining time is threefold:

1. To take a quick look at the Greek word "*oikos*" (which is at the heart of this Lenten sermon series – Becoming Salt and Light.)
2. To help us consider who "our people" are.
3. To provide some biblical perspective on how to identify begin to pray for, and to practically love and serve the people that (I would say) God has sovereignly placed in our lives.

B. Let's look at them one at a time...

1. The (Greek) word "*oikos*"
  - a. You might know *oikos* as a popular brand of yogurt, but I would like to introduce you to what many theologians and church historians refer to as the *oikos* principle.
  - b. The word *oikos* is used 120 times throughout the NT and is most often translated *house* or *household*—not the structure but the inhabitants.
  - c. Here's my best and most concise description (or definition) of *oikos*:  
*Oikos is a social system composed of those connected to each other*

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<sup>2</sup> A federation of 10 Greco-Roman cities on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire where Greek settler-soldiers and their families lived and had their own court system, currency, temples, theaters, and armies. There was no love lost between the Jewish people and the inhabitants of the Decapolis.

through shared ties and/or tasks. (Your sphere of consistent connections.)

- d. I would point out here that **anthropologists** have identified three universal units of every society and every culture throughout recorded history, which are social systems based on 1) common kinship, 2) common community, and 3) common interests.
- e. **So, why are talking about our *oikos*?** Because, in the NT the *oikos* principle became ***oikos evangelism***, which became the **chief strategy that God used to expand the KOG and populate the church.**
- f. Michael Green, in his classic book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, (1970) observes that the NT Church **vigorously adhered to the *oikos* principle as its primary strategy** for the advance of God's kingdom.
  - 1) The early Christians knew when the message of faith was heard and demonstrated by friends and family who were known, and trusted; barriers to the gospel were removed and receptivity to the message increased dramatically.
  - 2) **Epistle to Diognetus**—a letter to a friend explaining why Christianity was growing so quickly. It has been dated between 130-200 AD... "Christians busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They live in their own native lands, but they live as aliens. For every foreign country is to them as their native land, and every native land is as their foreign country. They marry and have children, but they do not kill unwanted babies. They share their table with everyone, but they don't share their bed with everyone. They love everyone but are persecuted by all. They are poor and make many rich. They are short of everything and yet have plenty of everything. They are treated outrageously but behave respectfully. They are mocked and blessed in return. When they do good, they are attacked. When they are attacked, they rejoice as if being given new life."<sup>3</sup>
  - 3) What we see is that life **change**—or life **transformation**—catches the attention of people. One of these days you might

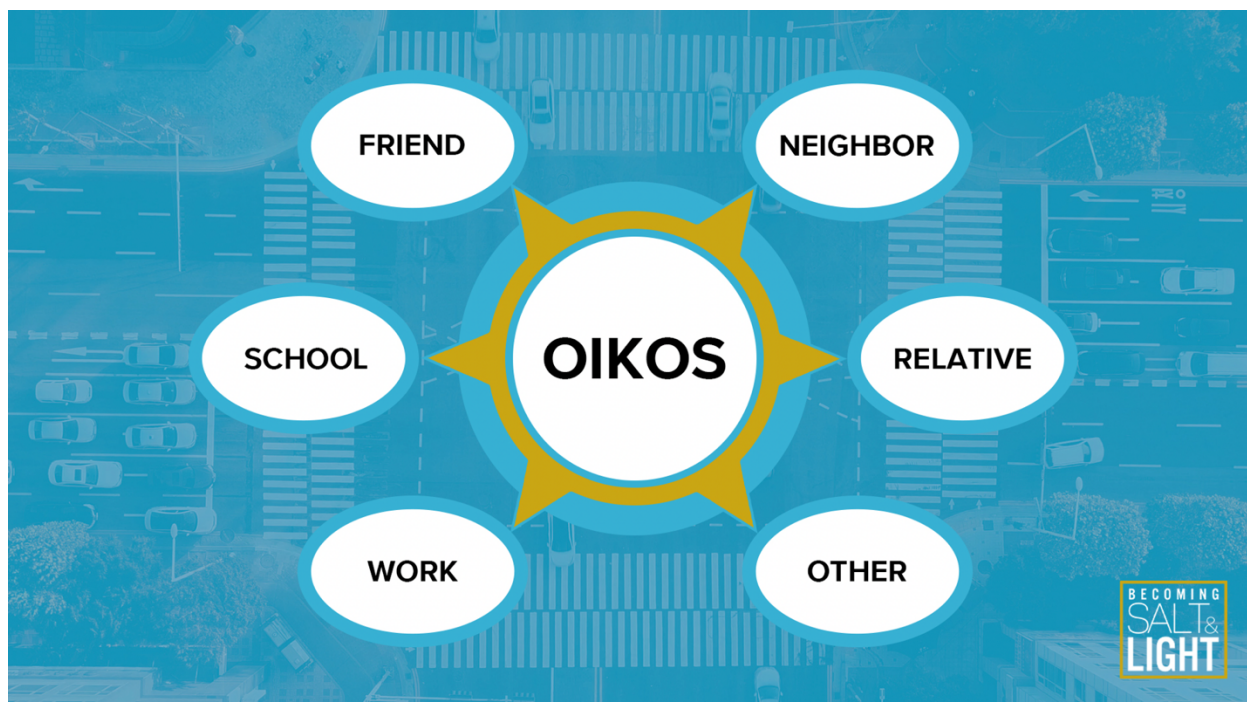
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<sup>3</sup> Epistle to Diognetus. Dated between 130-200 A.D. The anonymous author of this Epistle gives himself the title Mathetes, which means "a learner, pupil, or a disciple."

have someone at work say to you, “You’re kind of a jerk, so why are you being so kind to me?”

2. Who are “our people”?

- a. This shouldn’t be too hard to figure out...Our *oikos* consists of all the people we come into contact with on a regular consistent basis. It encompasses our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, the other parents of your kid's sport team, your hairstylist, your golf buddies, your business associates, your mechanic, your carpool buddies, your dentist, etc.



- 1) In other words, we would say that every person in this room (or watching online) has a distinct and measurable *oikos*.
- 2) Husbands and wives certainly have overlapping *oikoses* but each one also has a distinct and separate *oikos*—and your children also have an overlapping *oikos* with you but they also have a growing distinct and separate *oikos*...
- b. ***Oikos* Card??** Statistically, the vast majority of us have between 8-15 people in our *oikos* who are unchurched unbelievers, or “de-churched” people.

- c. When we took the online survey last summer the survey response was that 63% of us have 6+ non-church going friends and 34% had 11+.
- d. Fill out the card... It might be good to involve your children??
- 3. **How to pray for and practically love and serve the people that God has sovereignly placed in our lives.**
  - a. We will talk more about this next week but here's an overview...
    - 1) After you've written down the names, place the card somewhere where you'll see it consistently – your Bible, on the refrigerator, or your bathroom mirror. Then pray for them.
    - 2) When you have the opportunity to interact with people on your list **be fully present** with them. Listen well. Don't try and fix them or give advice that isn't asked for. Empathy is a better relational connector than sympathy.
    - 3) Here's the big idea that's printed on your bulletin: **The universal longing for full acceptance and belonging is the core issue that must be addressed (and hopefully experienced) in our evangelistic efforts.** (Augustine: Our hearts are restless...)
    - 4) It is always helpful to keep in mind that when we were at our worst, on the most depraved day (or season) of our lives, Jesus was loving us at that very moment.
  - b. Here's what I really want you to hear today: What we're talking about here – the *oikos* principle or *oikos* evangelism is not a program that we're introducing to try and grow our church. Church growth is the fruit not the goal. What we're talking about here is our desire to get back to **the basics of the Christian life, which is to love God, love people, participate in the expansion of God's Kingdom, and serve faithfully in a local church.**

### III. CONCLUSION

- A. As we move toward celebrating the Lord's Supper, I'll close with this verse from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of 1 Cor 9:19-23: ***"I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ. But I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I***

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*did all this because of the [Gospel]. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!" --1 Corinthians 9:19-23, MSG*

- B. As I pray and we move into celebrating the Lord's Supper, I'd like to invite our ushers forward to release you to come and receive the elements. Please hold on to the elements as you return to your seats and we will partake together.
- C. Pray with me...

## Communion

Let's consider for a moment the distinction between "Union with Christ" and "Communion with Christ."

- Union with Christ is a one-time legal declaration of righteousness granted by God to the repentant sinner. We are united with Christ by grace – and you may have heard me say, if you are "in Christ," all that is true of Jesus is now true of you.
- As believers we now enter into Communion with God, which is fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Our life is now about a growing intimacy with God through surrender, confession, learning and loving with other believers.
- What I'd like for us to see this morning is that our Union with Christ can never be disrupted if you are a believer but our Communion with God CAN and is disrupted as we veer into selfishness and sin.
- This morning let's distinguish between our Union with Christ and our Communion with Christ and celebrate the Father's love. Like the younger prodigal in Lk 15, no matter where we've been or what we've done, we are lovingly and joyfully embraced as we find our way home.
- If you are not a believer here's what needs to happen: Accept that you are a sinner in need of a Savior, Believe that Jesus died for your sins (past, present, and future), and Commit the rest of your life to Him.