

What we VALUE – Mission-Shaped
Matthew 28:16-20
Rev'd Chris Johnson

In this series we have been looking at the four Values in Vision 26. This morning we come to the value “**mission shaped**”. For some churches mission gets loaded last onto the good ship Ecclesiania. As soon as you hit some rough seas it is the first crate to go overboard.

In Vision 26 we declare our determination to be a church that is on mission, to not let mission slip off the ship. We want to be obedient to Christ's call to go and make disciples of all nations.

When we hear that command we often only think about it in individual terms. It may be our western way of thinking or we think about brave souls like David Livingstone going to Africa and decide it is for individuals to hear the call of God and be obedient. But making disciples is also a corporate activity, something we are called to do as a Church.

With the individualistic model, if you don't have the gift of evangelism you can very easily get discouraged and see the job of making disciples as belonging to someone else. I would like us to develop an understanding of church that means everyone has a part to play in making disciples. Every gift, every ministry can be harnessed to further God's mission. Everyone can feel they are a part of this great task of making disciples.

At the same time I want to make sure we give special honour to those who have the gift of evangelism. It is a precious and vital gift for the body and it is a gift that should get much more recognition and encouragement than it usually does.

So this morning I want us to think what it means to be a **mission-shaped church**. How do we give special honour to those who are evangelists but also recognise that every gift is contributing to the mission of the church.

Matthew 28:19 should be a very familiar passage to you, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

What does it mean to make disciples?

A Disciple is a wholehearted follower of Christ. Being a disciple has a beginning. There has to be a conscious decision to turn your back on the world and say the central focus of my life is now Jesus Christ. This decision is based on a realisation of all that God has done for you in Christ. It is based on the fact that Christ died on the cross for your sins and rose on the third day to give you a new life in God. It is based on a vision of the Kingdom of God and wanting to make it happen.

It may take a few weeks or even months to contemplate all this and make a decision for Christ. It may come to you in a lightning flash where it all becomes so clear. Either way a decision, a commitment has to be made. You can't be a disciple without commitment.

It is the work of the evangelist to make the gospel clear so that people realise they need Christ, reach out to him to be saved and make the commitment to follow.

In the Great Commission Jesus says once a person has made that commitment they are to be *“baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* Baptism is the outward sign of that inward commitment to be a disciple.

Once a person makes a decision and undergoes baptism they then have to **grow as a disciple**. Jesus goes on in v22 to say, *“Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* We grow through teaching. Matthew is the longest Gospel and it is full of teaching. It is in Matthew that we get the Sermon on the Mount as well as many other parables and teaching that is only in Matthew. This teaching grows us as disciples.

This teaching should **inform all of the ministries of our church** and it is all the ministries which help the church grow disciples - worship, welcoming, connect groups, pastoral care, community mission, wider mission, children's ministry, youth ministry, women's ministry, men's ministry and administration. All of these ministries have a part to play in growing a person as a disciple.

Worship opens the disciple's heart to the glory of God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Pastoral care reassures the disciple of God's shepherding concern for them.

Connect group takes the disciple deeper into God's word.

Community and wider mission stretches the disciple to be Christ to the world and make a difference.

Every ministry should be geared to making disciples not just in the sense of the start, but the ongoing sense of growing. The making of a disciple is about developing a well equipped, mature follower of Christ.

As well, all of these ministries should have an evangelistic influence. We want any unbeliever who is considering Jesus Christ, to be helped by these ministries towards a decision for Christ. Or as I put it in E-News this week, every ministry has a mission edge and we need to sharpen that edge and use it to chisel the church into a mission shape.

This week we were going to be doing the **National Church Life Survey**. Now it will be next week. This survey is very important for us to develop our church into a mission shape. The NCLS will give us a snapshot of who we are as a church and help me, Lynda, Brad and the other leaders think through in more detail how to develop this mission edge.

As well it is designed to link in with the National Census that was done last year. The National Church Life Survey linked with the local data from the Census will give us information for planning our mission.

So please engage with the survey and help us with our mission.

I want to leave you with this illustration of the church and its mission.

Think of an arrow.

It has a sharp point at one end, a shaft, and feathers at the other end.

-For the arrow to reach its target it needs a sharp point to make its way through the air and then to be able to stick into the target.

-It also needs the feathers at the other end to give it flight and stability.

We might like to think of the church in terms of the arrow. The sharp pointy end is **evangelism**. It cuts through the air, takes us forward, penetrates people's hearts and brings them to Christ.

We might like to think of the feathers as all **the other ministries of the church**.

In Vision 26 we have identified 12 ministries in the church as well as evangelism. So it is like the arrow has 12 feathers giving it stability and direction in this great task of making disciples.

For the arrow to be effective it needs both ends, the pointy end and the feathers. Likewise the church needs all the ministries, all the gifts if it is to travel straight and true and fulfil the Great Commission.

So don't ever think your ministry or your role is unimportant. Every ministry contributes to the mission. We simply need to make sure every ministry is focused in its goals so that the church travels straight and true.

So my prayer is that each one of you will find your place in this great task; that you will know your gift and then join a team in this church so that we might be a healthy body that can achieve its mission. I pray you will come to see the connection between your ministry and the task of making disciples. Because when you see that connection, it is then that we will become a mission-shaped church **Living to Love and Proclaim Jesus**.