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**Oak Grove UMC**  
**October 1, 2017**  
**The Mission: Reach Out**

**Matthew 25: 31-46**

<sup>31</sup>“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup>Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup>And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

**(Slide 1: The Mission)**

Throughout this month we're focusing on the Mission of the Church. We do a lot of great ministry here at Oak Grove. So much that sometimes we can get so caught up in doing and doing and doing, that we kind of lose our focus on what really matters.

So at the beginning of the summer I called together a small group to take a look at all the things we do as a church and categorize them into Ministry Areas so that we could work together more effectively. To help us focus,

We asked, “what are the BIG biblical ideas that describe the essential work of the church?”

Here's what we came up with:

**(Slide 2: House Graphic)**

Love God. Based on Deuteronomy 6: 5

Love One Another. Based on John 13:34

Meet Together. Based on Hebrews 10:24&25

Reach Out to care for the least of these. Based on Matthew 25:40

Good Stewards. Based on 1 Peter 4:10

Essentially, the mission of the Church is love.

Loving God,

loving one another,

meeting together to stay focused on love,

Reaching out to love our neighbors through service and

being good stewards of the resources God has provided us so that we can love all the more.

This week’s focus is: Reach Out to care for the Least of these based on Matthew 25: 40

**(Slide 3: ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ (Matt. 25:40))**

‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

And the “this” that Jesus is talking about in this teaching is to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, care for the sick, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit prisoners.

- This *\*should\** be a challenging teaching because it asks us to step out of our comfort zones
- And yet, we love feeding the hungry, we aspire to be more welcoming to strangers, and we are delighted by the stories of transformation that come out of prison ministries.
  
- This teaching *\*should\** feel uncomfortable because Jesus identifies himself with the least of these -- Christ the Refugee, Christ the Homeless One, Christ the Inmate...
- And yet,
  - we celebrate the Christmas story where Jesus' family were refugees in Egypt fleeing the violence of King Herod,
  - many Christian monastic orders emulate Jesus' homeless and possessionless ministry by taking vows of poverty,
  - and we remember that Jesus was arrested and executed as a criminal, every time we take communion.
  
- This teaching *\*should\** feel very culturally dissonant because in American culture we are used to being judged as individuals on our own merits and in this story God is judging the "nations,."
- And yet, we find comfort in the idea that since we can't care for all of the least of these as individuals, that God actually expects us to work together, as nations, or people groups -- *ethne* in the original koinonia Greek --We're in this work together!

We love this teaching!

Which is why Reaching Out is such a popular Mission Area here at Oak Grove.

**(Slide 4: Reach Out house portion)**

Before I ever got here, you already had

- a food barrel for the foodbank
- An annual tradition of making health kits for UMCOR
- A women's clothing closet which is free to anyone,

- The English Tea which is a fundraiser for United Methodist Women's mission work, and
- You had just let go of serving dinner at Outside In

One of the priorities that you presented me with when I got here was to help you be more involved in serving the local community, so we experimented with the week of service last Lent and

- one of the things that really resonated with people was being a part of feeding people at Clackamas Service Center, so we made sack lunches last week.
- You also said that you wanted to serve families with children, and the new Boys and Girls club down the street was looking for a Church to partner with, so we're experimenting with hosting their annual Christmas dinner for their neediest families as our One Big Thing for Christmas season.
- Many of you have also said that we need to do "something" about the issue of homelessness that is so visible here in Oak Grove, so we've been in conversation with the County Homelessness group about the possibility of becoming a Cold Weather Emergency Shelter -- which is a big job. So maybe we want to try volunteering at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Gladstone to support them in opening as an emergency shelter this year?
- And I was also approached by the SON network of churches, to see if we would be interested in taking a turn housing and providing meals for a family with children at the church for a period of two weeks, which would also require a lot of commitment.
- And there were many more suggestions that came up in our Town Hall meetings last week!

I love that we have such a passion for Reaching out to care for the least of these in this church!

But I am profoundly grateful that God calls us to do our part, not to do it all! The real challenge for this Mission Area is to choose the few good things we can do well -- the things we have enough people, enough resources, enough money, enough space, and enough energy to do well enough to be a blessing to our community. And then to release the rest of the good and

wonderful ideas to the Church Universal, trusting God with the big picture outcome.

We can't do it all, so what is God calling us to do here and now?

To help us answer that question, I'm going to continue to ask you to do 3 things:

**(Slide 5: 3 things)**

1. **Be a part of the conversation.** We came up with many good ideas at our town hall meetings last week. Now, I need you to continue to be a part of the conversation by filling out the survey in our newsletter and returning it to the office. And please be honest. I'm asking you to only mark the things you are actually willing to volunteer with or financially support.
2. **Pray.** Prayerfully fill out that survey. Because the question isn't, "what do I feel like doing," the real question is, "where is God calling me to serve?" So take a moment to pray before you fill out the survey.
3. Then, respond to God's call and **serve**. Serve because you feel called, and what you are doing adds meaning to your life, not because nobody else was willing to do it. And be willing to say no to things that God is not calling you to do.

Let's discern together: How is God calling us to live out our Mission of Love here and now?

Then let's do it, together.