

Experiencing Jesus Together

September 16, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Kumfer

Today we're going to begin with our mission statement. This is the guiding principle for our church and school and everyone who is a part of our community here. So, our mission statement is: At Our Savior's Way we glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by forming relationships, experiencing Jesus together and sharing God's love. Last week Pastor Tyson reminded us of the importance of forming relationships.

When my family and I first came here, everything that you've heard about this church was true. We're a friendly church. There's a lot happening here. This is a great area, the schools are great. There's so much to do. And I believe all those things still are true but I also think that they hide one underlying truth that many people who live here and come to this place experience. And that is that this can be a very lonely and isolated place.

As I say this, I'm at least partially aware of some of the reasons that this is true. People are only here for a few years because of their work. It's so expensive to live here that there isn't time for much besides work. The kid's schedules are crazy and it's hard to keep up. I'm connected, see I have 200 Facebook friends and 300 followers on Instagram.

Part of me wants to keep going because I feel like I'm justifying why the loneliness and isolation that I feel isn't important. I need to keep up a good face and be strong for all of you, for my family. But the truth is that we all can feel very lonely and isolated even in

our friendly church. And that's why today we're going to talk about the second part of our mission statement, experiencing Jesus together.

Over the past several weeks Emily Sonstroem and I have been having conversations with the confirmation kids who will be confirmed next month. We're asking them questions about their time in confirmation and the values that we will be talking about as part of our "Together with God's Vision" series. During one of these conversations, one of the students said, "High school needs a lot of Jesus." Emily, the student's parents, and I laughed because that statement was so true and wise from a freshman in high school. What I don't think this student realized is that it's not just high school that needs a lot of Jesus.

In the Gospel reading for today, it's as though Jesus has read our minds and knows exactly the loneliness and isolation we face because he said, "7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Jesus is telling us how to experience him now, today. He tells us to abide in Him. To abide is to act in accordance with something but it also carries the feeling of doing something without wavering or failing. To abide is to keep in contact, to keep close. Jesus is telling us to keep close to him and His laws so that we might have joy.

When we abide in Jesus we are loved. Love is such a powerful emotion and more and more I think people are afraid of it because love is something that we never quite fully understand. But Jesus says that He loves us. He loves us and wants us to remain in that love. It's not going anywhere. There is nothing you could ever do to stop God from loving you. But we all know that there are things we do that distance ourselves from God.

First and foremost among them are our busy schedules. As we're ramping up in the school year and getting closer to Christmas those schedules are filling up pretty quickly if they haven't already. And when those things come up the first thing that often falls off is our time with Jesus. We don't come and worship every week. We forget to spend time reading God's word or praying to Him. We forget Him because He isn't that physical presence right beside us. But as much as we forget, God abides.

God doesn't waver or change. He doesn't leave us on a whim to do something else. He is faithful, always with us. And that's a great thing because we need Him. We need him to combat the loneliness and isolation that is becoming more and more of a problem in the world.

I think Jesus foresaw that too because the commandment He gave us so that we would abide in Him was to "love one another as I have loved you."

It is very true that high school needs a lot of Jesus.....The world needs a lot of Jesus.....

We need a lot of Jesus.

In His infinite mercy, Jesus provided for that too. His command to love one another is our opportunity to experience Jesus together every day. When we show love to our friends, to our neighbors, to our co-workers, to our enemies we experience the love Jesus has for us. And what's more, when we share that love with others, they get to experience Jesus too.

And there will still be times that we feel lonely and isolated, but Jesus has got that covered too. In the book of Hebrews Paul reminds us what to do so that we might abide in Christ. He says, "23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

We experience Jesus together. That confession of our hope is our confession of Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Jesus who loves us and sacrificed everything so that we wouldn't be separated from Him, but together with Him. And being together with Him means that we have work to do.

The work is glorifying His name and making disciples for Him so that no one has to be isolated or alone any longer. By abiding in Jesus we draw them in. We encourage one another. We stir one another up in love and good works.

And we do not neglect meeting together. We do not. But we encourage one another more and more to meet together, here and in the world because the day is approaching when we will abide with Jesus forever. But until that day comes, it is our mission here at Our Savior's Way to glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by forming relationships, experiencing Jesus together and Sharing God's love.

Because what we have through Christ is great! What we have is worth sharing. When we experience Jesus together in worship, small groups, and conversations at the coffee shop or wherever God puts us he has the blessed assurance of Him in us.

Because I think we can all agree, the world needs more Jesus. So, let's bring it to them. Through His holy and precious name, Amen.