Matthew 5:14-16

We are on week 2 of our Vision Series, and as you’ve already heard this morning from our Vision Team members and specifically from Molly Pitkin, we are going to spend this time looking deeply into our new mission statement which was revealed last week after a year of prayer, learning, and listening. Again, Colonial’s mission is “To be the light of Christ in a hurting culture so that the lost are found, the broken are made whole, the fatherless find hope, and our city is blessed.”

As Molly mentioned, this mission statement was “discovered” by a team of people who spent many, many hours together in prayer, study, conversation, and discernment. Again, the Vision Team Members included Steve Aliber, our current Clerk of Session; Jim Cannon, our former Clerk of Session; Brian Mack, our Elder of Strategic Planning; Ken Kurtz…a current Elder at Wornall; Kevin Nunnally…a recent Elder at Wornall; Meda Green…Chair of Deacons at Quivira; Molly Pitkin…high school youth leader at Quivira; Ken Blume…Executive Director of Programs and Ministries; and me as the Lead Pastor. We benefitted greatly from our facilitator, Ted Vaughn, who guided us through a wonderful process of discovery.

Now, before I jump into unpacking the Mission Statement, let me address some of your questions that I’ve been asked over the past week.

First, I was asked why words like “making disciples” and “doing everything for the glory of God” were left out of our mission statement. That is an excellent question. Let me be perfectly clear: every person on the Vision Team initially agreed that our mission as a church was to make disciples and bring glory to God! In fact, for the first several hours of our meeting on the purpose of our existence as a church, those were the only two ideas we could come up with! However, as we prayed and talked and prayed some more, what we realized is this: those words mean EVERYTHING to those of us inside of the church, but they mean almost NOTHING to those outside of our church. Which led us to the first of many convictions about our mission statement, which was this: Our mission statement should be easily understood by those who are not yet believers and/or those who are unfamiliar with biblical terminology. Now…we have documents that clearly state our theological convictions regarding disciple making and bringing glory to God and many other doctrinal statements: 1) we have the EPC Essentials of the Faith that we endorse to the letter; 2) we have the Westminster Standards and Confessions that provide us with our system of doctrine; and 3) we have an abbreviate statement of our Beliefs that we have created for our website and literature. Trust me: Colonial will always be bold, clear, and faithful to express what we BELIEVE, but that’s not what a mission statement is designed to accomplish. The Mission Statement says in no uncertain terms: This is what we are all about…and this is what we are committed to do. And because of the way that our mission statement is
written...because it paints pictures of Jesus as a light in the darkness, pictures of lost people coming home, broken people becoming whole, fatherless people experiencing hope, and our city being blessed...our mission statement also creates a VISION of what will come about if we are faithful to our mission. The vision comes to life in our imaginations when we recite the mission statement, and that was also one of our goals.

Another concern that I heard expressed was that the mission seems to be all about reaching people who are not in the church. In other words, “What about those of us who are already in the church? Shouldn’t our mission include those who are already here?”

Again...that’s a good question. So here’s how I would respond: Do you think there are any lost people who come to church on Sundays? Yep. Do you think we have broken people in our church who need healing in their lives? Yep. Do you think we have people who come into our church every week who are trapped in an orphan mindset? Yep. Do you think that people from our city regularly attend our church? Obviously, right? So...clearly our mission is not JUST for the people who are “out there.” Agreed? Our mission statement is inclusive of those “out there” and those “in here.”

That said, I embrace the tension of the famous statement made by William Temple, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, who said: “The church is the only organization that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are NOT its members.” When I read Jesus, I have no choice but to agree with the Archbishop. Clearly our corporate identity is, in it’s very essence, missional, even though our common life together is vital to accomplishing that mission. As Jesus said in John 17, our unity will show the world that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus taught in John 13:35 that our love for one another is the way the world will come to know that we are disciples of Jesus. What happens inside the church is incredibly important...what happens inside the church can make or break our mission...but what happens inside the church is NOT our mission. Our mission is to be the light of Christ in a hurting culture so that the lost are found, the broken are made whole, the fatherless find hope, and our city is blessed! That’s our mission, amen?

Now, I will breakdown our mission statement into 7 small parts and quickly unpack each part as time allows.

1) The first part of our mission statement is this: “to be the light of Christ...” As I touched on briefly last week, Jesus says to his disciples in Matthew 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”
Here in Matthew 5 Jesus makes an identity statement about those who are His disciples: “You are the light of the world.” He doesn’t suggest that they spread light, or create light, or reflect light…He just said, “YOU ARE THE LIGHT.” And to emphasize his point, he points to a lit up city on a hill on a dark evening and states the obvious, “A city on a hill CANNOT be hidden.” That city doesn’t have to work on being seen at night because by its very nature as a city that is exposed on a hilltop, it simply CANNOT be missed…it sticks out because it cannot do otherwise. To make the point even more redundantly, Jesus says, “People do not light a lamp and then put it under a basket.” That comment was intended to make you laugh, by the way. It’s utterly ridiculous…it’s like ancient slapstick humor…Jesus was a funny dude. Seriously, it’s so silly that the disciples surely chuckled, because everyone knows that if you are going to burn up the precious oil and wick of an ancient lamp, you are going to do so with the purpose of lighting up the darkness…no one would ever think to light a lamp and then hide it under a basket…that’s just hilarious.

Do you see the point that Jesus is making? His point is obvious and redundant: If you are my disciples, you will shine! You won’t really even need to try…you just have to be you, and you will bring light into the darkness wherever you are. You will not be able to hide, even if you want to. Like a city on a hill, you will stick out. Like a lit lamp in a dark room, you will provide light so that everyone in the room can see and share in the warmth of the light that is in you. And oh, by the way…I lit the lamp…I put my light in you…and I did not put my light in you for you to hide away unseen by those who are trapped in the darkness. You get that, right?

Now, please understand, Jesus speaks these words to those who love Him, who have left everything to follow Him, and those who, in every sense of the word, were His students and apprentices. Those sitting at the feet of Jesus receiving these words were not mildly interested spectators who found the teachings of Jesus to be interesting! He was speaking to His disciples…he was speaking to His church! The true CHURCH of Jesus is comprised of those who are His disciples…those who are saved, called, and willing to do His bidding. Such is why we can say with all certainty that the MISSION of HIS church called Colonial is “to be the light of Christ,” because that’s exactly what he just said.

Jesus concludes by saying, “So let your light shine in front of other people, so that they may see your good works…” How will people see the light of Christ in us? They will see Jesus in us by our actions…not our intentions. They will see the light of Jesus in us when we show up, not when we agree with doctrine. They will see the light of Jesus in us when we step into their darkness and allow our light to shine right there in front of them…there is no concept here that people will see the light of Christ by coming to where we are…we must go to where they are.

2) That leads us to the second part of our mission statement: “in a hurting culture.” Our mission is to be the light of Christ in a hurting culture…not to be the light of Christ that avoids...
interaction or engagement with our hurting culture. This is a big deal. Too many Christians and churches have decided that the culture is going straight to hell and we would do well to get out of their way. Consequently we build high walls and withdraw, we try to protect our children from the culture, we spend all of our time with other Christians, and over time we become completely unfamiliar with and unengaged with the culture around us.

Let me tell you something: the culture is going straight to hell…that much is true. In other words, everyone who has not been forgiven in Jesus Christ is going to hell. That is biblical, it is horrible, and that is EXACTLY the reason that Jesus Christ became flesh, dwelt among us, suffered the cross, and rose again on the third day…so that NO ONE would ever have to go to hell. If the justice of God does not await those who are unjust…if the eternal punishment of hell does not await those who have done evil…the crucifixion of the Son of God makes no sense whatsoever. Here’s what Jesus said in Matthew 13:41-42, “The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Again, in Matthew 13:49-50, Jesus says, “So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Now, I know I just offended a ton of people, and some of you are new here today and you don’t know me very well. Listen: I am a Wake Forest/Princeton Seminary graduate…ask anyone in town and they’ll tell you that I’m a geeky intellectual and hardly an “unsophisticated” thinker…and with all that being said, I’m telling you right now…hell is real. People are going there because they are unrepentant and unforgiven. Hell is real, and it is a horror that exceeds our imaginations…it is something that you would not wish upon your worst enemy. Go home today and Google “hell testimonies” on YouTube. There are dozens, perhaps hundreds of people who are giving their testimonies that God showed them hell, or that they died for a few minutes on earth and found themselves in hell. Just listen to ten of those testimonies and keep in mind…only one of them has to be true for hell to exist. The similarities among the testimonies from all over the world are striking, and the urgency of those giving the testimonies is obvious and convincing. I remember a 70 year old lady in one of our membership classes a few years ago broke down and shared with us that she had coded on the table when she was a 26 year old unbeliever and immediately found herself in hell…she couldn’t stop crying. She described her experience in detail, and it sounds almost exactly like dozens of other testimonies I’ve listened to from people all over the world. Listen church: If you tell me that you believe the Bible is true, and you acknowledge that souls are perishing and falling into eternal torment, you should understand how absolutely WRONG it is for those who have the hope of heaven to withdraw from those who are destined for hell. Jesus said it best, “It is not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick.”
Such is one of the many reasons why our missional commitment is to be the light of Christ IN a HURTING culture. Do you know our culture is hurting? Do you care? Suicide is on the increase amongst our students. Some 42000 people died of opioid overdoses in 2016, and that number is on the rise in 2018. Depression has become the norm amongst young women, and the majority of men in America now have or have recently had an addiction to pornography. Many people are hurting because they have been deeply wounded…many are hurting because they feel trapped in poverty…many are hurting because they are marginalized…many are hurting…so many…because they feel totally, completely, utterly alone. Jesus saw the culture and he had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd. Like Jesus, our mission should be fueled by compassion and care for those who are hurting all around us.

Church, take a good hard look around…and here’s what we know: our culture is being swallowed up in darkness. So as those who bear the light of Christ, our job…our calling…our reason for being is simply this: we must push back the darkness! We are not powerless…we are not helpless…we are not defeated…we are not weak. You know what we are? We are the LIGHT OF THE WORLD, that’s what we are! Jesus said it, and I believe it…so our mission is to be the light of Christ in a hurting culture.

3) SO THAT…! I love those two words…SO THAT! SO THAT indicates an outcome that we anticipate happening when we are faithful to live our lives as the Light of Christ in a hurting culture. SO THAT demonstrates our determination to see results, and our accountability when things are not getting done. In other words, we are not simply content to “Be” a certain way together as a church…there’s a “SO THAT” which should be measurable. Like the Israelites, God has led us this far SO THAT we might take Jericho! So what is it that we anticipate happening should we faithfully BE the light in our hurting culture? There are four “So that’s:” 1) so that the lost are found; 2) so that the broken are made whole; 3) so that the fatherless find hope; and 4) so that our city is blessed. Let’s look at each one of those clauses in order.

4) So that the lost are found. I shared with you last week that Bill Hybles, the founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, has been a role model and a key influencer in my life. One of his favorite sayings was this: “Lost people matter to God; so it stands to reason that lost people should matter to us.” What is a “lost” person? A lost person is one who doesn’t know where they are, and they can’t find their way home. A lost person is also one who, unless found, will be subject to the horrors of this life and the next. In Luke 15 Jesus paints three pictures of “lost.” The first was a picture of a good shepherd who had 100 sheep. However, one of those sheep strayed…wandered away from the flock…and as such was in great danger. Jesus assumes that his listeners get the common understanding that a good shepherd would leave the 99 sheep who are together in order to search for and to find the sheep that went astray. In fact, Jesus says, “That’s what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. There is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than 99 people who don’t think they need to.” Clearly Jesus thinks of “lost” people
as those who remain unrepentant…which means they are also those who are destined for an eternity without God. Even one lost person is worth the search to see if they can be found.

If you’ve ever been lost in the dark, what is the one thing that you need more than anything else to find your way? You need a light. Who is the light? We are. Our conviction is this: if we will be faithful to be the light of Christ in our hurting culture, then lost people will be found. Those who are lost in darkness will be drawn to the light of Christ…but they will never see the light of Christ if we do not walk into their darkness, amen?

5) The next outcome we anticipate is that “the broken will be made whole.” How are we to think of “broken people?” Broken people most often have been mishandled, wounded, or even traumatized at their own hand or that of another. Consequently, those who are broken often carry with them a distorted image of themselves and a distorted image of God. Brokenness is a very common condition…in fact, more people are “broken” than are not broken…even in the church. If ever we were all to share all that there is to be said about our past experiences, our childhood experiences, our shame and our regrets for all that has happened in our lives…very few of us would escape the diagnosis of “broken.” The lepers and the prostitutes were considered “broken” within the New Testament…not just because of their skin or their career choices, but because the prevailing society utterly rejected them. They were outcasts, marginalized, and treated as less than human. People can end up broken from many different causes, but once broken, we’re all like Humpty Dumpty…we simply can’t reassemble ourselves. We need help. We need help from people who have been trained to help…we need help from a community that will accept and care for us as we heal…and more than anything else, we need help from a loving God who understands what it feels like to be broken…and yet has the power to make us whole. Jesus healed broken people all throughout the New Testament. He made the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dead to live again. He cleansed lepers, healed people of diseases, and forgave those who could not forgive themselves. He cast out demons that tormented souls, and he brought hope to those who were on the margins of society. Listen: when the church is shining brightly as the light of Christ in this hurting culture, we can expect that broken people will experience healing…dramatic, supernatural, holistic healing…they will be made whole, and God will be glorified! Healed people are the most passionate evangelists because they know that God accomplished in them what was impossible for them to accomplish on their own. How many of you have a testimony that God healed you…that Jesus Christ made you whole again? Amen…that’s what I’m talking about.

6) The next outcome that we are committed to see happen as we serve as the Light of Christ is that “the fatherless will find hope.” The word “fatherless” is found 42 times in the Bible…it’s a big deal to God. Who are the fatherless? We should think of that term in three ways: 1) in the simplest of terms, the fatherless are those who live without the presence of their biological father. Many of us grew up without a DAD in the house, either because he left our mom, or
because he was never home. The wound of an absentee father is brutal for all people…it just is. So is the wound of an abusive father. All over the world, fatherlessness is a huge problem…why? Because God did not intend for children to be raised without a father. Unfortunately, according to the Center for Fathering, 24.7 million children in America live absent their biological father, and though they survive, often the consequences of their “fatherless” condition are predictable and painful. 2) the second way that we think of the “fatherless” would include those we call “true orphans” who have neither a mother or a father. The numbers of true orphans around the world is staggering, even as that number increases here in the United States. 3) And then the third way we might think of the “fatherless” would include those who live estranged from their Heavenly Father…those who have an “orphan” mindset in regards to their worldview and their place in society. So many people all around us feel as though they are completely alone…that their existence doesn’t matter…that they don’t belong to anyone, and no one cares whether they live or die. That is an “orphan mentality.” An orphan mentality also leads people to believe they must earn the love of God and others…they must prove themselves to be worthy of love…and that leads to a myriad of destructive behaviors.

Colonial has been engaged in the ministry to the “fatherless” for many years now, and we have learned a great deal. We have learned that this ministry is hard…really hard. We have learned that “fatherless children” are not helpless, but they are often hopeless. We have learned to admire and deeply respect single moms who are doing their very best to care for their children without the partnership, support, and financial contribution of a husband and father to their children…and we are just now learning how to serve them and at the same time to learn from them. We have learned that once people have an orphan mindset, it takes a long time to build trust and overcome that way of thinking. We have learned that “fatherlessness” breeds fatherlessness…it’s often a viscous cycle. We have learned that Christians who are willing to enter into the life of a fatherless child can expect great challenges, and great rewards. We have learned that, as a church, we can make a difference in the lives of the “fatherless” because we bring hope…we bring light...because we can introduce them to the One, True, Always Good Father. And let me tell you something…when one who was once believed he had no father meets our Heavenly Father who loves him…it’s a game changer! It’s worth every hard day to see that miraculous day come to pass, amen? So that’s our hope and our expectation: if we will be faithful to be the Light of Christ in a hurting culture, we anticipate that the Fatherless will find Hope…because the fatherless will know they are not alone after all.

The last line, and the last outcome we anticipate happening as we enter into our culture as the Light of Christ is that our city will be blessed. In Jeremiah 29:7 the Lord says, “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you…and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” We are not in South Kansas City and Overland Park by chance…through the Sovereignty of God, we are here for a reason. This is our home…this our “Jerusalem,” and it is the responsibility of Christ’s church to bless the city in His name for the glory of God. I have to
tell you a quick story. I ran into a member of the Overland Park City Council the other day…he was eating lunch with a Colonial member. When I was introduced as Pastor Jim West, the council member immediately said, “Oh…churches. We hate churches. We really do. We hate churches.”

He was being a little tongue in cheek, but a few weeks later we met for lunch and he unpacked his feelings about churches, and it wasn’t great. His perception is that churches ask for a lot of services and then give little back to the community. Is that true of Colonial? I shudder to think so, but I don’t know. I’m not sure how our city officials feel about Colonial, but I can tell you this: if we are faithful to be the Light of Christ in this hurting culture, we will bless this city, and we will change the minds of those who say, “We hate churches.” It will take effort, intentionality, and investment, but we are committed to bless this city in Jesus’ name, amen?

So now you know…that’s the overview of our mission statement…and if you haven’t noticed, we’re pretty fired up about it, and I hope you are as well.

Next week we will begin to unpack the first of our six Core Values: Pray First, and Safe Harbor.

As we close, I want to invite you to give your life to Jesus right now, is that OK? I just want you to know that repenting of your sin and asking Jesus to forgive you is the most important decision you will ever make. God loves you…we love you…and it’s time. Invite Jesus to come into your life, and then join us on this mission to be the light of Christ in our hurting culture…help us push back the darkness. Let’s pray.