

Introduction: Rescue Missions

Everyone loves a good rescue story. I love reading about them as well but here's one that I never heard about before. It occurred on August 24, AD 79, the year that Mt. Vesuvius erupted and decimated the Roma city of Pompeii killing off at least 15% of its 20,000 inhabitants. Many who survived the blasts of hell, fire, and brimstone were buried alive in the soot and ash. However, the ones that escaped did so because of the heroic efforts of Pliny the Elder.

Pliny was an accomplished sailor, scientist, and historian. He was also the admiral of the Roman Imperial Fleet which on that fateful morning was docked in Misenum, 18 miles away on the other side of the Bay of Naples.

When he saw the black smoke billowing from the top of Vesuvius he immediately commissioned 12 of his fastest warships to rescue the Pompeians. The fleet arrived just in time. Lifeboats were launched and 100's of citizens were brought safely back onto the larger ships. In hopes of saving more, Pliny went back into the city. However, as he was bringing out a few survivors a cloud of poisonous gas engulfed him. His body was never recovered. Historians estimate however, that before he died, Pliny was able to save upwards of 2000 people.

Church Is

Last week we launched our "Church Is" series in which we saw how the church is God's transformational community filled with people whom God has (Colossians 1:13):

Rescued from the Kingdom of Darkness and brought
into the Kingdom of his dear Son.

Because of Jesus, we are rescued from sin and death and meaningless lives. Because of Jesus, we are rescued from the fallen and broken world and are now citizens of His Kingdom. As the rescued however, we are now also the rescuers. Before we see what

else the church is today, I want to throw in an inspiring, albeit highly challenging, comment from John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Movement :

Give me one hundred people who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergy people or lay people; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth.

You've heard of the Sparta King, Leonidas and his Royal Guard of 300 who staved off the hordes of Persians for three days at the Battle of Thermopylae? Well sign-ups are in the back if you want to be a part of Wesley's 100!

The Great Rescue Mission

Last week we mentioned the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20. Because it is the Great Commission and not the "Great Recommendation" or the "Great Relaxation" let's review it again this morning.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Go!

I call this "God's rescue commission" and in it we see four atomic practices that will make us successful in our mission "To get and make disciples that transform the world." "Go" is the first one. Not stay. Go is a verb, not a noun! Go speaks of the outward focus, thrust, and trajectory of the rescuing church. "Go" prevents inward focus. "Go" prevents inertia. "Go" prevents stagnation. A river is on the go, a puddle, not so much. Outgoing "on-going-ness" is the definitive practice of God's missional church. When Jesus came to do his mission of "Seeking and saving the lost" (Luke 19:10) he didn't sit in the Temple and say, "We got some nice facilities and amenities, programs and people in here, come get some." He went out and walked about 22,000 miles preaching, teaching, healing, feeding, and ministering to the least, last, lost, and lonely (Wesley: 250,000 horseback). As His missional church will we walk across the street? The 3rd leg of our 3gs "Get, Grow, Go" process is "Go" whereby we go out into the world to "invest and invite" in authentic friendships and do "S.A.K." i.e., systematic acts of kindness.

We go with the express purpose to “make disciples,” the 2nd atomic practices of God’s rescuing community. But what is a disciple? We define one as:

One who under the power of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of God’s Word, and the encouragement of the Church, is LEARNING how to do what Jesus did, think like Jesus thought, say what Jesus said, and love what Jesus loved.

If you are a disciple this morning it’s in your DNA to make more disciples. Disciples reproduce disciples. How? We first become better disciples! We become better in the four core discipleship practices. What are they? If you need an acronym I-GPS will do: inviting, giving praying, and serving. Which of these four habits do you need to improve? The best way to grow is to let another disciple help you and hold you accountable until you get the results you want!

Baptize

The 3rd atomic practice of the rescuing community is baptize. Baptism, which means “to dip into or under” is an initiation into KOG through the local church. Baptism is a public demonstration of ultimate allegiance and surrender to Jesus Christ as your Lord/Savior/Leader/Forgiver. Baptism is an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace signifying that we have died to self and have been resurrected into new life with Christ. Baptisms is the symbolic cleansing from sin. Through baptism we are marked as Christian disciples, not as believers, church attendees, or religious consumers! Got baptism? If not, after the service I’d be glad to throw you in the ocean and hold you under as long as is necessary ☺ (Just kidding.)

Teach

The 4th atomic practice of God’s rescue community is teaching. Jesus said “You are my disciples if you practice what I taught you (John 8:31). We can’t practice what Jesus taught us to do if we don’t know what Jesus taught us to do! For this reason, preaching and teaching will always be the bedrock foundation of Jesus’ church. And for this reason, we have to daily immerse ourselves in God’s Word and then share what we have learned in a small group.

Conclusion

As you know I took up cycling a few years ago and had to file for bankruptcy since I did! I jest, but one of the most important devices for performance improvement is my bike computer called the Garmin Edge 830. Everything I need to know about my ride, e.g., distance, time, location, heart rate, cadence, pace, power output, gear setting, and even emergency alerts, are all recorded. As awesome as all these analytics are there is only one that really interests me: average speed. Of all the practices we engage here at Bay Point there is only one that really matters.....our mission!

Get and make disciples who transform the world.