

As I prepared Bible Study using this Sunday's readings I became aware of a common theme. For me, these readings brought clarity to what it means and requires for us to be missional as individuals and as a church.

In the first reading from Acts: 5-12, we see two men, Peter and John, who have undergone a transformation. Once fearful and hiding from the authorities, they now, filled with the Holy Spirit, walk right into the center of power and authority and proceeded to remind the rulers, Priests, teachers and people of what they had done to God's Son and instruct them on how to make it right. We see two fishermen unafraid, taking on the educated and powerful, two men on God's mission.

When asked, "Under whose authority..." Peter responded that his authority came from Jesus; he acted "in the name of Jesus".

What does that mean? If someone asks you to act in his or her name at a property closing or legal action, what does that imply? 1. You have that person's authority in this matter given to you. You become his/her agent. 2. You do not have ownership or control of this property or activity outside of what you were commissioned to do. You act according to that person's will not yours. To act otherwise is to overstep your limits. 3) You act in behalf of that person, for their sake not yours. Any credit or benefit is all theirs. 4) Your reward is only what your friend wishes to give you over and above their gratitude.

To act in Jesus' Name, we also must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Our actions must conform to His Will, we act as His agent and then we have His authority. He maintains the control and ownership and it is to Him that all credit and benefits belong. Our reward is His gratitude and the rewards he has promised. This is the commission He has given to all of us.

The second reading, 1 John 3: 16-24 continues this theme. John tells us that we will know when the Spirit is in us by our love for one another. John then defines true love. He tells us true love is not an act but it is a way of life and extends to placing others' lives before our own. John warns that without this love the Spirit will not be in us and we cannot be missional as individuals or as a church.

The gospel for today, John 10: 11-18 completes the missional theme by pointing out the kind of mutual intimacy that is expected of a missional Christian and in a missional church. We are to reach such intimacy with Jesus that we can easily recognize Him from all others. He in turn will recognize each of us and call us by name. As His sheep, we are to place full faith in Him and trust that He will protect us, care for us, feed us spiritually and physically and even find us when we stray. When we are asked to be shepherds to His flock, we are to act with this same love and dedication to those entrusted to us. Remember, to be missional, we act only "in His Name".