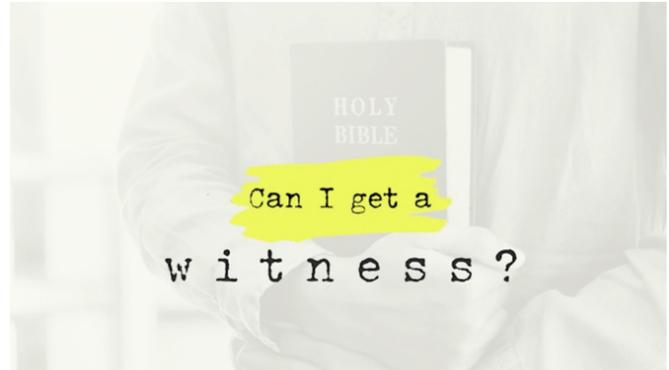


A framing question for BUMC has been "Where is God at work in our community, and how can we join in and participate in that work?" *This sermon series challenges us to find our purpose and passion, and to ask what we should be doing and why it matters. Our fundamental Christian vocation is to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. This call transforms ordinary moments into opportunities to anticipate God's goodness (Week 2), to notice God's presence (Week 3), to name God at work (Week 4), and to participate with God in the world (Week 5).*



Each of the following weeks corresponds with a sermon in the six-week series. You can watch all or parts of the sermon individually or as a group and then dig in to these discussion questions together.

Week 1: Can I get a witness?

1. Pastor Adam says this is a sermon series "about purpose and about passion. It's a series about what YOU can do and why it *does* matter." He started out talking about the Switchfoot song, "Dare you to move." **What stories/songs/quotes/ideas dare YOU to move, to persist or to reflect on your purpose?**

2. The past few years have been full of challenges, and for many of us our focus as gone from calling and purpose to plain survival mode. Pastor Adam highlights these challenges here: "Now, for ALL OF US, these questions of personal purpose and passion are set on the backdrop of all these GREAT BIG and GLOBAL challenges—pandemic, war, world-wide, systemic realities that can give us a sense of so much that is out of our control... that can make us feel powerless." **What are some of the things in your life that keep you from remembering or discerning your purpose?**

3. The sermon series title is "Can I get a witness?" **What has the word "witness" meant to you in our faith walk in the past, and what does it mean in this context?**

Hint: The word in Greek for "witness" is the root for our word: martyr. *Being a witness for Jesus is, at the very least, a holistic thing.*

- It is not just what we say but what we do.
- It is about being wholehearted.
- It is fundamentally about what we give our lives to, and
- Discovering how to give our lives away joyfully.

4. There is a temptation for our faith in God to justify an escapism. This kind of theology shows up in statements like, "Well, everything happens for a reason" or "God will work it all out, don't worry." But we all know that life doesn't always work out, that we don't always win, and sometimes we go through really hard times. But we are challenged by this quote from Henri Nouwen: "The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it." **What barriers, "self-inflicted" and static, prevent me from effectively dealing with the "hard" places in life?**

5. What do you find hard OR easy about this challenge posed in the question asked by Pastor Adam's spiritual director: *"do you ever think... that we don't bring about God's transformation, that maybe our calling is that we get to witness to the transformation that only God can bring?"*

Pastor Adam's response: "I found so much freedom in that. The burden of figuring out how to sort through all the complexity falls away... we are the ones who have the privilege of seeing God's work and joining it—witnesses of Jesus Christ who is still present in the world and at work in every single person. What if this was what we did?"

6. Where are you feeling God's Spirit nudging you to look more closely to be a witness to God's working?

Week 2: Who will anticipate God's Goodness?

This sermon challenges us to anticipate God's goodness. This sermon series challenges us to find our purpose and passion and to ask what we should be doing and why it matters. Our fundamental Christian vocation is to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. This call transforms ordinary moments into opportunities to anticipate God's goodness, to notice God's presence, to name God at work, and to participate with God in the world.



1. Pastor Adam talked about the anticipation his dog Bella has for taking walks. **What is something that you've waited for with great anticipation (or possibly dread)? Are there things in your life that you once anticipated but do no longer?**
2. Anticipating a future event requires some measure of waiting. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave his disciples an important task...to *wait* for the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would give them the power they needed to be his witnesses. **What feelings or memories arise when you hear there will be a "wait" for something or that you'll need to "wait on the Lord?"**
3. Our job is to be there when Jesus shows up. Pastor Adam told a story about missing an opportunity to participate in God's work in the world by not helping a woman purchase her medicine at the pharmacy. He also related Jesus's parable of the 10 bridesmaids in Matthew 25, whose job was to wait for the bridegroom. When five of them ran out of oil before the groom arrived, they missed out on the chance to participate in the party. The bridesmaids ran out of oil—they didn't have enough and were not prepared. **When have you missed an opportunity or failed to notice or join God at work? What did you miss? What do you find helpful for keeping your head "on a swivel" so as not to miss opportunities?**
4. Discouragement, depression, and apathy are real challenges that we face. **What helps you stay ready to anticipating God's goodness in the world?**

Hint: Reminder of quote from Ann Lamott: "Also, besides our friends, getting outside and looking up and around changes us: remember, you can trap bees on the bottom of Mason jars with a bit of honey and without a lid, because they don't look up. They just walk around bitterly bumping into the glass walls. That is SO me. All they have to do is

look up and fly away. So we look up. In 68 years, I have never seen a boring sky. I have never felt blasé about the moon, or birdsong, or paper whites.”

5. “For most of us, the challenge is to keep our attitude and our hearts open. To not become hardened or skeptical on one end of the spectrum or disillusioned and give up on the other. To stay alert.” **What will you do this week to keep alert to witnessing the work of God in the world?**

Some possibilities for how to stay expectant: Being outside; running, working in the yard; corporate worship; learning and challenge; gratitude journal; Daily examen

There might be good reason to be resigned or resentful. But our calling is to cultivate expectation anyway. If not, we will miss out. God will be present. God will move. Miraculous things will happen, but we’ll be distracted and disillusioned, and we’ll miss what is right in front of us.

Week 3: Who will notice God's Presence?

This sermon challenges us to notice God's presence. *This sermon series challenges us to find our purpose and passion and to ask what we should be doing and why it matters. Our fundamental Christian vocation is to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. This call transforms ordinary moments into opportunities to anticipate God's goodness, to notice God's presence, to name God at work, and to participate with God in the world.*



1. Noticing little, but important things can be really difficult. Pastor Adam showed this through his story about searching for mushrooms as a child and the story of a viewer of Flip or Flop noticing the host's cancer. Sometimes we develop an eye for things because of our training or other interests. **What is something you notice that others do not?**
2. We see God at work in our communities and our church. Pastor Adam mentioned Jonesville Academy, Boys to Men, newborn blessings, etc. **Where do you see God so evidently in our community?**
3. Carol Gard, a BUMC hometown Hero story, prays with her cashier. She broke a lot of Pastor Adam's grocery checkout rules. Her story showed that she was living in Kairos time rather than *Kronos* time. Pastor Adam describes Kairos time as moments full of divine possibilities. **When is your perspective of time more *Kairos* and when is it *Kronos*? What do you find keeps you from experiencing more *Kairos* time in your life?**
4. There are many ways we can see God at work. We can see him at work in the *past* through people that have brought us to where we are. We can see him at work in *unexpected places*, where we would not think God can be present. For example, Pastor Adam mentioned the ways he saw God at work even in the local food desert and after the December tornados. Seeing God's work in these places does not explain anything, but rather it lets us see threads of God's goodness in everything. **What are some places in your past or some unexpected places where you have seen God at work?**

5. Pastor Adam talked about following through. He had to follow through with Abraham Williams after their conversation about the need for a grocery store on the west end of BG. **Why is following through after we notice where God needs us so hard? Is there something in your life that you need to follow up on this week? Is there something in your life that needs follow up but that you cannot adequately follow up on alone?**

God, help us see what others miss. Amen

Week 4: Who will name God's Activity?



1. We shared our name's origin story with the people around us on Sunday morning. Let us share again in this space. **How did you get your name? What does it mean? What is your opinion on your name and names in general?**

2. Pastor Laura says naming is a deeply intimate expression and that God names a lot of his people. God even gives nicknames—not as a reward for anything we do, but as a clear way of showing what God was doing in their lives. **How do you feel about nicknames? What about when people change their name?**

3. God sees special characteristics in us even before we believe them about ourselves. For example, God calls us his children, forgiven, friends, and beloved. **Why do we struggle to believe these things about ourselves?**

4. God also gives us the privilege of naming qualities and characteristics in others. This practice connects us to God as co-creators. In Pastor Laura's words, "Naming is a powerful act of love that then creates growth." **How have you ever wondered what other people see in you? Can you remember someone in your life identifying something redeemable of which you were not yet aware?**

5. Quoting Parker Palmer, Pastor Laura said: "...Our strongest gifts are usually those we are barely aware of possessing. They are a part of our God-given nature with us from the moment we drew first breath, and we are no more conscious of having them than we are of breathing." Many times it takes someone else NAMING how they can see God uniquely working in and through us for us to recognize it. **As you think about the people with whom you spend time, what do you see? What keeps you from naming their gifts and God's work in them? What can you do this week to participate in this activity of naming God's gifts and activity in other people?**

Week 5: Who Will Participate with God in the World?

1. Pastor Laura talks about losing sight of her purpose while on the basketball bench. She got asked to get in the game and she wasn't ready—she had a mouthful of skittles and more candy up her sleeves. She reminds us, we are not called to live on the sidelines. **Have you ever gotten**

distracted and lost sight of your purpose for being somewhere? Have you lost sight of the task at hand/ the purpose Jesus has given us?



2. Barbara Brown Taylor has a wonderful shoe analogy. Certain tasks require certain shoes: you don't wear high heels to run a marathon, and you don't wear bright white tennis shoes for your gardening. We are not called to just click our heels like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz waiting for Jesus to whisk us away from the challenges of this life; rather God has called us to lace up our cleats, to join the team, and to get in the game of extending hope right in the middle of the hurting, difficult, broken places of our world. Proper footwear is important. We do not wear ruby slippers, but we join the team wearing cleats. We are called to participate. **What does it look like to contribute to the game as a follower of Christ?**

3. Recap on what it means to be a *WITNESS*

Anticipate God's Goodness

Notice God's presence

Name God's activity

Participate in God's work in the world

On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples anticipated God's goodness, noticed God's presence, named God's activity, and participated in God's work in the world. **Which of these tasks feels most familiar, and which one feels most challenging?**

4. The past five weeks have outlined a way of understanding how to be in the world as a follower of Christ. **How is this formulation of what it means to be a Christian both the same and different than what you thought five, ten, fifteen years ago?**

5. As we conclude this time together, **where have you grown? Where would you like to see growth in your life? What are your next steps? How is God calling you to participate in God's work in the world?**