



**The #1 reason I attend this church is**

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Embracing Christ's Mission

Luke 9:57-62; 10:1-2

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At the beginning of the service today, I asked you to fill in the blank on this slip. "The #1 reason I attend this church is (blank)." Before I read some of these, let me ask you this. Would you guess that all of these are going to have the same answer? No way, right? The people of this church have many different reasons why we attend here, don't we? Let me share a few. (*read several ...*)

Well, this little sample confirmed what we all guessed. People have many different reasons for coming here, and it would be very difficult to say what the #1 reason is. And that's OK. Our loving God has brought all of us together here, and we are a mixed bunch, a motley crew. We've each been on our own unique faith journey, haven't we? It's pretty amazing and wonderful that God had led us all to this place, to this congregation of diverse souls.

I wonder, though, what our top answer would be if we changed the question to this: "What is the #1 reason why you follow Jesus?" Think about that one for a moment.

People like us have all sorts of reasons why we believe and trust in Jesus, why we admire him and find inspiration in him. Why do you follow Christ? I'm sure that we could answer that question in a hundred different ways.

But today's Bible story teaches us that there is a #1 reason to follow Christ. There are many different motives for people like us to follow Jesus, but Jesus himself points us today to the #1 reason.

This story comes from Luke chapters 9 and 10. Christ has been attracting big crowds. For some, it's his healings and his miracles that draws them in. For others, it's Christ's teaching and preaching; and, for still others, his charisma and personality. For all kinds of reasons, people are following him around. Lots of people!

And as Jesus is walking along the road one day, a person comes up to him and says, "I will follow you wherever you go." Here's a person full of passion, ready to commit – or so it seems. But Jesus knows that he's not really ready. This would-be disciple's reasons for following Jesus aren't going to be strong enough to overcome some personal discomforts on the road -- no house, no hotel, no bed, no creature comforts. So this eager beaver gets shot down.

And then the Lord turns to another admirer and invites him to follow. But this fellow says, "I have something important to do first." And Jesus kind of shoots him down, too, basically asking this man, "What's more important than this? What's more important than to go out and proclaim the kingdom of God?"

Then a third person says, “Hey, Jesus, count me in! I’m just going to run home and say goodbye to my family, and then I’m all in.” And the Lord tells him, “No, you’re not all in. You’re not keeping the main thing the main thing.”

And in all of these conversations Jesus is making a clear point. He’s not saying that family and friends and other pursuits are bad things. But Jesus wants his followers back then to know that being a disciple means being a part of his mission. The #1 reason to follow Jesus is to be a part of his mission.

And what is that mission? The Son of God came to save sinners. Nothing else is more important. Christ’s mission is to save sinners – the lost, the hurting, the guilty, the unrighteous. Jesus could’ve allowed himself to get sidetracked with hobbies, sports, politics, or social gatherings, or a thousand other things. But our Savior was locked in on his mission. The Son of God came to save sinners. The Son of God was born on Christmas Day to save sinners. He lived a perfect life in order to save sinners. Christ died a sacrificial death on the cross to save sinners. And the Son of God rose from the grave to save sinners like us for all eternity. That was his mission!

And today’s Bible story teaches us that Jesus wanted followers whose #1 reason for following him was that same mission. Embracing Christ’s mission is something crucial for modern-day disciples, too.

Ask yourself, “What can I do to help Christ’s mission carry on? How can I help to bring the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation in Christ to someone who hasn’t heard it?”

I don't believe that Jesus is asking all of us to leave our homes and jobs and families, and to go off two by two proclaiming the kingdom of God. Certainly we should enjoy our families and friends, and all the things of this world with which God has blessed us. But, at the same time, Jesus wants his followers today to be clear on what's most important, on what matters most of all. For followers and disciples of Jesus, nothing's more important than his mission to bring salvation to the world.

So ask yourself, as a follower of Christ, "How can I participate in, and support, the work of Jesus? What can I do to help one more hurting, lost soul out there hear the story of Jesus and his love?"

And, as a church, we need to always be asking ourselves, "Is everything we've got going here at Hope – in all our programs, in our busy schedule of activities, on our website – is everything we're doing as a church embracing Christ's mission, supporting Christ's mission, carrying on Christ's mission? Friends, there is nothing more important than that, is there!

In Jesus' name. Amen.