

# Sermon Text for July 24, 2022

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

## ***Genesis 1:26-28 and Matthew 28:16-20***

### ***“Go out into the world, and around you too!”***

I asked to play clean up after the kids and Kristin said something, and so here I am. A common theme that played itself out throughout the week was the kids being reminded that they were made in God’s image. That is actually where we have to start before we do anything here at the church. Middle School can be a really difficult time for a lot of kids. There are all sorts of issues that they are working through but none more important than understanding your identity. Throughout this week we have been trying to emphasize to them that they have value not because of what they do, but because God gave them value when they were created and God said you are very good.

Struggles with identity and value don’t end at middle school. Some of us even today find our value in our work, and without that we are lost. Some of us find our value in our families and our kids, and if that were taken from us then who would we be. I guess this message is for you as well. We have value simply because God has given us value. We don’t have value based upon our understanding of biology or based upon our rights, or based upon anything except the fact that God has created us and claimed us to be very good.

Genesis gives us that lesson very clearly. When you leave your comfort zone and go on a mission away from your home you start to wonder where your value comes from because what you are used to giving you value, your family, your friends, whomever it might be, are taken from you. But another aspect of being made in the image of God that we wanted the kids to learn was that not only they are made in the image of God, but everyone with whom they come into contact is made in the image of God. We arrived on Saturday evening at 10am, in order to get to the church we had to walk past about 8 people sleeping on the ground outside of the church.

As soon as they saw this group of middle schoolers making their way in they packed up their stuff, their cardboard boxes, and left. We didn’t see most of them again except for Patrick, who brought us pizza our first night, and David who was deaf and mute and so Kristin was able to communicate with him, and Michael who had one leg and used his stump to help us get a mower out of the ditch. These kids came face to face with homelessness in a way that they had never before, and in a way that we hope and we pray will humanize each person who was

homeless. Humanize them to the point where they knew their names and knew that they were created in the image of God, just as they were.

God commands his disciples to go out into the world and make disciples. We are now in Matthew, and they do that, they go all over the world. The church was spread across the world because of this command. But notice the order of going into the world. They were in Galilee when Jesus gave this command. He tells them to go into the world, but we know that their home base was in Jerusalem. He wasn't telling them to just go out into the world, just go to Italy, but also to minister here at home.

We have one of the important weeks this week that we have all year. VBS is a time when we are able to reach out into the community where people who do not know Jesus come into contact with us in a way that can be powerful and transformative. When we were in Florida not a single student spoke to an individual about Jesus. But at each place where we served the heads of the organizations came up to us and said, I don't know what you all are doing, but this is the best group that we have ever had. The witness that this group had was significant and one that I can't overplay.

We were able to share the Gospel when they asked: what are you doing? And we can say we focus on Jesus and everything else follows from that. When we go into the world we do so in order that the Gospel would be proclaimed, and we have proclaimed it in Italy this year. When we go into the world we do so in order that the Gospel would be proclaimed, and we have proclaimed it this year in Florida. When we go into the world, we do so in order that the Gospel would be proclaimed, and this week is an opportunity for us to do it through VBS.

I don't have much more to add, but I want to be sure that you are aware that you have done a couple of things. Through your support of the church you have made it possible for these youth to be involved in the type of mission that they will remember for the rest of their lives as a mission to glorify God first and foremost. But it doesn't end there. You are also missionaries, God has also called you to proclaim the Gospel by helping out at VBS, but being an active part of the programs of the church that reach out to this community. Because we are called to go out into the world, but we are called to serve around us too. Look for ways in which to be a missionary as God has called you to be. Amen.