

GATHER, SCATTER

We Christians lead double lives, a two-phased life. We gather and we scatter. Two parts to our lives, we gather and we scatter.

We need both parts to go together. We gather weekly for worship and we scatter for the remainder of the week to witness and serve.

Our mission (Love God. Love Others. Serve) is fulfilled in this second phase, when you take up your daily life, your chores, your jobs and your round of activities between poles of our Sunday morning worship services.

We learn to love God, we learn how to love others and how to serve during worship when we gather, but we do those things, loving and serving, we do them when we scatter.

So today, let us recognize, emphasize and celebrate the two-phased nature of the church. We gather and we scatter. We breathe in regularly in liturgical assembly where we pastors lead you in

worship. We breathe in as we gather.

Then we breathe out as we scatter. We breathe out in all our walks of life, where you, the member of our church, lead the way and do the work.

In and out, gather and scatter.

At the individual level, I find more and more of you asking questions about yourselves and your place in the world based upon your faith.

Questions like, what kind of impact am I making in the world? What significant thing am I doing for the cause of Christ? How can I be a person who puts Christ at the center of my life and not just at the periphery?

Rather than being known for coffee and donuts on Sunday mornings, many of you want to make a real difference where you live and work.

To have an impact. But to have an impact, you must first be clear in your own thinking. You must understand that the mission of the

Church does not take place primarily inside the church.

We are to meet here. We enjoy corporate worship, fellowship, encouragement and instruction here. But the Church's mission was never intended to be carried out within the four walls of the church. We don't exist for those inside these walls, but for those outside these walls.

There is an important distinction between church work and the work of the church. Church work is something some of us are involved in. Pastors, leaders, musicians, ministers. It is important and it is vital and it has great honor, church work.

But the work of the Church takes place away from the church, it happens where you live and where you work. That's the work that most of us need to be involved in because that's our mission.

The church is like a filling station. Remember filling stations? Where cars would come for gasoline, for air in the tires, for repairs and so

forth. But once they get fixed up, the cars went on their way to do what cars are meant to do.

Well, that's the church, a filling station. It's been designed by God to equip you to be more effective in another place, in the place where you are meant to serve.

God's work is done on the street not in the garage. Look at our Philippians text this morning, (*Phil 2:14-15.*) **Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.**

Does that sound like you this afternoon? Or you on Monday morning?

Ever wonder why God does not make it easy? Why doesn't God just let us enjoy a nice Christian community where we can all love each other and be kind to each other, a sort of Jesus city?

Well, my answer is that we have a mission from Jesus, a mission to impact the world, a world that does not know Him and is lost and dying apart from Him.

If we're not doing that with our lives, then we're doing very little, if anything, of importance. The mission of the Church takes place outside the church, in the world.

To accomplish your part in this mission, two things have to happen. First, your life must make a statement and second, your life must make an impact.

First, your life needs to make a statement. It's not just what you say, but that your very life should tell others that you are a new creature in Christ. Your attitude, your actions, your responses, how you do your work, how you go about your life. All these things need to become distinctively Christlike.

Further, your life needs to make an impact on others. The world is harsh. It is a tough place to have

much influence. And yet, you can have a profound influence on others through how you love and serve people.

If you want to have an impact, become a servant, like Christ. If you live that way, you will have an impact, because no one lives that way. Everyone is living for herself or himself. We think only of our own comfort and convenience. But that's what makes the servant so distinctive. That's why the servant has such a powerful influence on others, because there are so few servants.

How do I be a servant, you ask? Remember our church mission statement. Let that be your personal mission statement if you do not already have one. Love and serve. Love God. Love Others. Serve.

That is mission, being a servant in the image of Christ and making a difference. It is possible. That is our purpose. That is why we gather and we scatter. We gather to be filled up, we scatter to empty ourselves in order to fill up others

God be with us as we gather this morning.

God be with us as we scatter, too.

Amen.