

1stTHINGS1st



What's really in first place in our lives? We say God is first, but our schedules, commitments and finances tell another story. Setting God in the highest place is not just right, it's good! When God is first, everything else falls into place. It's time to let God be God. Let's study our priorities until God is at the head of our lives and order everything around Him through worship, obedience, service, prayer and generosity. God in first place—let's put **First Things First**.

First Things First - First Step • Romans 10:14-20 • Tim McConnell • October 1, 2017

On this World Communion Sunday we take time to recognize our connection with missions work and believers around the world. So let me ask then first of all if we have any missionaries in the house. If you are a missionary or served in missions, let's say for 6 months or more, would you raise your hand? Wonderful. Praise God. But it was a trick question. Yesterday was CityServe. We put 1800 Jesus-followers out on the streets to serve and many of them from First Pres, so if you participated in CityServe yesterday would you raise your hand? Yes, these are missionaries too. But that was still a trick question. Where are the missionaries? Who is a missionary? Which of us is on mission for Jesus? You are. Every one of you are. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are a missionary right where you are. Jesus said in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." That's you. And you. And you. And me. Who is on mission? You are. When does the mission start? Right now. Where does this mission reach? From here in Colorado Springs to the very ends of the earth. How does the mission begin? With the first step out that door.

We've been talking about First Things First, the power of priority, holding God in first place in every aspect of our lives. If we don't give God our first thought we won't give Him a second thought. Matthew 6:33, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." The art community has given us a stunning visualization of it in the Plaza. Everything hangs from the cross of Christ. If you haven't stopped to look up, please do. Today we talk about the first step, the first step on mission. Everything follows from the first step. The whole adventure begins with the first step. The first step matters in following Jesus, the first step matters in going on mission for Jesus in our lives. If you never take the first step you will never see what comes next. If you never take the first step, you will never see who God wanted to reach through you. Romans 10:14-15 makes it so very clear, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to

them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" First steps are scary. But beautiful feet are first step feet.

I'm amazed at the human heart. The human heart, about the size of your fist, beats 100,000 times a day to pump 2,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of blood vessels. Your heart sends your blood each day far enough to get around the earth twice. You have 25 trillion red blood cells carrying oxygen to the furthest reaches of your circulatory system, bringing life to every cell. If the ends of your toes get oxygen to feed your cells, it's because your heart sent it. If the tips of your fingers get that life-giving oxygen, it's because your heart pumped it out there then drew those cells back to get some more. Follow this now, your heart is pushing 25 trillion red blood cells through a circulatory system of 60,000 miles of arteries, capillaries and veins almost 2,000 times a day. But some cells get tired. "I don't want to go." I know this isn't exactly how it works, but play along. They group up with some platelets and just say, "You know...enough. I don't think those toe cells appreciate it anyway. I quit." They grab on to a nice comfortable spot on the side wall of some artery, maybe grab some cholesterol to hang out with. Next thing you know you've got a clot.

Friends, the church is a like a heart circulating the life and light of Christ through the city. One of the things I love about First Pres is we get to be right in the core, right in the heart of the city—literally. I love how much I get to see this, and I get to see that you know this, you value this. God put us here to be a heartbeat. Every week we pull the believers in. *How far away did you get this week? Where did you carry the life of Jesus? You look tired!* The red blood cells come into the heart a different color than they left. They're worn out. Deoxygenated. But they get the breath again from the lungs, and then out they go. Red as fire! Fire-engine red. Out they go. Every week we pull the believers back in, fill them with life and breath from Jesus, then send them out again. Thump. Thump. Thump. 145 years we've been

doing it. Badump. Badump. Badump. Every cell. Every member. Every follower of Jesus filling the arteries all the way out to the capillaries, all the way out to the extremities. You can't stop coming back for oxygen. You can't stop going out to bring life to others. Yesterday we were out in force. Today we recharge at the table, by the Word, by the songs and prayers of the congregation of the faithful. In and out. In and out. Here's the thing. Are you ready? This is rough. This is hard. Here's the challenge: Are you part of the life-giving force on the move for Jesus or are you the clot?

We've been jumping around to different Scriptures in this series, which can be difficult. Here again we drop in on Romans, Paul's letter to the church in Rome, and just touch down on this one part. This community of Christians are only just beginning to figure out what it means to be followers of Jesus, and they're living in a city unfriendly to their beliefs. Their inclination would be to withdraw, raise the walls, pull back and try to fly under the radar. But Paul says, in effect, if you do that how will anyone be saved? Look again at verses 14-15. Here's how it works: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Romans 10:14-15) The goal is, someone got saved. What does that mean? They met Jesus. Someone was walking through life trying to keep all the pieces together and wasn't sure God even exists. Someone was pushing through life on their own trying to make up for their mistakes, trying to deal with the weight of their guilt, trying to process the shame they felt where things weren't working or the pain they felt from the wounds they'd received, and they were doing it all on their own in total spiritual darkness—and they met Jesus. And they called on his name. And they realized that Jesus was God come to earth to rescue His children. They heard that forgiveness and healing and new life were available in Jesus. They heard that Jesus died on the cross to pay their debt of sin, that Jesus rose from the grave because death wasn't

strong enough to hold Him, and that every hope and promise of a Savior from God is found in Jesus. And they believed in their heart and they confessed with their lips, and they put their faith in Jesus. As it says right here, "As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame...For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" (Romans 10: 11, 13) Somebody was saved. How did it happen?

Follow the string along in verses 14-15. Someone was saved because they believed. They believed because they heard. You can't believe something you've never heard. They believed because they heard the news about Jesus. They heard because someone told them. Someone told them because that someone was sent, sent out with the message from the community of faith, sent out fire-engine red with the glow of the Spirit of God in them, sent out to speak of Jesus. And when they were sent, they went. Beautiful the feet that bear good news. Beautiful the feet that go. When they were sent, they went. Continue on in the passage and you see, not all believe; not all accept the message, not all. But out the voice goes, out the message goes to the ends of the world, to people who don't understand, to people who didn't even know they were looking for it, to people who don't deserve to be saved. But God saves them anyway, just like He did for you and me. When they were sent they went—beautiful the feet that go and take the first step.

Do you feel sent? If you don't, let's fix that right now. If you are a follower of Jesus, if you have responded with faith and your allegiance is with Jesus Christ the Lord who gave His life for you and set you free for new life in His name, if you believe in Jesus today—you are sent. You are sent. Beautiful the feet that take the first step. Our mission at First Pres is now and always has been to reach our city for Christ. Every week we pull in, we recharge, and we head out. I know a guy name Bruce Buell who goes every Monday night down to Canon City to lead a prison ministry and has now for over twenty years. I know a guy named Dick Shultz who goes over to Asia to lead CEO's in Christian business practices and helps them see Jesus. I know a lady named Sues Hess who goes every morning back into her position

as director of Family Life Services and shelters women and children. I know a bunch of people in our church who foster children and support families who do through Hope and Home, one of the most successful foster agencies in Colorado, begun right here in our Pathfinders class. Hundreds of us were out yesterday for CityServe, and I bet many of us will return again and again to those places of need. Our church touches Colorado Springs, the United States, Cuba, Guatemala, Egypt, India, Mongolia—all very regularly. Today we have our Compassion info booth set up in the plaza. Hundreds of Compassion kids are sponsored through First Pres around the world. Maybe you'd like to start one today.

Are you part of the life-giving flow of the light and life of Christ, pumping again through arteries of need? Are you the clot? All you need is a first step. Take a first step. If you don't have any idea how, here's my advice. Define a mission field, some area you think God might want you to make a difference. Pray for it. Pray and wait. Wait for God to show you the opportunity and open the door. And when it comes, pounce! Get in there. Take the first step. Beautiful are the feet that bear good news. Beautiful are the feet that go when sent. Beautiful feet don't have all the answers, beautiful feet may not have all the solutions to the problems, but one thing that beautiful feet do, they take the first step.

STUDY GUIDE

FIRST THINGS FIRST • First Step

Romans 14:10-20

Start It

- Christianity is the world's largest religion with 2.4 billion adherents making up about 33% of the population. There are more Christians in the southern hemisphere than in the northern hemisphere. Christians speak all kinds of languages and worship in all kinds of environments. Many more Christians speak non-English languages than speak English. But we are one body. Every time we affirm the Apostle's Creed we affirm our belief in the "catholic church" meaning the universal church following Christ in all these different environments. We also affirm our belief in the "communion of saints." That means we are one not only with all Christians alive in the world right now, but with all Christians who ever lived anywhere. We are a very small part of a very large, global, universal movement following Jesus. Every bit of it began with a first step.

Study It

- Read Romans 10:9-13. How is a person saved? Who can be saved?
- Read Romans 10:14-15. What does this passage teach us about how salvation in Jesus Christ is spread abroad to all peoples? What do you think it means that someone must be "sent" with the message?
- Read Romans 10:16-17. What is the message that must be heard for faith to occur? Why is it called "good news"?
- Read Romans 10:18-20. How far should the message of Christ be taken? What is to be done with those who have no interest about what Christ has done?

Pray It

Heavenly Father, from You every family receives its name and heritage, and in Jesus Christ Your Son all people are united into one family from many nations and many languages. Your family is a beautiful and rich family, Lord, and we give You all thanks and praise for inviting us to be a part of it. In Jesus name, Amen.

Live It

Study a branch of the Christian church in a faraway land in a culture and language not your own. Spend time praying for them this week.