

Feb. 17: 6th Sunday after Epiphany

Message: Disciples Make ... Stands

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:15-17 & John 8:31-32

Blurb: Christians stick out. We look weird. We choose to follow Jesus, and that means we walk a different walk. Yet, out in the world, we are pressured every day to conform, compromise, and change. Being disciples mean that we make stands. We choose to think differently, behave differently, see things differently. This Sunday we'll explore how every day we can make a stand for Jesus.

Memory Verse: Put on God's armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil. - Ephesians 6:11

Opening Song: *Hymn Sing* - Sanctify

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse:

"Put on God's armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil." -Ephesians 6:11

Worship Music Set:

O Taste and See

Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus

Shane T. takes kids into lobby - Paper airplanes

Send Me Out

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Serve Moment: Blackford Scholarship Fund -Cassi

Offering: *Come, Follow Me* - Sanctify

Love Moment: Lifeline -Andrew

Prayers: - Andrew

Kid's Moment: Shane T.

Message: Disciples Make . . . Stands

Bumper Video

PP#1: *Image of a person standing out from the crowd, looking different*

Can you spot a Christian? If you're in a crowd, or at a gathering, can you tell if someone's a Jesus-follower? What would give it away?

Or maybe the question needs to be, do Christians look different than other people? Behave differently? Talk differently? Do Christians stand [pun] out?

Many in my wife's family are not Christians. Yet, I would argue, they are good people. They are hardworking, will help people out, volunteer through community organizations, and do good deeds. So, do they look different from Christians? For my wife's cousin Kelly, she thinks Reese is "different" because she doesn't smoke, drink, or swear. Reese goes to church, but then again, she is married to a pastor. But Kelly's a nice person. She's kind and helpful. What makes Christians look different than good people?

Do Christians stand out? Well, *disciples* do. Disciples of Jesus, those who chose to follow Jesus, who live the Jesus-way, they look and behave differently.

Now, in theory, Christians and disciples are the same thing. Yet the reality is that some people who claim to be Christians don't live as disciples. And this is where some of the confusion comes from with Christians in our culture.

PP#2: Jim Morgan, founder and president of the Christian Outreach Ministry "Meet the Need"

Christian: Confession and Belief

Disciple: Surrender and Transformation

Jim Morgan, founder and president of the Christian outreach ministry Meet The Need, argues that people can be Christians just by what they believe. If you confess Jesus as your savior and believe in Him, you are a Christian. But, he argues, Jesus wants your life. Disciples are those who give their lives to Jesus, all of it. And that's radical. That means surrendering to Jesus and being transformed by Him, being made different...so you look and behave different.

Source: <http://meettheneed.org/blog/2017/11/can-spot-christian-crowd/#sthash.a7jRkIFd.60eaFXN5.dpbs>

PP#3: Jim Morgan: Many Christians resemble non-Christian good people:

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| 1. Are not vocal about their faith | 2. Volunteer the same amount (outside of church) |
| 3. Comparable moral failure rates | 4. Equally worried and anxiety |
| 5. Respond much the same way in crisis | 6. Equally generous (outside of church) |
| 7. Not viewed as more loving | 8. Similar reliance on financial security |
| 9. Divorce rates (of infrequent attenders) are similar | 10. Similar focus on self |

Jim Morgan's research shows that many Christians look much the same as good people in 10 major ways. They are about the same in how much they talk about their faith, how much they volunteer in the community, succumb to moral failures, similar struggle with anxiety, respond to crises about the same, treat money about the same and so on.

So the question then is, casual Christian, what does your faith do for you? What good is it?

If you want a different kind of life, one that is marked by generosity, assurance, peace, resiliency, and resistance to moral failure, then you must do more than profess Jesus as your savior. You have to make Jesus your Lord. And that means becoming a disciple.

Disciples have a personal relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit lives vibrantly within them, actively guiding them and empowering them. "They have studied deeply, committed fully, and

changed drastically. They've assumed the attributes of Jesus and live like Him, exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit." In Jesus' time, disciples of a rabbi hoped to become just like their rabbi one day. To do that, they following him in every way, literally every step of the way. A common blessing in Jesus' day was, "May the dust of your rabbi be upon you." May you walk so closely and so in step with your rabbi that the dust of his sandals falls off on you.

Church, may you be true Christians, disciples! May you follow Jesus so closely that His dust falls on you!

PP#4: Disciples Make . . . Stands!

Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abiding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord." -1 Corinthians 15:58

Disciples of Jesus make more disciples. They make Jesus number 1, make the Holy Spirit their guide, make patterns of spiritual growth, make God talk. And disciples of Jesus make stands. We stand out in our culture. We make stands for Jesus. We look different. We live differently. 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abiding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know, your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

PP#5: "You are the salt of the earth. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." Matthew 5:13

Jesus told His followers, "You are the salt of the earth." Think about this image. Salt is a distinct and completely different substance from whatever it's added to. And when it's added, it doesn't adopt the flavor of the soup or bread. It adds its flavor to the whole, and changes the whole. It isn't changed. It affects change. Jesus is saying we're salt. This is what we are, and do. We stand out from the rest. We are different. And it is that difference that is exactly God's plan for how He is changing the whole. We are God's plan to change the world, and that means we retain our saltiness as we are sprinkled out there into the world.

Now, what did Jesus mean that salt could lose it's saltiness? We here in Minnesota actually understand this better than you might think! In the ancient world, salt wasn't purified. It was usually found in the form of salt ore. So, you would add the ore to your food, and the salt would dissolve out of the ore and flavor your soup, and the rocks would sink to the bottom of the pot. Or you added it to your liquid first, and then removed the pebbles before mixing the flour in to make bread. If your rock ore got saturated and the salt dissolved out, all it was good for was to sprinkle on the ice that's on your sidewalk! We do that. Boy do we do that! Forest Lake ran out of this last week!

Jesus' point was: don't lose your saltiness.

Today we're saying it like this: Disciples make stands.

We don't blend into the rest of the culture. We stand out. We look and behave differently. And that means that we make stands: on big issues and in dramatic situations, and we make thousands of tiny ones all along the way.

PP#6: Disciples make ... Stands!

1. Stands against ... the devil

"Put on God's armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil." - Ephesians 6:11

Disciples make stands *against* the devil. Christians make hard stands against violence, bigotry, injustice, victimizing, against all the ways that people are dehumanized and terrorized. We make strong stands against such ugliness. We are God's plan to make our world better!

But there are also a thousand of smaller, sneakier evils that we must stand against, too. The devil—I've learned from personal experience—doesn't usually vie for obvious priority. Few people say the devil is good. But the devil works among us turning our attentions onto ourselves: I am most important. I must focus on myself. I am the unnamed god of my life. And it even goes so far as to turn the healthy distinctions of self-preservation, self-validation, and self-assertion, to the extreme, to making unhealthy rationalizations to justify a cloaked form of selfishness. "You cause me to get so angry, so, in order for me to be a better me, I need to sever our relationship." Now, in some cases that may be true. But most of the time, that's just an excuse for me avoiding the hard work of controlling my anger. It's hard work to stay in a relationship. And we usually look for ways of avoiding that hard work. "You don't validate my feelings and ideas, and I can't allow this toxic environment to bring me down, so I must do the noble thing and withdraw." Again, that may be true sometimes, but often it's a cloaked form of saying, "I didn't get my way, and so I'm not going to stay a part of the group." I've heard both of these recently. Or another one I've heard, "I've prayed about this a lot, and I've discerned that God is leading me to do exactly what I think would be most exciting, or easy, or least costly." Really? It just so happens that God is leading you to do what you want? You know, that's not what God usually calls me to do!

God calls me to make stands, stands against my own selfishness, stands against the tricks, the ways that the devil tempts me to see my way is God's way. God calls me to stand firm in my difficult relationship, and do the hard work of looking inward to find what I can change to get my anger in control. God calls me to stand firm in my commitments, to stay in the groups that make me frustrated and exhausted, to not give up when they don't do whatever I think is best. I must hang in there even when things don't go my way, and put the bigger goal above the current mess. I stand strong, with resiliency, able to accept other people's criticisms, or telling me my idea isn't best. I grow from that! I stay in there, keep on going, and don't give up. I stand against my desire to blame, condemn, judge. I pray and I am willing to let God suggest to me that the hardest path is the right one, the one that doesn't fit my expectations or preferences, the one that costs me the most.

PP#7: *Image for standing against the hateful culture of negativity*

Disciples stand against the negative culture. When conversations go negative, and people start griping, we stand up and speak different words into it. "Yes, well Marcia may be difficult, but she wants what is best." Or, "I wonder if I would be any nicer if I had all that on my plate." Or, "What could we do to help her have a better attitude?" How about at work: "He's not the enemy. We need to find a way to work together." On our Facebook string, we stand against the third comment...it's always the third comment...the one that turns nasty or mean. We can stand up and post, "Well, our president is not perfect, but he's not a moron. He deserves the same respect I extend to all people." Or, we can respond, "Nancy Pelosi sure has strong views, but she's got a tough job. I respect her hard work. Rather than blaming her, I'm going to pray for her." Or, "Those people in city hall aren't idiots. They're people living in our neighborhoods. I may not agree with them, and we may have a different plan for our city's future, but we will make the most progress if we all try to use respectful dialogue, and learn to get along."

This kind of response is so weird. It's so different. It sticks out like a sore thumb! It makes you instantly identified. But here's the cool part: it also turns the conversation around for some people. No, not everyone will be affected, but some will. And that's being salt!

When your friend has hurt you, you choose to stand against the temptation to play the victim, or nurse the hurt, or lash out in anger. You're the first to go back and make repairs. Not if it's abusive, of course. But most of the time it just means standing against the anger that the devil stirs within you.

What do you need to stand against? What big issues has the Holy Spirit placed on your heart? In what ways can you make stands? What can you go do, go volunteer to do, how can you serve to make a difference? Are you willing to make that bold stand against the devil?

Or how about the sneaky, small behaviors that you need to stand against, the behaviors of the devil that leak out of your life? Choose one thing right now that the Holy Spirit is showing you in your heart that you need to take a stand on this week. Keep track. Watch yourself. Write it down in your message notes.

PP#8: *Image for putting on the armor of God to STAND against the devil*

But then, pray it through. Put on your spiritual armor. On your own, you're too vulnerable. You can't do it. But the Holy Spirit is within you—remember Disciples make the Holy Spirit their guide—and it is the Spirit that can be your defense, your strength, your conviction, your push to make the apology, to be the first to say words of life. Before you go in, prepare. Pray up. Give God your day early in the morning. Put on your spiritual armor, and stand.

PP#9: Disciples make ... Stands!

1. Stands against ... the devil

“Put on God's armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil.” - Ephesians 6:11

2. Stands for ... the Truth

“To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” -John 8:31-32

Disciples stand *against* the devil, and we also stand *for* the Truth. John 8:31-32, “To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” They believed Him. They confessed. But Jesus pushes them more. “Live out my teachings in your daily life. Stand in what you believe. Obey my teachings.” Jesus is the Truth, remember? He said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). If you live His way of life, you will know Him personally, and He will set you free. His truth will stand against all the false teachings and opinions of this world. He will free you! His way is different, weird, hard, but it is the path of abundant life!

We make those hard stands: doing what seems foolish to human thinking, resisting what feels so good or what we want so badly, not doing what everyone else is doing, or thinks is okay. We live differently, about everything! Our money we say belongs to God, and we spend it in a way that honors Him. We are radically generous! Our time is a gift, and we make time for God, for helping others, for giving. Our bodies belong to God, and so we use them for good and for respecting others. We save sex for marriage, even though every cultural norm says it's okay. We're different. We're radical. We don't blend in, we stand out. We stand out because we stand up. We ask Jesus, “How do you want me to live?” And then we choose to follow that.

PP#10: 1 Peter 3:15-17

“15 Instead, regard Christ as holy in your hearts. Whenever anyone asks you to speak of your hope, be ready to defend it. 16 Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience. Act in this way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ may be ashamed when they slander you. 17 It is better to suffer for doing good (if this could possibly be God’s will) than for doing evil.

Turn to 1 Peter 3. Peter is talking to disciples. He’s coaching them how to stand. He’s telling them to not fear all those people and authorities that come against them, push them in wrong ways, threaten them. In verse 15, he says, “Instead, regard Christ as holy in your hearts. Whenever anyone asks you to speak of your hope, be ready to defend it. [Stand. Be ready to speak words of life, God speak. Verse 16,] Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience. Act in this way [this different and strange way, this hard way, this self-sacrificing] way so that those who malign your good lifestyle in Christ [for they can see you standing out like you do, and they’ll attack you, try to push you down. But stand firm, so they] may be ashamed when they slander you. It is better to suffer for doing good (if this could possibly be God’s will) than for doing evil.” It is better to suffer for standing tall, than to suffer the results of living wrongly.

What do you need to stand tall for this week? What is the Holy Spirit laying on your heart? What is it that you must stand for? Write that down in your message notes.

PP#11: *Another image for standing out against the crowd, something inspirational.*

It’s not up to us. We stand against our own selfish desires. It’s not up to them. We stand against whatever “they” say is permissible. It’s up to Jesus. We stand for our Lord and Master. We surrender to Him so that He may transform us into something that sticks out, something holy.

Disciples are different. We can be spotted quickly. We are salt, flavoring the rest of the world. We stand *against* evil, and we stand *for* truth, who is Jesus. Disciples make ... stands!

“May the dust of your rabbi fall upon you!”

Amen.

Closing Song: *Those Who Trust***Memory Verse:**

“Put on God’s armor so that you can make a stand against the tricks of the devil.” -Ephesians 6:11

Announcements: -Pastor David**Benediction:** -Pastor David

May the Holy Spirit make you steadfast, unmoveable, always abiding in the work of the world, so that you may know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord! Amen. Go in peace.