

Today's sermon concludes the PAWN message series.

- We have considered our purpose to be a community of Jesus' disciples focused on making more disciples.
- We are blessed to be a blessing to the world.
- We are here in York to share the Good News of Jesus especially with those who have not yet heard it.

We have considered our assets – the people, facilities, skills, and location to carry out our purpose in God's mission.

Last Sunday we talked about the Wows! In our lives

– the good stuff God is already up to

- our outreach ministries
- and the many agencies in our area who are instruments of God's presence.

**Today we consider the N of PAWN** – our needs for the kingdom work God has given us to do.

Naturally, the first thing that comes to most people's minds is more people and more money.

So that's a given.

Even Jesus needed money and people to carry out his purpose in God's mission.

After all, neither he nor the 12 disciples were gainfully employed during his public ministry; they relied on the support of others.

**So let's go deeper in discovering what our needs are.**

Today's Gospel sheds light on 5 things Jesus –and his church--need to be the life-giving presence of God in the world.

1. **Knowledge** – Jesus needed to be told that Simon Peter’s mother-in-law was sick in order to do something about it.

We need knowledge, too,

- to know what our neighbors are facing and
- where the church’s healing and life-giving presence will be effective.

So we need to talk with our neighbors,

build relationships with them so that we discover

where the good news of Jesus can speak into their hearts.

2. **Authority** – Jesus needed authority over the illness, over the demons and unclean spirits.
  - a. Jesus was given that authority by the word of God the Father. “This is my Son, my chosen one – Listen to him!”
    - i. **The Son of the Father has the full authority of the Father.**
    - ii. **And the Son shares the Spirit of the Father** who does nothing but create faith and give life.
  - b. Now it is not probable that we can simply take the hand of sick persons and cure them.
  - c. But, we can take those hands and speak God’s word of hope and healing, and **through that word**, God will heal according to God’s will.
  - d. By Baptism, we have been given both the word of God and its authority and the power of the Holy Spirit.
    - i. So although *we* of our own power or authority cannot heal,

ii. *God* works through us to accomplish healing and life.

3. **The Grapevine** – Jesus needs people to tell others about him. How else did the story go from one healing inside the house to the whole city turning up outside the door?

a. So, too, we need people to tell others about what Jesus is doing here

- i. – his forgiveness and grace,
- ii. his mercy and generosity,
- iii. his feeding the hungry and clothing the poor,
- iv. his loving compassion for all people.

**b. It does no good for us to come together and receive all this wonderful love of Jesus**

**i. and then not tell others about it so that they, too, may come and see Jesus.**

c. Being the grapevine for Jesus prevents us from being hoarders of God's grace.

d. We have our mouths, social media, and print media to help us be Jesus' grapevine.

4. **Prayer**—Jesus refueled himself by praying.

a. When his energy was spent,

b. when he was thinking to himself “If I see one more demon tonight I will scream!”,

c. when he was tired from sleepless nights and weary from the journey of carrying out God's mission,

**d. Jesus went on retreat to pray.**

e. He did not presume to have unlimited energy – he was living in a human body, after all.

f. But he also need prayer to refuel his spirit,

i. to refill his capacity to be the life-giving presence of God in the world.

- g. The same is true for us. **We need to pray so that we do not go off the path of God’s mission to do what we want to do** –however good it may seem to be.
  - h. We need to pray –individually and together--to refuel our tanks with the Holy Spirit of God as we sink into deep relationship with God who gives us life.
5. **Boundaries**—Finally, Jesus needs boundaries – the lines that mark out limits and the size of the community.
- a. It would have been logical for Jesus to return to Capernaum after his prayer retreat
    - i. – there were doubtless many who were waiting in line for healing that Jesus did not get to that first night.
  - b. But Jesus marked a boundary instead
    - i. – a line of “I’ve done enough here” even if it wasn’t “all”.
  - c. The boundary also put him back on the path of his purpose – for crossing the boundary meant bringing his merciful healing and life-giving presence to the next village
    - i. – and the next – because “That is what I came to do”
  - d. **We need boundaries, too** --
    - i. Limits that allow us to say “no” to things that do not give us life and “yes” to the things that give us life eternal.
    - ii. and for some, the challenge may be recognizing that **God’s boundaries for us are different from what we think they should be.**
      - 1. For example – God may want a boundary that is now 1 congregation
      - 2. to be expanded to include 2 or 3 congregations.

3. Or God may want a boundary that prefers to include middle-and upper class White Anglo-Saxon-Protestant people
  - a. to expand to include people of different color, wealth, race, values, and religion.
- 4. God's boundaries are discerned only in prayer and meditation on God's word.**

So, now we will finish this sermon together once more. (ushers pass out papers)

Again, write down individually your responses to the questions, and then form groups of 3-4 to talk together about them, being sure to record responses. Then we will collect the papers.

Again, your responses should be things other than more people and money – that's a given.

The questions today regarding Needs are:

1. what does this congregation need in order to be a more effective congregation?
2. In order to feel connected and cared for in this congregation, what do you need from the congregation?
3. In order to be more a more effective Christian during your daily life, what can the congregation do to help you be a better follower of Jesus 24/7?

Wrap-up: Gracious God, you know our needs even better than we do. Help us to see clearly what we need to fulfill our purpose in your mission so that we can ask for it, use it wisely, and become more effective. Today we ask for knowledge about our neighbors' spiritual and physical needs, the authority of your Word to make us bold, the grapevine that broadcasts Jesus' presence among us, prayer that brings us closer to you, and boundaries that expand to fit your love and help us recognize our limits. Fill our hearts with eagerness to see our neighbors come to know you and your life-giving mercy. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.