

For Sunday, September 13

What a thrill to begin my first series of sermons as one of your pastors!

I thought that the best way for me to proceed in the coming months is to preach through the church's vision statement: "We are a community following Jesus with a heart for the city and beyond." I realize that many of you have done a lot of good thinking about it, but it seemed that it would be good for me to walk us through it in light of the new things God is doing in and through us.

What I plan to do is ask questions of each of the phrases in the statement and then have Scripture answer. So I want to ask "How does God understand 'the city'?" From a Biblical, theological perspective, what is the meaning of 'city-ness'?" I would very much welcome you sharing your reflections with me, especially sharing your insight from your particular vocation and location in the city. I want to ask "What does it mean to be 'community'?" in our time; how does this work when we are scattered all over the metropolitan area and are so busy just surviving? I want to probe the phrase "a heart for the city." What does that look like in practical terms? And "whose heart" – ours or His? I want to ask "What does it mean to 'follow' Jesus?" What does this look like 24/7? What are the challenges and/or obstacles to doing it in this part of the world? Again, I would value you sharing with me how you are wrestling with His call to discipleship.

I want to begin the Fall with the most important question for the vision statement, "Who is Jesus?" It is a question we will never adequately answer, a question posed anew by the changes in the world and in our personal lives. Who is this One who calls us to 'follow'? Why does He call us to 'follow'? Where does He want to lead us? He speaks of Himself as "sent" – sent to do what? How is He related to other would-be saviors and lords? How do we speak of Him in the marketplace and on the side-walks? What is He up at this time in history? What is the "Good news" He brings and loves to announce?

We begin this morning by looking at the answer John the Baptist gives to the question. Who is Jesus? Well ...

Here we go!

Darrell