

HERE FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Proverbs 11:11; Luke 19:1-10; Mark 10:45

1. Seeking

2. Saving

3. Serving

4. Sacrificing

love.learn.live.

westvalleychurch.com



West Valley Church
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Here For Good: Here for Our Community

These days are the start of a major shift in the life of West Valley Church; we've launched an effort that is going to help us tremendously in growth and influence for Christ in this community to a degree that we've never had before. We believe what we've begun is *vital* for the future of our church and our ability to impact West Valley – and beyond – with the Gospel. We've been saying this before, but I want to make sure you hear it again: the time is now for us to eliminate our mortgage that we've been carrying for nearly 20 years. I've been here ten years as your pastor, and even before we set foot here, I've known this day needed to happen when the time was right. But before we could tackle the mortgage, there were several things we needed to accomplish first – one of them being prioritizing our pattern of mission partnership. Another one was establishing the foundations of our ministries to the community. Those things have happened and now is the time to eliminate our debt. To be finished with the burden of debt will free up \$100,000 each year in the church's budget! That's money that is currently profiting the bank that should be put to use by us for ministry. Think about what we could do with *\$100,000* every year! Think what we could do to reach our community with the Good News of God's love for them! Think how well we could introduce people to Jesus Christ, if we could invest in our ministries and services to others!

This is especially true now that there are over 600 luxury apartments moving in next door to us. Those are going to be young adults and young families that statistically have no relationship with a church.

And, our ability to minister means we need to update the effectiveness of one of the main tools we have – and that is our facility. Except for the café, the newest parts of our building are 20 years old, and the oldest parts – including this room – were built in the 1970s. Technology, as well as people's needs, were much different 20 years ago, let alone almost 50 years ago. We need to be able to do our very best to welcome and minister to people who come through our doors every week to worship and looking for a church home.

So we've launched **Here for Good** – because we are here for *good* – we need to be rid of debt so we can be here for another 60 plus years. But we are also here to *do* good, so why wouldn't we want to maximize our resources – especially our budget and our building?

So in this series, we've been talking about what it means for us to be **Here for Good**. It means that we are Here for Christ: Christ is the reason we are here, that we've been saved, that we have a new life; Christ is the reason that we have Good News to share. Amen? Then last week we said that **Here for Good** means we are here for each other; as the church we are here to love and serve one another. So it doesn't make sense for us to give our money to the bank. All of us faithfully give because we love our church and we love each other; and yet out of our giving, we hand over tens of thousands to the bank. We are

the church; we're not here to profit a bank! We are God's community. He has placed us right here in this local community to make a difference. He has given us his Holy Spirit who is present *right now* with us, shaping us individually and as a church to be Christ in our love for each other; we are together in Christ. So we are *Here for Christ*, we are *Here for Each Other*, and we are *Here for Our Community*. That's what you heard about in the opening video (by the way, you can re-watch these opening videos if you go to the sermons page of our website – and I'd encourage you to do it; the message in them is great).

We are the church, united together as God's community, to take care of each other individually *so that* collectively we can go out and demonstrate God's love to those around us! God placed us on this corner on purpose; we are in this community to make a difference for Christ.

In the Bible, the book of Proverbs says:

“Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted.” (Proverbs 11:11, niv)

Our calling is to make this city great by being a blessing to our community!

If you are a Christian, you *already* have access to all the riches of God in Christ *today*, as well as in Heaven. The reason you are *not* in Heaven yet is because there are other people that know you that won't be there; you and I are here to introduce them to Jesus; that's our mission and that's why we're still here. So we need to maximize all the resources we have to accomplish that. I don't know about you, but I don't want to someday get to Heaven and have Jesus ask me, “Why did West Valley Church give so much money to the bank instead of using it reach people who were lost and didn't have abundant life?” God's Word is clear: he intends for us to make this city great, by being *Here for Our Community*.

All followers of Christ have been commissioned by Him to carry out His work in the world. After Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, three days later he rose from the dead. He appeared to hundreds of people for a period of forty days – and spent most of that time with his disciples. Before he ascended into heaven, he commissioned all his followers to reach people. That was Jesus' last command to us in Matthew 28:18-20.

He wants more and more people to be his disciples, to be God's forever children, and he wants to do that through us. Until Jesus comes back, that's exactly what every follower of his is supposed to prioritize his or her life to do, and that's what every church is supposed to do; make disciples of Jesus. If Jesus expects us to carry out his work until he comes back, we'd better know what his work is, right? Fortunately, it is very clear in God's Word. Jesus stated his purpose in a couple of key statements. Of course, everything Jesus said was important, and we need to pay attention to all of it. But there were two statements he made that especially reveal His passion and His purpose, and therefore reveal ours, as well.

The first we find in Luke 19. You'll be reading it in your small groups, and you can read it later, but let me summarize it. It's the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a tax-collector – not a job that was respected. It was well documented that tax-collectors were thieves. They were the kind of “middle man” for the Roman government. Rome demanded taxes from people. Somebody had to be the IRS and assess peoples' taxes and go collect those taxes. *That* was the tax-collector; sort a government contractor. Tax collectors weren't paid by the government, so their pay came out of whatever they collected from the tax-

payer. So tax-collectors would add dollars on top of the total tax that people had to pay. The taxpayer couldn't do a thing about it, because if they didn't pay, the soldiers would come looking for them and drag them away into prison and slavery until they could pay it all. Rome didn't care what the tax-collectors did, as long as the government got what it demanded. So tax-collectors took advantage of people and literally robbed them by extortion, and that's why they were commonly considered to be the worst of sinners. In a Jewish village, the tax-collector was usually a Jew, working for the hated oppressor-government, taking advantage of fellow Jews. They were traitors to their people. *That was Zacchaeus.*

So Jesus is walking through Jericho and a crowd is following along and word of Jesus' arrival goes ahead of him. So this short-statured tax collector climbs a tree so he can see over the crowds and can get a look at Jesus.

When Jesus reached that spot, Zacchaeus was shocked to hear his name; Jesus called out, "Zacchaeus!" even though as far as we know Jesus had never met him before. The crowd was shocked as well. Jesus said, "Come down immediately. I MUST stay at your house today!" Jesus knew that this man was a sinner. He knew what people would think of him for staying at Zacchaeus' home. But when Jesus came to Zach's house, Zach repented of His sin and became a follower of Jesus, and then Zacchaeus proved it by taking from all his wealth and paying back everyone that he had extorted from. Then Jesus made an amazing statement: he said that Zacchaeus was a "Son of Abraham" – meaning that Zacchaeus was a full-blooded, full-rights Jew; a chosen person of God. This was insulting to the Jews who were watching this. But Jesus clearly loved Zacchaeus. Jesus explained himself by saying that Zacchaeus was a *lost child of God*.

Have you ever seen those "lost dog" signs? They post them on our mailboxes in our neighborhood, and you see them on power poles and community bulletin boards – have you seen them? There was a sign once that said there was a big cash reward for whoever found the lost dog, and then it had a description of the dog so folks could identify him. It said: "He's only got three legs, he's blind in the left eye, he's missing a right ear, his tail has been broken off and he was neutered accidentally by a fence (yikes!). He's almost deaf. He answers by the name 'Lucky.'"

That dog is *not* lucky! He's been through a whole lot of mess. But he's lucky because he's got an owner who loves him and wants him back. That was Zacchaeus!

Jesus finished his greeting of Zacchaeus when he said:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10, niv)

Jesus was very clear with everyone there and with us that he came to seek out and find those who were lost. So, if we are going to continue doing the work that Jesus gave us to do, then the first thing about our church being *Here for Our Community* means that, like Jesus, we will always be...

1. *Seeking*

We, too, need to seek those who are lost. It's important here to understand what it was that Jesus was seeking. We know he was seeking what was lost, but let's learn what he meant by "lost." The word that Jesus used (*apollomei*) means the whole of mankind – that is, all men and women. And the word indicates that those who are lost are *totally* lost (which is *all of us*). The word can be translated to mean "destroyed, drown, ruined, executed, killed, perished." It means that the lost are *completely* dead, that there is not an ounce in us that is "found" or even remotely "findable" without Christ. We are completely and totally lost, cut off from God and from all hope and all eternal life, whether we are Jews or not. It is true for all people everywhere through all time. One commentator said it this way: as lost "as a traveler is lost when he has missed his way in the wilderness, as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable, or as a prisoner is lost when (a life) sentence is passed upon him." That's how lost we are.

That's important because it tells us how much we need what Christ has done for us. All of us are that dog named "Lucky" – the only reason we are lucky is because we have an owner who loves us and is looking for us.

So, as the church, the word "lost" is also important to us, because it tells us who *we* should be seeking for Jesus. Do you see this? If it is *people* that Jesus came to seek, and we are supposed to carry on Jesus' work, then the whole world (including and especially those in our neighborhood, and those moving next door to us) are *all* on our agenda to seek and build relationship with, that we can welcome them into our home and perhaps be welcomed into theirs.

So when we say we are to be seeking, it means that we are to do anything we can to build relationship with the unchurched. The best way we can do that is by serving them in the all ways that we can. That's why it's important to free up our debt, because there are ways we cannot currently serve the lost because we don't have available resources.

Jesus said he came for the lost sheep and that:

"In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish." (Matthew 18:14, niv)

Jesus emphasized this desire for the lost by telling not one, not two, but three stories (Luke 15) in a row about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son – all to show how much we matter to God and how desperately he's looking for us.

Now when Jesus said he was seeking all people in general, He meant something very specific, too. The word he used for "seek" (*zeteo*) meant to desire, to diligently seek after, to pursue with such passion and intensity that it is almost like worshipping the thing that is lost. You heard that right!

Of course, Jesus didn't worship anyone but the Father and neither should we. But the intensity of Jesus' seeking was just one step short of *worship*; that's how much passion there is in it. That's how deeply Jesus feels about us and how strongly and desperately he seeks us. And it's with that same intensity that *we* should seek those around us who are lost. *We* are a consuming passion of Jesus. So we too need to have that same passion to seek people for Him. That's what I want; my prayer is, "God, give me the same desire to seek people that Jesus has." It means that I will be conscious of the people around me. That

I will engage in developing relationships so that I can determine ways I can serve them, being genuinely interested in their lives, and ready for any opportunity that they give me to introduce them to Jesus. Would you dare to pray that prayer? Would you be willing to pray, “God give me the same desire to seek people that Jesus has”? If you are, then it will make sense that you will do things differently, including giving in significant ways to **Here for Good** so that we as a church can seek people.

But there’s a second part to this. We’re not just seeking out new friends so they can be like us. We are seeking them so we can see Jesus save them, too. It means that we are here for...

2. *Saving*

Remember, Jesus said he came to seek and to *save* us. The word that Jesus used for “save” (“sozo”) means to turn toward, to secure, to receive, to deliver, to heal, to protect and to preserve.

Jesus is the *only* one who can save us like that because we are so totally lost. He gave his perfect life in exchange for our lost lives. He came to *save* us. So we too, want to see people saved by Jesus, to begin a relationship with him, to experience his forgiveness and new life at an astronomical level of life with him as the Lord and Leader of their lives.

This is what the Apostle Paul said was *his* purpose, too.

Listen to his driving passion to see people saved so they can know Jesus too:

“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22, niv)

“I’ve become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.” Is that your attitude and passion? This was Jesus’ driving ambition – to rescue people. He would give anything and everything to see them saved; in fact, he gave his life. He was willing to face horrible torture and crucifixion in order to save us. That is exactly what Jesus’ name means; the Bible says that God told Mary to name her baby “Jesus” because he would save people from their sins. If Jesus gave absolutely everything he had to save us, and he has commissioned us to carry on his work, shouldn’t we also give everything we can to see people saved? In light of what Jesus gave so that you could be saved, is giving sacrificially for **Here for Good** too much to ask of you, so you can help people be saved?

I know it’s messy work to seek people and get involved in their lives. In the process you have to accept them in all of their stuff – divorce, addiction, abuse, confusion, anger, pain, relational issues – come to think of it, it’s stuff that *we all* have! But seeking people so Jesus can save them is exactly what Jesus tells us to do.

Did you hear about the guy who bought an old yellowed piece of paper from a Goodwill store for \$2.48 and it turned out to be one of the original copies of the Declaration of Independence? (There he is) \$2.48! He turned around and sold it at auction for over \$2.42 million. Can you imagine? That is one valuable old piece of paper.



Imagine you found a Rembrandt painting, but it was covered with mud and dirt and yuck. But you know it's a Rembrandt – like that yellowed Declaration of Independence, you know it's incredibly valuable. What would you do? Throw it away because it's dirty? Wouldn't you take it to an expert who can restore it to its original condition and beauty?

Well, lost people are that Rembrandt. They are made in the image of God. We don't want to dismiss them no matter how "dirty" and worn we might think they are. Instead, we want to connect them to the Master who will restore them to their original beauty and value. This is what it means for us to be **Here for Good** – to give all we can to seek and to save.

Now there's another thing that Jesus came to do that we are to do as well. Jesus talked about it during a time when his disciples were arguing about who among them was going to be the greatest in Jesus' Kingdom. They all wanted to have top billing, but Jesus set them straight by telling them that whoever wanted to be greatest was going to have to be the least, and that they needed to follow his example. That same instruction applies to believers today, and this is the example that Jesus set for us: He said:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45, niv)

That was another part of what Jesus came to do, and therefore we are here to do as well.

Another reason we are here is to be a...

3. *Serving* church.

I already alluded to this earlier.

Do you realize that Jesus could have come demanding obedience from us, and demanding that we worship him? He had every power and right to do that. But instead, he came to serve, and he specifically said that He was giving us an example to do the same thing for others. Jesus said:

“I am among you as one who serves.” (Luke 22:27, niv)

...and he demonstrated it over and over.

During his final meal with the disciples, the Bible tells us that Jesus got up during the meal, grabbed a bowl and a towel and began washing his disciples' feet. Normally a servant would have done this when Jesus and the disciples walked in the door, but there was no servant to do so, and of course none of the disciples volunteered to do something like that –

it was so beneath them! So in the middle of the meal Jesus got up and started washing their feet. Keep in mind that these were fisherman – hard-working guys who wore sandals and walked everywhere on very dusty roads. Their sandals were not Chacos or Birkenstocks; they were straps of leather – not much separation between their feet and the dirty ground. Their feet had to have been really gnarly! But Jesus washed their feet anyway.

The feet that Jesus created, he washed.

He must have thought about how, in just a few hours, his own feet would soon be nailed to a slab of wood by the hands he created – the hands of men.

But still Jesus washed.

Then he said:

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” (John 13:14-15, niv)

It if wasn’t beneath Jesus to serve in this way, is it beneath us to serve people in our community?

As a church, we want to serve the needs of our community. I was looking back at my sermons when I first got here, and can I tell you something? Ten years ago next month, I’d only been your pastor for a few months, and I made this statement:

“I promise you there will be intentional efforts and opportunities that West Valley Church will create in the future for us as a church to serve our neighbors and community.”

Now here we are, ten years later, and we have so many ways to serve! We already had Upward Soccer, but did you know it has grown over these last ten years from 250 kids to, again this year, over 500 children involved, making it the largest Upward Soccer ministry in the world? Besides that, we now also have homework club, we have school partnerships, we give away backpacks and school supplies, we have summer science camps and Trunk or Treat and Breakfast with Santa.

We have done so much; imagine what we could do if we were done paying that mortgage?!

And this applies not only to us as a church; it applies to you, too – to your neighborhood, to the people you work with and go to school with. Look for ways that you can serve!

So we are *Here for Our Community* to seek, save, serve, and finally we’re here...

4. Sacrificing

Jesus said that he came to give his life as a ransom or a sacrifice for many. That means he sacrificed himself for all those who are lost. And tell me again, who again are the lost? All of us – all people. Sacrificing is an example that Jesus wants us to follow. It’s a purpose he wants us to carry on. The Bible tells us to follow his example specifically:

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8, niv)

“Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...”

He sacrificed for us, and he wants us to also sacrifice for the sake of others who are lost. We are to seek, to save, to serve, and to sacrifice, all for the sake of people in our community.

Let me put it all this way: when we become Christians, we often talk about inviting Christ into our hearts and lives, right? So we have Christ *in us*. And that is a very important truth of the Bible; we must ask Christ “into” our lives. There are at least five places that the Apostle Paul wrote about how we need *Christ in us*.

But I’m not sure that should be our greatest focus, because there is *another* truth of the Bible, that is *more important* than having Christ *in* our lives: the greater truth is that *we are in Christ*. Paul talks about Christ being *in us* five times, but he uses the phrase that we are “in Christ” 164 times! Here’s why this is important: If Christ is limited to being *in you*, how big is He? But if all believers are *in Christ*, how big he must be! Here’s the difference: if Christ is merely *in you*, then you take him along wherever you go. But if you are *in Christ*, that means you go wherever he goes; and I think you know where he goes: to seek and save those who are lost. We must do everything we can to be in Christ, to go where he goes, to seek, save, serve, and sacrifice all we can for the lost.

One very good, tangible way to do that is through **Here for Good**. It’s certainly not the only way, but giving of our finances is certainly *one* way that God intends for us to sacrifice for the sake of the lost.

So here’s what I want to ask you to do; the same thing as we’ve done the previous two Sundays: I want you to think of how God wants you to be *Here for Our Community* and I want you in a moment to come forward and write it down on a post it note. You’ll see on the walls that there are four large posters of the pin drop. That pin drop, like a point on a map, indicates that we want to be **Here for Good**. Today, we want to commit to be *Here for Our Community*. So up here on these tables are baskets that have post-it notes and sharpies. I’m going to ask you, in a moment, to come forward, take a post-it, and write some way that you need to be *Here for Our Community*, and then take it to one of those pin drops, and post it on that poster with the post-it notes we’ve put on it to be *Here for Christ* and *Here for Each Other*; post it on there and then find your way back to your seat. Don’t put your name on it; just put that one thing God is speaking to you about. It might be the name of a person that needs to know Jesus. It might be some specific way you need to serve your neighbor or friend or enemy. It might be some way you need to serve through our church. Of course, it might also to be that you need to give to **Here for Good**.

Whatever it is, come forward, write it down, then place it on one of those four posters and then go back to your seat. When we are finished, we'll close.

Pray.

When you are ready, come. If that's difficult, raise your hand and someone will come to you.

We've got an incredible opportunity in front of us! But it's a big one; to accomplish this, it is going to require great faith and sacrifice on the part of every one of us; we need 100% participation. When all of us are "all in," we will see God work as he multiplies our effort and we will accomplish this tremendous task of raising \$1.6 million over three years! Maybe even more than that, and maybe sooner than that!

Just like you, Shelly and I are thinking and praying about what God is calling us to sacrificially in a very big way so that we can make our best gift to the **Here For Good** generosity campaign over these next three years. We've already heard from folks who are putting off a home remodel and giving that money instead, and someone else who had an unexpected business addition so they are giving all the proceeds from that. Others have talked about selling a car, or paying off a loan and planning to give the same amount as the payments for the next three years. You heard from Alex that he has actually postponed his retirement so he has the means to give to **Here for Good**. By the way, that's as close as we plan to get to telling you what people are giving; we will not announce individual giving; only our *total* so you'll know where we are at toward our goal.

- So please, pray for everyone in our church to be involved, for us to achieve what God has laid on our hearts, and for your own part in this.
- Be with us for the remaining Sundays of this series, and join us on March 8 when we collect our commitment cards together.
- Please use the discipleship material we've provided for you through the devotionals and small group materials to study together that are in your book. If you are not in a small group, there are groups meeting Sunday morning and Wednesday evening here at the church during this series. You can join any of them at any time!
- Use the daily devotions in your book *today* – day one of week three starts *today*. Read these every day during this time together.
- If you didn't get a packet or need an extra book, go to the table in the foyer under the cross.
- Also, if you know of a West Valley alum or friend that you would like us to send a packet to, stop by the table and the person there will get that information from you.
- Finally, use that commitment card that has the giving chart on it to pray over, listen to God, and make a bold step of faith – bigger than you've ever done before – in your commitment to give to **Here for Good** at your West Valley Church, so that we can be *Here for Christ, Here for Each Other, and Here for Our Community*. Okay? We'll collect these on March 8, so start praying now and come prepared to commit.