

Majoring on the Minors, Introduction
Mission Testimony – New Bern, NC
 Rev. Dr. Meagan Boozer

If you've been faithfully connecting with the church on Sundays since the beginning of summer (which I hope you have), hopefully you've picked up on a common theme. Over the summer we went through the book of Genesis (*He Was in the Beginning*), discovering how this amazing first book of the Bible points to Jesus Christ the Promised Savior! Then in September we began the *Pointers* sermon series asking how our own lives point to Jesus as our Savior and Lord. The initial plan was for the *Pointers* series to last 4-5 weeks maximum, and then we would move into a new series that would take us right up to Thanksgiving and into Advent. The Holy Spirit however, added two more weeks to the *Pointers* series, which I hope instructed and challenged you as it did me. But now my plans are a bit messed up (hopefully because God's plan nixed my plan) because we only have four Sundays (including today) before the Turkey Supper – and the Sunday after the Turkey Supper is going to be all Scripture and Song as we lift our voices in Thanksgiving for his grace and goodness!

So, here's the new old plan, in minimized form: We are going to take three weeks to major on the minors – meaning that we are going to look at three of the minor prophets to see how they point us to the coming of Jesus Christ as the Promised One as we prepare for the onset of the Advent and Christmas season.

Let's first look at a list of the major and the minor prophets: The Major Prophets (meaning the longer books) are *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel*. The Minor Prophets (meaning the shorter books) are *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*. The Minor Prophets are also sometimes called The Twelve. These 17 books of the Bible (with the exception of Isaiah) are what we might call the 'least popular' or the 'lesser read, lesser known' books. But listen to this verse from Hebrews 1:1, "*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets.*" Why wouldn't we want to spend time listening to what they heard from God, (more time than we spend checking messages from other people) because as we know from all we read in the Bible, what God said to people in Bible times, God is still saying to us today.

Sometimes we misunderstand what a prophet is, thinking only that he or she is a wild and half-crazy person who predicts the future like a fortune teller or something. In the Biblical prophetic books there is an element of prediction – they spoke of coming judgment, the exile, and the future restoration of a faithful remnant to the land God had promised. But the predictions weren't primarily to tell the people about their future, the predictions were meant to encourage the people of God to form the future. They were intended as incentives to do life the way God said to do it so as to receive the fulfillment of God's promises. In these short little prophetic books we'll see the predictions that Jesus fulfilled as we prepare to wait for and welcome his coming in December.

So, what's with the *pointing* theme for all these months? Why did we start in June pointing to Jesus through the book of Genesis, and why haven't we stopped pointing yet? Well, I am always hopeful that what is being preached is what God wants to be preached here, and in this time in history where so many Christians are leaning more towards a universal salvation as opposed to Jesus as the only way of salvation, we need to be reminded to stay the course. A universal salvation approach insists that all people will eventually be reconciled to God – whether they come to faith through Jesus Christ, or through Mohammed, or through some new age oneness with light as they do good works, or through clicking their heels together and saying, "There's no place like heaven." A universal salvationist approach declares that everyone wins! Everyone gets to Heaven! Everyone gets what God said he desired, "That none would perish!" But God also very clearly said that "*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be*

saved." (Romans 10:13). Jesus gave the roadmap: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* (John 14:6). But we are so worried about offending someone in these days that some (many) faithful Christians are in essence denying what the Bible claims. They are turning instead to the gods of tolerance or false compassion instead of speaking the truth. "I'm a Christian and that works for me, but if you don't believe that, that's okay – whatever path makes you feel good is the path you should take." What? Really? Is that how we want to lead our children? If we know the life-saving remedy is behind door number 1, why (literally for heaven's sake) would we tell them it's fine, 'oh it's great' to spend their lives walking towards any other door?

The Bible clearly points to Jesus Christ from the very beginning in the book of Genesis as the Promised Savior. But the pointing doesn't stop in Genesis – the whole Old Testament points to Jesus, all the way through the prophets, ending with the prophet Malachi. It's all about Jesus, friends. **Jesus is the soul savior and the sole savior.** He is the soul savior and the sole savior. He is the ONLY one who can save our souls, heal our hearts, clear our minds from the lies we have been told, set us free when we are oppressed, and put a joy and a peace within us that cannot be shaken. We can't compromise on this, church. We can't bend. We can't fudge what's true. As the Scripture does, we need to point to Jesus Christ as the only way home to heaven.

Today, we read from the minor prophet Jonah for our call to worship. I think most of us know the story. Jonah was called by God to go to a place called Ninevah to tell the people there that they needed to clean up their act or God was going to do away with them. But Jonah didn't want to go because he didn't like the Ninevites and didn't want them to be saved. It's sort of like us when we don't want to speak the truth that Jesus is the only way to be saved. We're ok to hold that truth in our hearts for ourselves, but we don't want to tell others. It seems so 'narrow' and people might think we're religious fanatics or something. But you remember what happened to Jonah, don't you? It wasn't pretty. Three days in the belly of a whale, until he was regurgitated. Lovely.

When God calls us to do something, whether it is through the Bible, through the witness of the Holy Spirit within us, through the counsel of biblically-grounded, godly friends, or through the way the circumstances are stacking up – we'd be wise to do it. And when we obey, the joy that comes, the peace that comes is beautiful, even when things are still hard. God works in our lives to instill a contentment that only comes from obeying and following him. So, as a testimony to this truth, the New Bern, NC Mission Team is going to testify to how God granted them joy and peace in their obedience to heed his call to pack up and go to help those in need.

My Mission Testimony
New Bern, North Carolina
October 14 – October 19, 2018
Carrie Anderson

As I begin to share my experience with Samaritans Purse in New Bern NC I want to share a scripture verse that has helped me during the week. "I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me; he freed me from all my fears." (Psalm 34:4) Hopefully, as I explain our week you will be able to understand how this verse spoke to me.

On Monday when we arrived and got settled in we were placed in a team. Our team included the 5 from Path Valley, several married couples and a small group of ladies from North Carolina that included Joyce, 81 years old and before the week was over was an inspiration to all of us. We had the opportunity to be led by a man named Kenny. When we met Kenny, he was wearing a pair of denim bib overalls, talked with a southern accent, and had a dry sense of humor that took a day or so to catch on to. As we gathered into a prayer circle to begin our morning the first thing he told us as a group was, "If ya'll are here to fix a house ya'll came for the wrong reason, we are here to minister to,

talk to and help the people and home owners of New Bern.” One fear that I had was what to say to the home owners and how to reply when they tell their story. When we arrived, we began to learn about the homeowners, Dan and Tracy, a retired military couple with a son and daughter. They had to be rescued by boat and had to leave almost all of their belongings behind, including their livestock. Many of the animals made it through the storm but several did not. During Monday we kept at work with what Kenny had asked us to do, taking out drywall, paneling, flooring, pulling nails, just demolishing pretty much everything from the floor to two–three feet up. As we worked I could see volunteers having opportunities to visit and talk with Dan and Tracy - learning about their experience and listening to their story.

Rita and I saw Tracy headed out to the barn area with a bucket of water for her animals, so we decided to help. While we were helping her, she told us something that really impacted me. “You people are real, you’re authentic,” she said. “I don’t know anyone from church that would come here and help me water my pigs or ask about my chickens....do the dirty hard work that you are doing in my house, you are good people that care about people.” My fear of not having the right words or what to say turned into being blessed by listening and doing and just being with Tracy at the right time.

As the week went on and we were getting near being done with Dan and Tracy’s home, Kenny mentioned that he would need help the next day (Wednesday) with crawl space work. I froze with fear. Laurie and Brenda both knew that this was consuming me and Laurie just kept saying don’t worry about tomorrow it’s okay, God will work it out. Brenda referenced Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

As we met in the morning and Kenny called out areas of the home that needed work, first on his list was the crawl space. He needed volunteers. Whose hand went up: LAURIE! then several others. Then I realized, “Oh, I don’t have to do this. I don’t have to crawl around with the spiders; Laurie is going to do it.” I felt so relieved. Then Kenny asked the ones that did not have a job there to go to a new location. As we arrived and walked around the home we could tell that it was a bad situation. This home owner was Elvie Brown, an elderly lady on dialysis with no immediate family and a husband that suffers with Alzheimer’s disease. Elvie was able to get out of the house before the storm but the house had been hit with several feet of water and had not been opened for 6 weeks. When Kenny opened the door, FEAR came...all over again Elvie lost everything. Our job was to bag everything up, carry water-logged furniture out, appliances, refrigerators, rugs that were still wet, food, magazines, books, clothing, everything. The following day would be a total demo from ceiling to floor. After much prayer within our team, my thoughts began to shift, my fear turned to blessing that our team was able to get her home cleaned out, that Elvie was able to get away from a dangerous living condition and that she was safe.

When Thursday came there was a third home added to Ken’s work list: Ms. Pam. So again, several of us divided up and half went back to Elvie’s home and half went to Ms. Pams. This home had very little damage. Our job there was to take the trim off doorways and take out the baseboard so that the floors could properly dry out and be sanded and refinished. Pam had family that were able to help her, and it was a blessing to be in her beautiful home and see the relationship she had with her daughter. As I worked that day I silently prayed and thanked God for using me in so many different ways, for changing my heart and for helping me to shift my fears to a blessing. I asked that he would continue to give me a heart to serve.

Friday, as I started to pack things and get ready to come home, I took a few minutes to think about all that had happened during the week. Our team had gone from hard physical labor of mucking or gutting out a water-logged home, to a devastating situation of seeing an elderly lady lose everything, not just flooring and two or three feet of drywall but everything, and then in Pam’s beautiful home where we could witness the love and support of her family and be blessed by that. How awesome it was for me and for our team to be guided and used in so many situations.

A scripture that I found and want to close with is from Psalm 3:27, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act." Thank you for gifting me the opportunity (financial support) and supporting our team (with prayer) so that we could do good and be a helping hand in so many ways for so many people. Thank you.

(Team members from left to right: Laurie Ruby, team leader. Carrie Anderson, Denny Stine, Brenda Hart, and Bill Snyder.)

