

## Vision & Purpose

Good Morning.

This morning, if you have been sitting in these seats for the last three years and it seems like I have preached the same sermon the whole time. Guess what you are absolutely right!

Every sermon, every message from God, everything that comes across this pulpit has to do with some very simple concepts...

- Understanding who Jesus is and what he has done for us
- Understanding and embracing the love of Jesus
- Understanding Jesus plan, through his word, to effectively carry out his vision
- Understanding
- Understanding Jesus vision for this church and what a church is
- Understanding what faith is
- Understanding our roles corporately and individually in Jesus vision
- Understanding how selfishness, resistance and rebellion have impacted what Jesus has called his church to do

Yet all of this is dependent on understanding his vision & purpose for his church.

Churches are the people not the building. Churches are created to:

- Spread the Good News of Jesus to those around them
- Bring people into the church and give them a place to belong, to find themselves and to heal and find his love
- Celebrate the goodness of Jesus in fellowship with each other by exhorting, edifying and comforting each other in a culture of honor
- Train the people what the word of God says. To help them understand the good news and embrace it for themselves
- To equip and support the congregation in Spreading the Good News of Jesus to their community and their friends

So really the mission we have been given is to:

- Bring people in to belong
- Actively participate in helping them heal
- Celebrate with them
- Equip them with the Word
- Send them out to Bring people in to belong

The Church is not meant to be an inward focused social club, it is meant to be a living breathing group of individuals actively caring for each other and reaching out to those who have not yet discovered the hope in Jesus.

Did you know that there are many reasons why a person comes to church?

- Some people come only because it is what their parents did.
- Some people come because they feel obligated to come by those around them
- Some people come as fire insurance
- Some people come because of a sense of duty or obligation
- Some people come because they feel guilty and want to be a good person

We will get to some other reasons in a moment, but can you see why people who come for these reasons are reticent or apathetic to Jesus vision for his church?

My friends, I want people who are in these categories to truly find who Jesus is. There are many and they are missing out. They have seldom had a real life changing experience with Jesus and many of these less fortunate Christians don't have the personal relationship with Jesus to really get a hold of this vision for his church.

Don't get me wrong, there are many in these categories that are strong supporters of their individual congregations. They will try to live a righteous life and may even extend a hand to others occasionally. Their faith however is limited and their vision is compromised because they cannot grasp what all the excitement about Jesus really is. There is often no context.

When a person is serving God out of duty or obligation, the joy, the life and the excitement are limited... Because, there is not personal relationship with Jesus

So as a priest what would you do to help these people truly discover Christ?

The word says you are all royal and priests before God...

As a priest and a pastor, I stand up here Sunday after Sunday and teach the living word of God. Do you know why I share his word?

I get a paycheck... No just kidding.

The main reason I do this is because Jesus has promised that his word will not return to him void. I know that anyone who has not fully committed to Jesus who hears this word is impacted. Change does not happen in my timeframe but on him. I feel compassion for those who do not grasp all there is to be had in him. They are really missing out.

So where is the problem with this living entity of the churches today as they stand?

Other reasons why people come to church are:

- Some People have had a life changing experience with Jesus
- Some People have experienced healing in their life with Jesus
- Some People have a relationship with Jesus

In these Christians, where they have felt a touch from their Lord, they have heard his voice, his knock and opened the door. When a person is impacted in such a way, they cannot help but embrace everything that Jesus has for them. I am a person who was coldly logical and came in duty and Jesus truly touched me and completely rewrote my software.

Often times this latter group people have hit rock bottom in their lives and they have turned to Jesus because they have given up on doctors or life or their own ability to solve their problems.

If both types of Christians believe on the Lord Jesus what is the difference?

The word says in Jeremiah 29:13 NIV:

*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*

To the one who has no where else to go seeking God with all their heart has produced a rich reward in that they have truly found God.

My friends, the cry of my heart this morning, is that if you haven't sought God with all your heart, that you don't have to come to crisis before you do. A crisis is not required, The only requirement is to seek him with all your heart.

So far...

- We have seen what a church is for...
- We have seen what it is meant to do...
- We have seen why people approach Church differently...

So how do we as his church in North America get church members, adherents and so on to get excited about Jesus vision for his church? How do we break down apathy and indifference? How do we establish Christ's vision in such a way as to create engagement of everyone?

I have prayed about this issue for 7 years...

God has said: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart"

So how do we as a church help those who haven't fully given their hearts over to Christ?

Here is our mission

- Bring people in to belong
- Actively participate in helping them heal
- Celebrate with them
- Equip them with the Word
- Send them out to Bring people in to belong

Here is our Vision

- We will worship God
- We will Love all People
- We will embrace community

This led me to ask: “How will we worship God, How will we love all people and how will we embrace our community”

By bringing people into the church and giving them a place to truly be accepted and belong, by being with them on the journey and helping them and ourselves to heal, by celebrating with them, By teaching and equipping using what God has said in his word. We are prepared to replicate the love of Christ to others. We love all people through emotional and spiritual support, by encouragement and care and we embrace our community by helping where we can and sharing the good news of Jesus with those who have no hope.

Next question: “How do we get people in the church who come and love God but have no personal experience of him to find that relationship with Jesus that is essential for Joy and happiness in the good things of God. How can we release that Joy and fulfillment?”

We need to get them to seek God with their whole heart and embrace his vision for his church. But how do we do this?

WE DON'T...

Here is what we can do for our church:

- We can pray for each other
- We can pray that every person in the church; will diligently seek God with their whole heart.
- We can stop ourselves from being judgmental of each other and embrace that we are all on a journey and show Christ's love
- WE can preach and teach what God says in his word
- We can lead by example...

**We cannot change a person or their walk with Christ.**

But...

- They can change their approach to God and embrace him fully in all aspects of their lives
- The Holy Spirit can teach, lead and guide them to the fullness of life in Christ
- We can pray for them
- We can be examples of the Joy of Christ and share that with them

So... Does the church abandon vision until everyone can see it?

Unfortunately, Many do...

Still more pastors get discouraged and quit the ministry...

Church's close every day...

Billy Graham preached in London for 12 weeks in 1954 when an Anglican Priest approached him. The priest said to him: "Mr. Graham, I attended every night for three months and you preached the same sermon every night." Rev. Graham said later: "I thought I preached a different sermon every night, but I knew what he meant."

What Rev. Graham is referring to is that although the message changes the intent and purpose is the same.

This morning I ask you what God's opinion of the necessity of vision within his church is?

Proverbs 29:18a – *Where there is no vision the people perish...*

So will we adhere to the moral law of God? Will we be obedient to his will for his churches? Or will we as the North American church cast of restraint and perish

I want you to close your eyes for a moment.

I want you to see a beautiful church building in your mind. It is clean, It shines brightly, the light from inside comes out of stain glass windows in every color. It is beautiful. Now picture darkness. No moon, it is overcast. There are diverse creatures in the darkness seeking to destroy whatever it can get its hands on. In this darkness, which seems almost impenetrable the light of the church can be seen in the myriad diversity and all the colors of the people inside.

When a person in distress comes to the door is it locked or unlocked?

Is the person brought in and welcomed in to the light or shunned?

More over... This light in the darkness, this beacon of hope in the mire opens its door and from within it flow the people radiating the love of Jesus. They go into the darkness and take the lost by the hand and lead them to the church; to safety, to security, to their very salvation.

That's what is right here, right now, outside these doors in Salmo this morning. People are lost, people are dying what will you do?

Mark 5:36

The leader of the synagogue received a message from Jesus about a dead girl...

Jesus said: "Do not fear, only believe"

What was Jesus saying? He was telling the people to not look at the physical but to see in the spirit.

Want a practical example of vision...

Consider Bruce Lee the famous martial artist. He created his own fighting style, it fit him and he was effective. The most important part of his fighting style was the concept to aim 6 inches past his target. Essentially, if he was going to strike the torso, he would visualize his punch going six inches past the person's body.

Now as Christians, due to looking at the physical instead of the spiritual do we find ourselves stopping six inches in front of the target and never quite reaching it or do we look in the spiritual beyond and have faith that we will reach our target?

This leads me to faith... Do we have faith in Jesus to deliver if we trust him? Are we committed enough to sacrifice a bit to see what he wants done accomplished?

When you look up at the stars at night created by our God, how many do you see? To illustrate my point here is a small story....

A teacher gave her grade 5 class an assignment. She said to go home and after dark count how many stars you see.

Next day the students came back with a lot of different answers. Some said 1 million, some said a thousand, some said 100. Finally, the teacher asked a boy who hadn't volunteered his count. The kid said something very interesting...

He said he saw 3... Well the teacher wanted to know: How could you only see three? To which the child replied, "I guess we just have a small backyard..."

In our faith, do we have a small backyard?

God has asked us the impossible hasn't he? Why should we even try?

Let's consider some bible leaders shall we?

What if:

God says to Noah: Build me an ark  
And Noah says: Sorry God but I don't live near any water and I don't do boats

What if God had said to Moses: Go unto pharaoh and tell him to release my people into your care for an exodus into the desert.  
And Moses says: I can't I don't like people

What if God said to David: I am with you go and slay Goliath with your sling  
And David replied: I don't do giants or kingdoms God, I uh... take care of sheep

What if God said to Mary: Mary you are blessed among all woman, you will carry my son and bring him in to the world to save the world  
And Mary replied: "What would people think? I'm not yet married and I wasn't planning on having kids yet? The Son of God, seems like a difficult situation for raising a child to me

When we look in the mirror do we see ourselves and our limitations or do we see beyond to see who God says we are?

This morning, I ask you to consider this thought...

Why don't we have more faith, courage, or vision?  
Is it God's fault?

This morning if you could give a hard swift kick in the pants of the one responsible for all your doubts, how long would it be before you could sit down?

My dear friends, this morning I want you to see that Vision is the ability to see what others can't. It is faith to believe what others will not and the courage to do what others say can't be done.

If you have been discouraged.... Look at Christopher Columbus' diary... Paige after Paige simply said: "This day we sailed on!" Will you stop short or press on to completion.

Helen Keller was an American author, political activist and lecturer. She was the first deaf and blind person to earn a bachelor-of-arts degree. That is pretty impressive, but not my point.

She said: "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision..."

Today the challenge is this:

Will we trade our vision for his?