

VISION SUNDAY 2019



Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brothers Ryan Sharp and Jeff Johnson at Impact Church.

Closing prayer

INTRO:

Some of you may be familiar with Eugene Peterson who died this past year. He authored a book called *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, which had the subtitle *Discipleship in An Instant Society*.

The point of his book from what I understand is that because of the culture we live in we expect certain results, and we expect them quickly and when they don't materialize in the way that we expect them, we are disappointed or we grumble or complain, because we're seeing the results we think we should, because we're not getting what we think is due.

This attitude will destroy your joy. It will destroy the joy of the church.

All that to say, on this Vision Sunday I'm only going to remind us of what our vision is so that we can keep moving forward with joy.

When the Apostle Paul told the Galatians:

Galatians 6:9

⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

He told them this because there is a real danger in the Christian life, especially in a culture that expects instant results. How many of us just in the last week asked this question of something, “How long is this going to take?”

- DVDs

PROBLEM #1: Growing Weary

So, one danger is growing weary of doing good, doing what God has called us to do as Christians together.

PROBLEM #2: Expectations

The other danger is expecting a certain return. The Lord promises that we will reap in due time, but we often have some ideas of what we should reap and when we should reap it. In other words, we have an idea of what the results should be.

- I struggle with this when I become frustrated with leaders like Andy Stanley and the widespread influence of his bad ideas.

But the ideas we have about success and the size of that success and the speed of that success fosters discontentment.

Our very first vision Sunday, I called this “The Someday Church.” It’s the mentality says, “Someday our church will be...” and then we dream about those future days of what God

will do at our church. We really dream about what we think success in the church looks like.

That first vision Sunday I also said, “Personally, I believe the glory days of our church are right here and right now.”

Here’s why I said that.

Don’t you have grace right now? The same way the Christian life begins is how the

**Christian life is maintained — through grace.
That is our primary point today.**

But let me remind us of some evidence of God's grace among us right now. One of our values is church planting. During our first vision Sunday, I spoke of us becoming a church planting church and I have been convinced from day one that in order to be a church planting church we didn't need to be a certain size of church. We just needed someone who wanted to plant a church that we could train and send out.

Well, at the end of our second year, the Lord gave us someone who wants to plant a church. So, he's part of our leadership team so he can see first hand what's involved in church planting life. Now, we're just trusting God to show us when and where. But we've been putting money away to support Rigo and his family when they are sent out to plant a church.

- Our ultimate goal is to plant 10 churches of 100 people**

So, this morning I hope to cover three things regarding our vision:

1. How did we get here?
2. Where are we going?
3. How will we get there?

1. HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Now, I can say with utmost confidence that I believe God birthed Center Church.

At the time, my family and I were getting ready to sell our home and leave town, but where were we going to go? That was the question.

On a drive to San Diego to meet some friends, I prayed, “What are we to do now, Lord?” Immediately, which is unusual for answered prayer in my experience, the answer came in the form of the Word of God coming to mind.

1 Peter 5:2 (NLT)

² Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly— not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.

So, I called Steve Adler and said, “Let’s see if there’s a flock.” Steve sent out emails and it turns out there was a flock.

The second Scripture that came to mind immediately after this first Scripture was:

Psalm 119:105 (KJV)

¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Our vision comes from the Word of God. The Word of God defines our vision, how we go about our accomplishing our vision and how we continue to endure in it comes from the Word of God. Everything about us is defined by the Word of God, which continues to reshape us and correct our misunderstandings and our ignorance. The

point is that, it's not our vision, but it's God vision for His church.

Acts 16:10

¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So, based upon the circumstances, they concluded that God had called them to Macedonia. In the same way, based upon the

circumstances and the answer to prayer, I concluded that we were called to ministry here in the Canyon Lake area.

That's how we got here.

2. WHERE ARE WE GOING?

John 20:21

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

This is basically the Great Commission that Jesus gave the church stated in a different way. But it's the same idea as:

Mark 16:15

¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

Our vision is simply the vision God has for His church, to be a Great Commission church, to

be a people who want to seek out the lost and introduce them to Christ. That's what Jesus meant when He said:

John 20:21

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

The Father sent Christ to do what? Well, Jesus Himself tells us why the Father sent Him:

Luke 19:10

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

So, we want to make disciples and then train disciples. A simple way to remember it is that we want to pray, care and share.

- **Invite Your One** - this strategy is simply about demonstrating visually that inviting people to church works.

Now, in order to engage in the Great Commission, you have to be growing as a Christian. What does it mean to grow as a Christian? Well, aside from growing in knowledge, you should be growing in Christlikeness. Now, that involves pain. That's why you need a theological understanding of what's happening to you. Because we are engaged in a spiritual war, when we

**understand this war from a biblical standpoint
it gives us grace to endure.**

**But that is only a question that you can
answer: Have you been growing in your
relationship with Christ based upon your
growing understanding and knowledge of
Christ?**

- Exodus**
- Center Groups (Love & Respect)**
- The Meaning of Marriage**

So, we want to be a Great Commission church that wins people, grows people and sends people.

3. HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

How will we become a Great Commission Church? Well, I'm going to answer that by looking at a parable.

Now, parables, generally speaking, are designed to make one point. They have one

thing to teach us, so we should be extremely wary of turning a parable of Jesus into some kind of life allegory. In other words, don't speculate about parables, but hone in on the one point.

The parable I'm about to share with you will tell us how to get to where we're going. It will show us how to accomplish God's vision for His church.

Matthew 20:1-16

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

So, God is looking for workers for His kingdom and Jesus is referring here to God’s kingdom on earth, which is spread through the church, the body of Christ.

² After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And going out about the third hour

he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’

So, we see here that people are called at all stages of life, some early in life and some later in life.

⁸ And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’

So, there are rewards for our labors as Christians. But that’s not the point of the parable.

⁹ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰ Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house,

When things did not happen in the way they expected, they grumbled. Sound familiar to anyone? These Christians had expectations.

They had certain results in mind. Now, what was the problem with their expectations? Well, we'll see in a moment.

¹² saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' **¹³ But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius ¹⁴ Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵ Am I not**

allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

How did your Christian life begin? By grace. How will you continue on in your Christian life? By grace. How will you finish your Christian life? By grace. It is all of grace from beginning to end whether you are a Christian for thirty years or three years before you die. That is the main point of this parable. If we

win three people to faith in Christ it is by grace. If we win three thousand people to faith in Christ it is by grace.

When we forget the principle of grace we begin to think we deserve something. We begin to have expectations based upon our performance. Isn't God allowed to do what He chooses with what belongs to Him?

MLJ has said, "In the Christian life we must desire nothing but His glory, nothing but to

please Him. So do not keep your eye on the clock, but keep it on Him and His work.”

- 1. How did we get here? By grace.**
- 2. Where are we going? Into the footsteps
Christ, seeking to save the lost.**
- 3. How will we get there? By grace.**

Supplemental notes from 2017:

I think the church as confused marketing and mission.

Marketing vs. Mission

At the 2015 Gospel Coalition Conference, author and pastor Timothy Keller said, “In the past we have known... that great preaching and great music and great youth ministry are all ways of gathering a crowd and you can grow your church a lot faster by focusing on those things.” He went on to say that we have

looked to marketing rather than evangelism to grow our churches.

“The church, as an outpost of the Kingdom of God, inexplicably ineffective because of the presence and power of God has been refabricated into another ‘business enterprise.’ This, in turn, has rendered the church as one more institution shaped by the culture in the name of relevance.”

We are here for this grand work of making Christ known. We want to grow in our understanding of the gospel and grow in our faith *in* the gospel so that we might *share* the gospel. We are completely focused on Great Commission goals.

- This grand vision depends completely upon our vision of Jesus. That's what I mean about growing in our understanding of the gospel. It's about a growing understanding**

of what Jesus has done for you personally. How He cares for you personally. How He wants to carry your burdens so you don't have to. How He wants you to understand He loves you as much in times of trouble as in times of happiness. How He wants to bind up your wounds and heal your broken heart. When you believe in that Jesus and experience that Jesus, you can't help but give yourself to the mission He's given the church.

The Grand Vision of Small Goals

Our immediate goals are to win people to Christ and plant our first church within our first five years.

How Statistics Changed My Life

Lifeway research did a study into church size and effectiveness. One of the studies reported, “The stats tell us that ten smaller churches of 100 people will accomplish much more than one church of 1000.”

The study went on to say that our soil as a smaller church is actually more fertile for

planting another church. What's even more incredible is what the studies say about our potential for reaching people for Christ.

“Churches in the smallest size category (under 100 in attendance) had won an average of 32 new people over the past five years; churches with 100-200 in worship also won 32; churches between 200-300 average 39 new individuals; churches between 300-400 won 25. So a ‘small’ church wins just as many people for Christ as a ‘large’ one, and what’s more, two churches with 200 in worship on

Sunday will win twice as many new people as one church with 400 in attendance.”

To me, that’s even more motivation to plant another church. I always thought we had to grow larger than 60 to 70 people before we could start talking about planting another church. Not anymore. Hats off to the statisticians.

The Effective Small Church

Ultimately, God will determine how large we grow. The point is that we don’t have to wait

until we're a large church to be an effective church. We can be an effective church now. We don't have to dream about the glory days of the future because we are in the midst of our glory days right now.

Christian Schwarz did a study that “found that the average growth rate in smaller churches was 13% (over five years), whereas in larger churches it was a mere 3%.” God is using smaller churches right now as much as He is using larger churches. But this isn't the prevailing mindset in broad evangelicalism

because it's not an attractive marketing pitch. Small means small sales. Big means big sales. Big sells better. Is that too crass a way of putting it? Maybe. But is there no truth to it?

Look at these stats: “A small church in the NCD sample with an average attendance of fifty-one typically converted thirty-two persons in five years; megachurches in the NCD sample averaged 2,856 in attendance but converted only 112 new persons in five years.”

It's not that the Lord doesn't use large churches, but He uses small churches just as mightily. He Himself tells us that "by the power that is working within us" He is "able to do far beyond all that we ask or think."

Far beyond *all* that we ask or think.

How to be Content with Your Church Now

The point of all of this is that we are a significant church right now because the gospel is always significant. The significance

of the gospel doesn't increase or decrease based upon church size.

Acts 16:14

¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

They immediately spoke about the gospel. There is no “win respect then share” strategy

here (i.e., “relational evangelism”). They sowed widely. Lydia happened to respond and showed that God was working in her. So they followed up with her.

Don't wait for people to like you before you start demonstrating and declaring the gospel to them. We're simply looking for people who are open to the gospel and the only way we find out if there open to the gospel is by bringing the gospel up.

Sow widely, then focus on the responsive people.

Philippians 4:15

¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.

As Paul was going around starting churches and training disciples, they supported Paul

financially along with some of these other churches. Today, this would be equivalent to having a church planting fund where we support other new churches.

Since missions is dear to the heart of God, God will surely bless those churches which actively help plant more churches (Philippians 4:19).

Paul understood that, most importantly, planting churches means reaching people.