

:: Summary

Our biggest problem is that all of us for the most part have an incomplete vision of who Jesus is. He is the good shepherd, the one who prayed to the Father in John 17 to be glorified (v.1, 2) and to receive his heavenly glory back (v.5), and he is the one who died on the cross for our sin. But in Revelation 1:12-16, John gives us a vision of the glorified, resurrected Lord who has received the Father's answer to his request: "Father, give me back my glory." And this church has been given the Great Commission to go and make disciples. Where churches are dying, in many cases it is for failure to follow this command. Where churches are seeking to follow Jesus in this, he is helping them transform and be a light in their community.

:: Share

Has there been a time in your faith journey where you have been confronted by Jesus to change? Share your story and what happened.

:: Explore and Discuss | John 17:1,2, 5; Revelation 1:12-16

*Note: for this week, we are going to engage Dr. Borden's teaching directly using quotes from his message and encouragement to us.*

Christianity is the world's largest faith and since World War 2, the fastest growing faith in terms of new converts (though Islam has now caught up). Literally thousands of people are coming to faith in Jesus (it is estimated 30,000 people are coming to faith in Latin America every day).

In his message, Dr. Borden said, "If you don't like a large church, you don't want to go to heaven." If GraceWay grows as a result of embracing the Great Commission, you won't know everyone, there will be more than one service (including online services and communities), people will be in varying maturities in faith, and people will look different from you.

- Are you ok with that? Why or why not?

The Book of Revelation gives us a vision of Jesus as the judge of the Church. In the seven letters to the Churches found in Revelation 2-3, Jesus is speaking to individual congregations represented by a candle. Each candle is a separate congregation, a church, that is alive. Jesus dictates a letter to each and the message is essentially the same, "As long as those churches do what I want, their candle will burn brightly. But when they stop doing what I want, I will literally, blow out their candle."

- Is this vision of Jesus the same or different from your vision of Jesus? How so?



There are three regions of the world where church is dying – North America, Europe and Australia/New Zealand. At least 80% of all congregations in North America are on a plateau or declining. 4,000 churches a year are closing (5,000 churches a year are being planted but not all church plants succeed).

Dr. Borden said, “Jesus didn’t create the church for Christians. He created the Church to mobilize Christians to reach a whole bunch of people who are not yet Christians.”

- Agree or disagree? Give biblical reasons for your position.

“In our nation, for the most part, the church has stopped doing that (i.e., reaching people who are not Christians). Because we believe the church is for us. This is why we argue and debate over what style of preaching there should be, what style of music we should do, what kind of liturgy we should have, what we should do for our teenagers, what we should do for our young people, what we should do for our children. Because it is all about us.”

- Honest assessment – are you personally more concerned about the church being for you than reaching people who do not know Jesus?

“And when it is all about us, Jesus says ‘Just as I grow the church, if the church continues to do that, I will remove it from existence.’ Because the judge of the church says, ‘when the church stops doing what I want, and you run it for the people there, I will let that church die.’ ”

- If Jesus had appeared and spoken these words directly to us, what should be our response?

Dr. Borden also stated our problem clearly. “I have been trying to help your elders see that your church is in the process of dying, and the reason it is in the process of dying is because the Great Commission has not been the priority.”

- What must you, all of us do to make the Great Commission a priority again?

Dr. Borden also shared the hope of transformation in his message. “There is another image of the glorified, resurrected Lord. And that is of Christ, the Victor, the One who is growing his church. That Jesus is going to win. That Jesus is going to build his church and that is what is happening in China and Latin America and in India, in Iraq and Iran. Jesus is building his church and the good news is churches in the United States who are in the process of dying are getting a new vision of who Jesus is and God is in some cases causing their candle to burn more brightly.”



Dr. Borden closed with this encouragement: "You are in a community that is changing. It is possible to reach that community. That is what transformation is all about. But it only comes as we gain a vision of Jesus that sees him both as the crucified Savior and the glorified, resurrected Lord who was given back his glory. And when we have a complete vision of Jesus and say 'we will do what you want,' it is amazing how God again begins to have candles burn brightly and congregations are transformed."

- Are you ready personally to seek that kind of transformation for our church?

:: Pray

Lord Jesus, we do want our flame to burn brightly for you and your Kingdom. Would you work in our congregation and help us to say, "enough is enough." We want to be about our what our glorified Savior wants us to be about, the making of more disciples. May that happen to bring even greater glory to your name. Amen.

