

A Defining Moment Pt2

REVIEW: If you were here last week, and now you are back, congratulations! I'm proud of you! Last week's message was one of those uncomfortable, step on your toes, pastor risks insulting or alienating everyone kind of messages. If you are back for week two, it means you are hardy folk, and want to see what pastor has come up with for vision for the church.

TRAN: More than that, it means that you, even if you do not feel it yet, are the kind of person that wants to commit to the cause of Christ in this local church.

INTRO: So last week was an evaluation, and a serious one at that. Are we as a church or as individuals lukewarm. And the answer to that question has many serious implications; implications for the church, but also for the individual. If the interpretation is correct that a person that is lukewarm and being spit out by Jesus is not a Christ follower, we are talking about where you spend eternity.

Today, I want to start with Jesus call to be dedicated to the cause of Christ in this world. Then I want to turn our attention to a vision for the church: areas of ministry we need to strengthen, and ways in which we need to rework the whole system of how we do things to reach more people for Christ.

- I. The cost of following Jesus - Luke 9:57-62
 - A. This passage is about Jesus encounter with three people
 1. The first guy proudly declares that he will follow Jesus wherever He goes - v.57-58
 - a) The background to this is the Jewish Rabbis
 - (1) The disciple of a Jewish Rabbi LITERALLY would follow them wherever they would go
 - (2) It was an effort to help the student learn how to imitate the Rabbi
 - b) Jesus response to him is not a request
 - (1) I always thought that Jesus was asking him for a place to stay
 - (2) Wrong - Jesus is telling him that this will not be easy - There is no comfort here - I often sleep wherever I can find a place because I have no home - all the comforts of home, you will have to give those up if you are going to follow me
 - c) So the first encounter we take away the fact that following Jesus probably means giving up things we find comfortable
 - (1) Do you HAVE to sell your house and sleep outside - NO
 - (2) Will you have to deal with things that are not comfortable - YES - it will happen
 2. The second guy Jesus invites to follow Him - v.59-60
 - a) The man replies, "Lord I have to bury my father"

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- b) Jesus answers, “Let the dead bury the dead - you go proclaim the kingdom of God.”
 - (1) Now, this answer usually rubs us the wrong way
 - (a) It seems too extreme
 - (b) It seems almost uncaring of Jesus
 - (2) To a Jewish ear this would have bordered on outrageous
 - (a) It was a Jewish priority to attend to the dead and the OT bears that out
 - (3) But what was allowed in the old era needs to be left behind in the new more urgent era
 - (4) Jesus phrase “let the dead bury the dead” seems harsh, but it makes the point that discipleship and one’s commitment to the kingdom take priority over even family considerations
- c) Jesus reply is no different than say “If you do not hate you mother and father you cannot be my disciple.”
 - (1) If this is the first time you have ever heard Jesus’ strong words, don’t worry, He does not want you to actually hate your parents
 - (2) His point is that compared to following me, it might look like you hate your parents - I take first place
- 3. Then the third man - he just wants to tell his family goodbye - v.61-62
 - a) Now this encounter has a very strong parallel to 1 Kings 19 when Elijah found Elisha and gave him the invite to follow while Elisha was...plowing
 - b) Elisha asked to say goodbye to his parents and Elijah won’t let him
 - c) To show his commitment and his break with his former life, Elisha killed the oxen, cut up the plow, burned it and roasted the meat - in other words, there was no going back
 - d) Jesus even says you cannot look back and be fit to be a disciple
 - (1) The plowing is a great illustration actually
 - (2) If you were not focused on what you were doing while plowing, if you looked back you could go off track, or worse, injure yourself, someone else, run into a rock
 - (3) The task required total focus
- B. I start off this way as a great reminder of what a heart that is not lukewarm looks like
 - 1. Last week we looked at being lukewarm and some of its impact on the church
 - 2. I want to start off positive on what genuine commitment to Christ looks like

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- a) And this is the kind of picture we should paint for those that might want to come to Christ
 - b) Painting a picture of a salvation that just requires belief and little else, no commitment, no sacrifice, no discipleship is a poor picture of what salvation is really about.
3. As we turn the corner to look at a vision for the church, keep this picture in mind of what it means to follow Christ
 - a) It might mean discomfort and sacrifice by giving up things that we might desire so that we can champion the cause of Christ
 - b) It might mean giving up relationships, or being in a position where you will not see family or friends for a long time
 - c) It certainly means a break from the old life and ways of doing things to pursue the kingdom and what God has in store for us
 - d) So keep that picture in your mind as we get really practical about a vision for our church
- II. A changing of vision
- A. In looking at the church and seeing where we are, I am becoming convinced that we need make some course corrections, and strengthen other areas of ministry
 1. Some of these things will be simple changes that take little effort
 2. Some may take some time and effort to figure out how to address
 3. But all of them will help be more effective in reaching new people for the kingdom of God
 - B. Before I start into the vision, I want to mention one more thing
 1. If you want to get motivated to reach this world for Christ, I will ask you to drop whatever you are reading and get a copy of the book “Rise of the Nones.”
 - a) It is written by James Emery White - a pastor in NC whose church sees 70% of their growth from new converts
 - b) That means no sheep swapping with other churches
 2. The book talks about the mindset of our culture today, any how the church can most effectively reach them
 3. It has been a great book for me to read, but this book will get your juices flowing about how YOU can be reaching the world around you for Christ, and how you can be more effective at knowing how the “nones” think
- III. The vision for our church
- A. One of the things that is true of our culture and this culture of the “nones” is that most will not venture into the church on their own

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1. You might have a few that are brave and will come - usually because they have kids and “church is good for kids”
 2. But most will not come to church for a whole host of reasons that we can’t get into and I would refer you back to that book
 3. HOWEVER, 82% of all unchurched people will respond if a friend or someone they know invites them to church
 - a) 82% folks
 - b) Statistically, that means out of 10 friends, 8 of your friends or acquaintances will come to church with you if you ask!
 4. Now, imagine what could happen if they came!
 - a) We would be in a position to “hit them with both barrels”
 - b) They would/should see the church at its best
 - c) But the question is how do we set up to make the greatest impact?
 - (1) I’m glad you asked
- B. One of the first things that helps to make a great impact is friendliness
1. This is straight from the book - according to a Office of Consumer Affairs study - 96% of unhappy customers will not complain about unfriendly treatment in a store. Of those 96%, 90% of them will never return to the store
 - a) And further, they will tell on average about 9 others about the unfriendliness
 2. Now, I do not know a church that does not believe that it is friendly
 - a) Seriously, when were you in a church that said, “Yes, we are the meanest church in town. We enjoy telling people where they can go!”
 - b) Every church believes it is friendly, but usually what they mean is they are friendly to
 - (1) Each other, or people they know
 - (2) Or even narrower, people they like
 - (3) Or they are friendly to people like them
 3. According to a research study by Lifeway only 1 out of every 6 church folk even try to make an effort with new people - hardly friendly
 4. Now, I do believe our church does better than that survey might suggest, but there is always room to improve
 - a) Friendliness should just be how we are marked - it should be ingrained in us
 5. You might have noticed a sign that cropped up last week - the Welcome Center
 - a) Describe the center
 6. But friendliness means more than a smile and a handshake

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- a) It means acceptance
 - (1) The culture we live in today, visitors will come as they are which may mean a gay couple come in, or a girl pregnant outside of marriage
 - (2) Will we freak out over those things or will we accept them where they are and trust that as they draw deeper toward Christ, He will minister to them in their pain
- b) It means that the atmosphere of this church exudes acceptance
 - (1) Not of a person's sin
 - (2) But of the person - We trust God to deal with their sin
- C. A second area of ministry that is already taking place in our church is children's ministry
 - 1. This is an area of ministry that we absolutely HAVE to support and get behind
 - a) The truth is this, even if the worship service was awful, the music was atrocious, and the good looking preacher couldn't preach his way out of a paper bag - if the children's ministry is strong, the kids will want to come back
 - b) I think too often in our church we have viewed this as some sort of way of keeping the kids occupied until the real stuff gets done upstairs
 - (1) What a joke!
 - (2) The kids can learn, do learn, and it sets them on a course for life
 - 2. This means that Sue Viaene and Melissa Zellers should be flooded with people wanting to help with child
 - a) That we view Children's Church as valuable time and we put full effort into making that 45 minutes we have with kids as exciting and full of learning as we can
 - 3. And if that means that we need to bring in or send people from our church to a children's ministry seminar - than that is where our resources need to go
 - 4. If we have any from this generation wander in the door, it will most likely be because of their kids
 - a) And if we ace it with their kids, we stand a better chance of building a long term relationship with their parents
 - 5. Let me tell you a simple ministry for Wednesday night if you want to support the children's ministry but don't like kids: Come talk with the parents as they drop off the kids
- D. Another area for our church that is always a bone of contention - music
 - 1. I have a video for you - Sister Act - Ava Maria

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- a) Now this is a huge Hollywoodisatize of things, but it does illustrate a principle
- b) Music literally calls to people and we can care more that it calls to us than it does to people that don't know Jesus
 - (1) Or we can go to that place of discomfort like Jesus was talking about and realize that if a difference in music reaches people that might never set foot in the door otherwise, than it is a good thing
2. This is an issue that the church in general never seems to grow past
 - a) When the reformers introduced new music into the church such as this little gem: PLAY "A Mighty Fortress is Our God"
 - b) That song was unacceptable because it came from a bar tune
 - c) Ever generation wants to bring a new song to the Lord, and every time there seems to be battles in churches
 - d) It is time to realize that we are here to worship God, and the lyrics and quality of the music determine worship, not our favorites
 - e) Throughout history there is a connection between church growth and contemporary music
3. So here is one thing we all need to do
 - a) We need to strike words like traditional or contemporary music from our vocabulary
 - b) We need to start to think of music in a missional way
 - (1) That means becoming students of the culture around us and make sure the music method of presenting the gospel matches with the people we want to reach with the gospel
4. So here is what we are seeking to do
 - a) We are seeking to find a lead instrumentalist - piano, guitar or something
 - b) We will be working to bring live musicians each week
 - c) It will not turn into a performance - it will be worship
- E. This one is brief but important - the appearance of the building and grounds
 1. Ray Kroc - the founder of McDonalds once drove through several McDonalds
 2. At one he noticed a bunch of papers stuck in bushes so he called the manager and together the manager and Ray cleaned out the mess
 3. The point is simple - if there is that kind of commitment to details of appearance and cleanliness in the secular world for profit, how much more should God's people be committed to good first impressions for the sake of the gospel
- F. The next is what we deem important for ministries
 1. First let's make a distinction of ministries - we have ministries that are

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- a) Regular - Bible studies, Kidz 4 Christ, Youth group
- b) And ministries that are periodic - Nursery, Children's Church, funeral lunches
 - (1) When I say periodic I understand that some of these happen each week
 - (2) I put them in periodic because the people that run them do so on a periodic basis
2. If you think through the ministries of our church, most, perhaps even all would have their prime focus on us in the church - Kidz 4 Christ being on the line between the two
3. We need to develop ministries more ministries that reach out to the community in a variety of ways
 - a) First thing this will require is understanding the needs in our community
 - (1) That may take a while to zero in on needs that the church can be truly helpful with
 - (2) But it can do a world of good by spreading the gospel in so areas that need the light
 - b) We had one person in our church that was working toward a ministry to help single moms
 - c) We have one person in the church that has told me they would like to look into starting an Alcoholics for Christ ministry
 - (1) AA is a fine resources for those that need it
 - (2) However they are a little loose theologically
 - (3) How wonderful would that be to help introduce more folks to the genuine gospel of Christ that way
 - (4) What would be nice is to send the person interested in leading this type of ministry for training (which would be true for all ministry leaders)
 - (a) We do have budget line items for these things
 - (b) But this highlights again why meeting the budget is important - we can then send people for special training to be more effective in sharing the gospel through the ministry they are passionate about
4. One of the take-aways I took from the book I recommended is this
 - a) In years past people wanted to feel part of the community, then they would commit, and then they would join the cause
 - b) Today, people are drawn to a cause, which then brings them into community with others, and then they will commit
 - c) So for example and a good idea for ministry:

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- (1) Men of the community might come to help work on a Habitat house with a group of men from the church
 - (2) In the process of work, community begins to take shape as relationships form and deepen
 - (3) As the community takes shape, as a result of the cause, we now have earned the right to talk commitment to Christ
 - (a) This does not happen all in a day, but in building that relationship
 - (4) But how awesome would that ministry be for a man or men in our church to organize and invite other men to come our once a month or even two of three times in a summer and work on a Habitat house for half a day or a day
 - (a) People today may respond to that and be grateful to see the church is taking interest in helping the poor with housing
 - (b) Then as relationships grow, so does our ability to share the gospel
 5. So whatever ministries we discover could be useful for the community can be a means of outreach even to those that participate in the ministries with us
- G. Since last week's sermon people have been asking, "What can we do to help"
1. These are the things - we need to shore up children's ministries by seeing how vital that is to reaching these generations for Christ
 2. We need to shore up music ministry with live musicians and really studying and knowing our community for how to program the music for worship on Sunday
 3. But most important, we have to develop more in our outreach to the community
 - a) Through developing new ministries
 - (1) And I am not thinking a dozen new ministries
 - (2) I am thinking 2-3
 - (3) What I want us to do is not try to do everything, but in the things we find strategic to engage in for the gospel I want us to bust our back sides to do those things with excellence for the glory of God
 - b) In our outreach we need to remember that we have one of the most valuable tools around - the tool of invitation
 - (1) Just a simple invite and we can see the face of the church altered for God's glory
 - (2) A simple invite and we can see more people coming to know Christ as their Savior

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- H. All of that is predicated on a heart on fire, thriving relationship with Christ
 - 1. If that is not present in your life
 - 2. If you do not have the passion burning in you to see people come to Christ
 - 3. Then like we said last week you need to chase after God in prayer until He gives you that passion

IV. A couple last thoughts

- A. When we talk about certain ministries - like children etc. - some of you may hate kids, and I get that
 - 1. But there are ways to support those ministries with direct involvement with kids
 - 2. And there are other areas of ministry - so don't feel like I am calling all hands on deck for children's ministry and it doesn't matter that you can't stand kids - get involved somewhere else
- B. Final thing: two books for you to read
 - 1. I told you about *Rise of the Nones* - I have two copies for anyone that wants to borrow them - if you are a kindle person it is \$9.99 at Amazon
 - 2. Second book I am still reading is by Kevin DeYoung called *Crazy Busy*
 - a) I am still in process of reading this book but it is good
 - b) If you are a crazy busy person it is for you, and it is about 120 pages - so pretty short, and Kevin is an easy read
 - 3. I believe both of these books will help you in giving you a passion for being involved in the cause of Christ

PRAYER: Passion for souls, passion for ministry, passion for the gospel