

Christ Community Covenant Church
Remodeling the Church: How will we know when we are finished?
Pastor Dave Scherrer - January 23, 2011

That is kind of the problem in life isn't it? How do we know we are finished?

In a remodeling job around the house it is good to ask "How will we know we are finished?" A couple three things come to mind:

- I have checked off everything on the 'to-do list.' I must be done
- I am out of time. I must be done.
- I am out of money. I must be done.

But when will we know we are done here getting better in this room? How will we know that the 'chambers' here in this room - in our hearts - is done?

Philippians 3:13-14

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead I (**we**) press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me (**4Cs**) heavenward."

This passage makes me curious. I want to ask things like "What are we pressing on to?" "What is this goal?" and "When do we know we are close?" As a church we need to have some clarity on this.

Now remember, the metaphor breaks down again when we apply the remodeling word picture. While physical construction of a church facility may someday be completed, the church that is the body of Christ is being perfected every day, being made new every day as we in the body are perfected. But when thinking of becoming more and more like the church God desires us to be, we need to be able to envision what that looks like and pursue it. We need to know what we are all about so that we can strive to be more like God's design for us. (Dave being Dave.)

I have one important awareness for all of us before we get into this. We cannot know the answer to that question unless God reveals it to us. We are who we are only because God has revealed himself to us. When Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus said to him, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." If you know God today, if you have seen his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, it is because God revealed himself to you. God opened the eyes of your heart. We exist as a church because God has shown us a glimpse of the infinite greatness and majesty and holiness and justice and wisdom and power and truth and goodness and mercy and love of God.

Hebrews 13:8, 12-16

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. . . So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, and bear the abuse he endured.

For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of the lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

This passage helps us see three purposes for gathering as Christ Followers:

1. To savor God in worship – This is to experience the continuing incarnation of Christ

At 4Cs we believe in missions. We believe in evangelism. We believe in nurturing children and youth and in adult spiritual education and formation. We believe in acts of compassion and mercy

in our community. But we know that this is all a weariness of the flesh if it is not preceded and carried by a sense of wonder at the glory of God.

John Piper writes:

If your . . .

- heart is not amazed by the grace of God,
 - and your mind is not gripped by the truth of God,
 - and your sense of right and wrong is not permeated by the justice of God,
 - and your faith is not resting in the power of God,
 - and your imagination is not guided by the beauty of God,
 - and your life is not steadied by the sovereignty of God,
 - and your hope is not filled with the glory of God,
- . . . then the service of God will be works of the law and not the fruit of the Spirit.

Our Hebrew passage from chapter 13, verse 15 says:

Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of the lips that acknowledge his name, continually offering up a sacrifice of praise. (vs 15)

Let me also say that to praise God in truth means that our lips must be praising God in truth. Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, "**This people honors me with their lips but their heart is far from me.**" That is not what Hebrews 13:15 is commanding. That is the **work** of the lips, not the **fruit** of the lips. The "fruit" of lips is the natural outgrowth of the heart. And therefore priority number one is the cultivation of a heart that stands in awe of God.

Worship for us is what this entire morning is all about. Worship in prayer and worship in singing and the playing of instruments. Worship in the study of God's Word and worship in giving. Sometimes is it worship in testimony or drama or dance or art. It is to stand before the Lord all morning long in various forms but with one purpose in mind; Savoring God. And while we can and certainly must worship God individually, God's Word tells us that corporate worship is special too.

I like what Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible says about this passage:

"When David, by the Spirit, introduced the singing of psalms into the temple-service the psalms were intended for that day, to excite and assist in proper devotions. The two tle tiintes713207(t)0.356603(i)4.71247(o)0

2. To deepen our relationship with God through each other – to experience the relational nature of Christ

By gathering together we experience the person of the Holy Spirit that indwells each of us. We simply cannot know God as fully simply worshiping God in a solitary life. Together we experience the gifts of that same Holy Spirit set aside for us collectively for the equipping and encouragement of the saints.

It is about doing good to others and sacrificially sharing our love

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.” (verse 16)

There are lots of things that can threaten our love for one another; selfishness, pride, sin. But, you know what? I don't think the biggest threat to our love of each other is licentious sin. Throughout church history from the very beginning, the biggest threat for our love one for another has been a spirit of legalism.

"Dear Cousin Gall,

We are excited to write to you regarding the new training we have received from our great mentor. He has come up with a wonderful ploy to create havoc with the enemy.

How is that? The principal means is by stealing their liberty. We can do that by binding them with chains where God has left them free. We will direct their attention to a different law, a false law, a new law. We'll tell them that what obedience to the enemy really requires is that they refrain from dancing, from smoking, from wearing lipstick, and from going to movies. By putting the accent there, we can keep their attention away from pursuing real righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit. If we're not able to convince them altogether of this false law, then we'll give them an unbalanced view of the real law, that is, we'll encourage them to act like the Pharisees of old by majoring in minors, by obeying lesser items of the law while ignoring the weightier matters. In a word, the strategy we will employ is to make them legalists. (*Resisting the Devil by Burk Parsons*)

Finally together we can find help, resources and the prayer support . . .

3. To spread the love of God to the world this is to experience the missional heart of God

Hebrews 13:13

"Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come."

Breaking out of our comfortable camps - the mission field is right outside those doors.

The church is the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members. *William Temple*.

The church is supposed to be Christ's body--his hands, his feet, and his voice--by which he carries out his plans in the world. God intends that **"through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is be made known" (Eph 3:10)**. The church is to be God's light in a dark, dying and lost society. The Christian life was never meant to be lived only in church a couple of hours on Sunday. It's meant to be lived in the public arena--on the firing line at school, the office, and in the neighborhood, seven days a week. We need worship and training and fellowship with other Christians, so that the Kingdom can be extended in an enemy held world.

Be assured, the Great Commission will not be finished without suffering. The Great Commission that takes us to the ends of the world now includes unreached people groups in some of the most resistant populations that hate Christians. Today these areas regularly persecute the Christians who live there and the missionaries that go there. How can we hope to secure the volunteers to go away from the comfort of our camp to torture at the hands of those hostile to Christ? Verse 14 gives the answer. **"For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come."** Our willingness to live and work with Jesus outside the camp of comfort and security is not naïveté. It is not a pathological desire to suffer. It is not stoical heroics. It is faith.

The thought that Christians are only called to live and work where it is safe is not a biblical thought. Biblical thinking proceeds on the assumption that we are all called to follow Jesus outside the camp where there is reproach and danger. It may be the risk of ostracism and scorn at your work. It may be being bullied in 4th grade and ridiculed in 9th grade at school. It may be the pain of misunderstanding from an unbelieving relative. It is, in fact, an unshakable and happy confidence that there is no abiding security and happiness in this world but only in the next. The pleasures and safety of upscale Denver and its suburbia cannot compare to the pleasures of the New Jerusalem.

Remember putting your face above a headless frame painted to represent a muscle man, a clown, or even a bathing beauty? Many of us have had our pictures taken this way, and the photos are humorous because the head doesn't fit the body. Here is my question this morning. We will be done here if we could picture Christ as the head of our local body of believers, and all who stood before the image would stand in awe of a human body so perfectly fitted the divine head.

Incarnational, relational and missional – these words define us and these are the character of the Prize we strive for. For the Prize is Jesus Christ Himself, our Living Head and Dearest Hope.