

Christ Community Covenant Church
Revelation: I have a letter for you!
'Let us build here a church...'
Pastor Dave Scherrer - July 31, 2011

This morning we will be wrapping up our series on the letters of Jesus to the churches found in the book of Revelation. But today is a bit different. For the last six years or so it has been our habit here to read a passage of Scripture, look at it carefully and wrestle with how it applies to our lives. But for the last eight weeks we have been looking at the churches in the book of the Revelation of John; the last book of the Bible. They were written to real churches in real places and definite times in history and specific cultures - they address particular issues in each of those churches. Jesus would look at that church, understand what really was going on in its midst and construct his letter accordingly.

So, I thought it might be interesting to speculate and ponder what Jesus might say to us here at Christ Community Covenant. For a long time now, going back even to our days of prayer over the building design and future plans for our new church we hoped to build at 100th and Wadsworth, I have been asking staff and leaders and long time attendees "What do you think Jesus is up to here? What is Jesus trying to tell us through all this striving for His will?" As you might guess each person has had a particular opinion and often has opened the door for some pretty specific thoughts to quickly rise to the top when you give a person such an open ended invitation. You all never fail to speak honestly and lovingly.

So, what would you say if you were Jesus? If you looked at this church from a God's eye view, what would you commend? What would you say as a warning? Would you want to address a concern? What do you think Jesus would say to 4Cs?

You remember that every letter that Jesus wrote to the Churches began with a salutation that was a picture of Jesus and His self introduction and salutation was written in a way as to foreshadow how his character related to the issues within the church.

You quickly pick up the fact that Jesus wants his church to reflect His character. We are the model of Jesus to the world. People look at the church and rightfully draw conclusions about the reality of Christianity and the nature of Jesus. Jesus is not the church but the church is to be a reflection of Jesus.

After the salutation the letter usually has three parts - the commendation (where Jesus talks about what the church is doing right) then there is the rebuke or warning (where the critical issues or potential pitfalls are confronted.) Finally there is a reward described for those who overcome and a invitation for us to hear with ears to hear.

So I want to now offer a letter to us as though it is from Jesus. Of course, these are my thoughts and they do not have any true authority as Jesus' words do. Still they are words written very prayerfully and with many hours and weeks and years of prayer behind them. I tried to follow the format of Christ and make each sentence matter. So if you will indulge me, let's look at it together. . .

To the angel of the church called Arvada write:

These are the words of Him who wears the crown of sovereignty, who is spirit and truth, and faithful to his promises.

I know your works - your vision for the kingdom, your perseverance and your commitment to God's word. I know you love my children. But, be warned! Be careful of allowing the thinking of the world to cloud your mind and thus wither your commitment to that which is right but hard. Make sure that

you see beyond this realm and perceive life through my eyes. Prepare to handle well the changes that are about to come upon you. Be my church for this age and the age to come.

He who overcomes will leave his mark for the kingdom of God and be welcomed to my arms in the life to come. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Salvation

To the angel of the church called Arvada write:

These are the words of Him who wears the crown of sovereignty, who is spirit and truth, and faithful to his promises.

It is the character of Christ to reign supreme. His 'rule and reign' define the Kingdom of God. I know from the very fiber of who I am that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord of ALL, to the glory of God (Philippians 2:9-11). God is sovereign! And as the images revealed to us from Revelation, His majesty and power are unmatched. Jesus is to be worshiped in Spirit and Truth according to John 4 (4:23). There is no article before these words – he is not 'a spirit' or 'a truth' but is Spirit and Truth and I believe he wants this kind of authentic worship to be manifest here to the Glory of the Father. And our God is a proven keeper of the Word, His promise to bless and keep is true. So now we turn our attention to the words of this all sovereign Jesus.

The Commendation

I know your works - your vision for the kingdom, your perseverance and your commitment to God's word. I know you love my children.

"A vision for the Kingdom of God"

For years now we have been presenting the idea to you that we are a 100 Fold Church. That somewhat mystic self-description comes from the teachings of Christ where the casting of the word of God falls on hearts of good soil producing a crop, 30, 60 even 100 fold. It symbolizes the Kingdom of God bursting forth into our world. If you listen you will hear our elders and staff talking about the Kingdom of God and the 100 fold blessing of God's rule and reign that we seek, perhaps even more than they talk about 4Cs distinctive. We are simply about *loving God, loving others and advancing the Kingdom of God together by pursuing Jesus Christ and his priorities in the world.*

The Kingdom compels us. That is because Jesus was all about the Kingdom of God:

Mark 1:14-15

Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Matthew 6:33

"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Matthew 6:9-10

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'"

To pray 'Your kingdom come' is equivalent to desiring for His will to be done. Our profound desire as a church is to see God's will or desire come to bear on every situation and aspect of life.

Illustration: Visiting Microsoft and discovering that Bill Gates' will dominates in every arena of that company. I believe that God is pleased and commends us for seeking Jesus' will to permeate every decision, program and prayer at this church.

I believe that our pursuit of the Kingdom of God and not our own Kingdom of influence here at 4Cs pleases Jesus!

"Perseverance in times of trial"

Over and over the churches of Revelation are commended for their perseverance in hardship and suffering. We have had our share here in the past several months and years. We have agonized over the building of a church at 100th and Wadsworth. We have gone through a complete change over of ministry staff in the past 5 years. We have recently found ourselves moving in 90 days to this east side location and having to endure program changes as a result. We have had terrible tragedies that have included the loss of loved ones in long time marriages. Still, we have stood strong in the face of these hardships. It has been a time of healing and self searching for all of us. I believe that there is joy in Christ for our steadfast manner, even a joyous manner, certainly a faithful manner that we have faced these trials. Many staff members have sacrificed in ways that the congregation does not know so that we could persevere through these circumstances.

Next week we will spend a bit more time speaking to the character trait of perseverance. But God desires to test us and strengthen us through hardship.

2 Timothy 4:5

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

"A commitment to the truth of Gods word"

"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me, it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me."
Martin Luther

There has been a commitment to God's word. When I first become Interim pastor here we decided to go to a steadfast diet of pursuing the truth of Scripture. In the last six years we have studied the life of Christ through a study of the Gospel of John, a survey of the missional heart of God by studying the Old Testament. We spent a year studying the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, two years ago we spent a year in the book of Romans learning of the doctrine of God's grace. Last year we spent a year learning of the teachings of Christ in studying His red letters. We have added lots of topical studies and we have celebrated the Christian holidays with great zest, but in everything the Word of God has been trump. I know that pleases God!

2 Timothy 3:16

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

"Our love for the children of God"

Throughout our history it is well documented that our love of children and youth has captured our imagination and heart. For good reason;

Matthew 19:14

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

I believe that our heart for children and the innocent and that they come to know Christ warms Christ's heart. We will always be a church that loves the little children.

Ok so that is the good stuff but I think he would then change his tone a bit. Not only are there commendations in these letters but there are warnings too.

And as I have thought about it I think he might have more warnings than rebukes for us as a church. Warnings carry with their admonition an implicit challenge to pay attention or wake up. I think if Jesus were writing us he would leave before us challenges to meet. I believe that there would be perhaps three he would give to us.

The Warnings or Challenges

But, be warned! Be careful of allowing the thinking of the world to cloud your mind and thus wither your commitment to that which is right but hard. Make sure that you see beyond this realm and perceive life through my eyes. Prepare to handle well the changes that are about to come upon you. Be my church for this age and the age to come.

"See life through the eyes of My Son"

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Illustration: At the turn of the 20th century, one of the greatest piano masters was Jan Paderewski. When he had a concert, the elegant symphony halls were "sold out" weeks in advance. At one of his performances, a child from the audience got away from his mother, mounted the stage, and sat down at the Steinway. To everyone's shock, he began to play "Chopsticks." The audience became indignant. "Get rid of that boy! Stop this dishonor!"

Backstage, the master pianist was even more indignant . . . at the audience! He slipped onto the stage behind the boy and reached around him and began to improvise on "Chopsticks," making it come alive. As he did so, he kept whispering: "Don't ever stop. Keep going. Don't listen to them." It is critical that we don't listen to what the world is saying but that we listen instead to the master artist's words of encouragement. Jesus has been behind us telling us don't quit. He has been improvising on our behalf providing just the right touch at just the right moment and allowed us to keep moving forward and to cast a fresh vision for our church in this community. There might be a second warning to . . .

Handle change well

As much as He wants us to keep our focus on Him and to push back the temptations of doing business according to worldly standards of success and methodologies, I also think that in a fluid time such as ours God wants us to be ready to handle change well. We know that our lease here in this building is limited. We know that we are going to have to be creative with our space limitations as we seek to expand our ministries. We know that there will be staffing and leadership changes, and even changes in our membership. Some will move and some will change churches. There will be new visitors and new members too and their interests and spiritual promptings will impact our church. At least I hope so! You see I don't believe George Carlin's theology . . .

I put a dollar in one of those change machines. Nothing changed. ~George Carlin

I believe that God is transforming us moment by moment into the image of His son by His word and prayer and hardships and our obedience and faith. As life goes on, we change. We discover we are no longer as fit for this world as we used to be. We are increasingly being fit for heaven

and this world and its passing pleasures just don't feel so much like home anymore. CS Lewis said;

"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world." C. S. Lewis

Isaiah 43:18-19

"Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

Finally I believe that God is expecting us to not settle. He wants us to have extravagant faith and to dream dreams worthy of a sovereign and powerful God. I believe that He wants us to leave a mark for the Kingdom.

"Leave a mark for the Kingdom"

Now here is where we have to be careful. Remember the first warning, to see things through the eyes of Jesus. Leaving a mark is done through obedience; by following well after Jesus. We cannot know for sure exactly what a mark for the Kingdom looks like. God's economy is so different than ours most of the time.

On the cover of your bulletin you see a magnificent building. It is the Cathedral of Seville in Spain. It took almost two hundred years to build. There was a resolution signed by the builders that read:

"Let us build here a church so great that those who come after us will think us mad ever to have dreamed it."

~ Resolution signed by the builders of the Cathedral of Seville, 1401

As magnificent as it is I don't want to build a church like that. In fact I think these builders made a critical mistake, not a mistake of architecture or maybe even a mistake of passion. But it is not our job to build the church. That is Jesus' job:

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The Reward

He who overcomes will leave his mark for the kingdom of God and be welcomed to my arms in the life to come. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.