

Christ Community Covenant Church
Our 4Cs Story: Our Mission - "Love God, Love Others
and Advance the Kingdom Together"
Pastor Dave Scherrer - May 27, 2012

Memorial Day remembering:

- Service men and women who have died for our country and defending her freedom
- Remembering others who have died
- Frankly I think that it is a great weekend of celebrating too
 - Graduations
 - The start of summer, outdoor fun
 - But it is supposed to be about remembering – And remembering helps us put first things first!

AW Tozer noted on page one of his work Knowledge of the Holy (one of my favorite works of practical theology and a great 20th century prophetic voice)

"What comes to our mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us."
A.W Tozer

Pastor Tozer reminds us that what we believe about God and how we respond to that belief is all important. Our belief in God defines our existence, gives our life a compass and direction and form and function.

And that is true for the Church too. I think it would be possible to say, "What comes to our Church's mind when she thinks about God is the most important thing about us."

This series coming up – The 4Cs Story - may be the most important series we have undertaken in some time. I kind of think so for several reasons:

- We have just finished a series called "The Story" a year-long remembering of God and what he has done to redeem the world from our terrible condition,
- We are at this critical time in the life of our church: relocating is just the start of a fresh season of examining and remembering who we are and what God is asking of us so that we can relocate well,
- I think that by taking a look at our church it will give you hope and perhaps definition and a sense of purpose and belonging that you have been missing perhaps here at 4Cs.

The 4Cs Story – We are going to spend the next 12 weeks or so remembering and looking forward. We will pray. We will seek the mind and heart of God together and explore what God has been showing us about ourselves and about our mission and call in the world. I am really excited about this series. In my prayers and study and meditating on God's word for this series, He has been active in shaping my life already. I believe that this is a time of transformation for our Church.

Prayer

4Cs Story Introduction

Mission, Call and Values

Mission Statements – I don't want to get lost in this. I want to keep it simple. Mission statements are short broad declarations that define the ultimate measurable purposes of a group or project or even a church. Here are a few examples:

- **American Experiment, a nonpartisan think tank: Our mission is to give voice to conservative and free market ideas and spotlight their importance in tackling the most difficult issues facing Minnesota and our nation.**
- **Insurance Company: Our mission is to increase access to comprehensive primary healthcare to the medically uninsured and underserved.**

- **Education Foundation: Our mission is to prepare young leaders for responsible citizenship and provide outstanding high school students the chance to explore the political process firsthand.**

Have any of you been on a committee or task force that was charged with coming up with a mission statement for a group or company or project . . . how was it? What made it hard? [Responding]

I really do believe in these clarifying statements. I think our church needs such a statement. But I am also with you who have shared. Sitting around creating our own mission statement is really hard and to be honest, it seems like a lot of wasted time to me when it comes to the church. It may seem too simple. *I think God has a clearly stated mission and the Church is the instrument of completing that mission.* The Church doesn't need a mission statement - God gave us a mission statement. Rather we need to get about His mission! His Mission for us as stated by Jesus Himself, in short, reads like this:

Our Mission: To Love God, Love Others and Advance the Kingdom Together

Here is the longer version:

Mark 12:28-32

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

To love God and to love others. This Great Commandment establishes the first two purposes for us here at 4Cs – ***To love God and to love others.*** Now when we look at the commandment there are all kinds of things to explore and define. There are a hundred questions to ask. But those arise from the **application** of the Mission Statement. This verse seems very straightforward until you try to put it into action, then it seems to get dicey. The statement is outstandingly simple and clear. Love God and love others. That seems pretty direct to me. God made it short and sweet because he understood the attention span of the creatures he was working with. At once it is a profound world view and a compelling call to action. I love this Great Commandment. Not because it is easy, but ***because it is worthy of a very large God.***

Now this Great Commandment is married to another commonly called "Great" passage – the Great Commandment. This is again Jesus' words that give us the one all-encompassing verse that gives each of our endeavors, however great or small, meaning and direction.

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Let's try our 4Cs Mission Statement together out loud:

Our Mission: To Love God, Love Others and Advance the Kingdom Together

Any Questions? I have a thousand! We can start with what does it mean to "Love God?"

Love God

And I have to say, if we have any conversation of meaning over the next twelve weeks, it is mostly likely going to come back to this 'oh so central' idea of Loving God – knowing Him intimately and desiring to live in that love and be powered by that love. We have called it "Abiding". ***You shall love the Lord your God with all***

your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the essence of what Christ Followers do – they “Be in Love!”

We have help from other places in the Bible as to what this love means. It starts with obedience:

John 14:15 - "If you love me you will keep my commandments."

It moves forward with singular devotion and demands that we die to self and live to God alone:

Matthew 6:24 - "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either love the one or hate the other, - or be devoted to the one and despise the other."

And it ultimately this love must have an earthly expression:

Romans 12:9 - "The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal; you shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

I am going to borrow from another wonderful writer and theologian, Dallas Willard this morning quite often: *"The first fruit of love is the musing of the mind on God. He who is in love, his thoughts are ever upon the object. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God. 'When I awake, I am still with thee' (Psalm 139:18). The thoughts are as travelers in the mind. David's thoughts kept heaven-road. 'I am still with Thee.' God is the treasure, and where the treasure is, there is the heart. By this we may test our love to God. What are our thoughts most upon? Can we say we are ravished with delight when we think on God? Have our thoughts got wings? Are they fled aloft? Do we contemplate Christ and glory?... A sinner crowds God out of his thoughts. He never thinks of God, unless with horror, as the prisoner thinks of the judge."* Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship*

Let's shift our attention to the second part of this verse, the part that is like the first; Love Others.

Love Others

Again Jesus isn't trying to make this mysterious. He is appealing to a universally understood condition. "I am concerned about me." I have "I, me and mine on my mind 24/7." What the commandment tells us is that this selfish life motive has to become less about me and more about others. It first and foremost tells us that this love of God that we feel increases when we nurture a sacrificial love for others.

If you think about it at all, this is an overwhelming commandment to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. I say it is overwhelming because it seems to demand that I tear the skin off my body and wrap it around another person so that I feel that I am that other person; and all the longings that I have for my own safety and health and success and happiness I now feel for that other person as though he were me.

It is an absolutely staggering commandment. If this is what it means, then something unbelievably powerful and earthshaking and reconstructing and overturning and upending will have to happen in our souls. Something supernatural. Something well beyond what self-preserving, self-enhancing, self-exalting, self-esteeming, self-advancing human beings like Dave Scherrer can do on their own. This two fold commandment to Love God and Love Others changes everything.

Now we need to turn our attention to the second half of our mission from God.

Advance the Kingdom Together

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sometimes I fear that we have come to understand our experience with Jesus as though it were a common affinity. We say, "I like to ski, I like to read, I like to eat pie, I like to go to church . . . I like Jesus . . . I like walnuts . . ."

As true Followers of Christ we have been bought back from a terrible condition of helpless death into His life and this all by His wonderful unmerited favor. His grace. But as Dallas Willard says:

"Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action. Grace, you know, does not just have to do with forgiveness of sins alone." Dallas Willard, The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship

Let's look at this passage just a little more closely:

"As you go . . ." This is a better translation. It is a constant truth for us "as we go."

"Make disciples . . ." There is an expectation of multiplication of all true disciples or Christ Followers. Making disciples, being Ambassadors of Reconciliation, is our job.

"Of all nations . . ." This is a call to universality and cross ethnicity. NO one falls outside the love of Christ, none. And we are the instruments of that blindness to the color of one's skin and accent in their voice.

"Baptizing . . ." Not an option but a commandment. We are to be encouraging those who believe in Christ to respond in obedience by following Christ into baptism.

Teaching them all that I have commanded . . ." And I think this is far more than lectures and preaching heads. It is the releasing of the church – you - to be "teachers" in their marketplace by sharing the love of Christ, using words if you have to.

"The word disciple occurs 269 times in the New Testament. Christian is found three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples of Jesus. . . . The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ. But the point is not merely verbal. What is more important is that the kind of life we see in the earliest church is that of a special type of person. All of the assurances and benefits offered to humankind in the gospel evidently presuppose such a life and do not make realistic sense apart from it. The disciple of Jesus is not the deluxe or heavy-duty model of the Christian -- especially padded, textured, streamlined, and empowered for the fast lane on the straight and narrow way. He or she stands on the pages of the New Testament as the first level of basic transportation in the Kingdom of God."
Dallas Willard, The Great Omission

"Who teaches you? Whose disciple are you? Honestly. One thing is sure, you are somebody's disciple. You learned how to live from somebody else. There are no exceptions to this rule." Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy

The test? Who does your life look like? If you are spending time with God, you will begin to look like His Son. No exceptions. And others will notice the likeness.

Make Disciples: Inviting others to become followers of Christ in word and deed

Worshiping a 'Large God' worthy of our total loving devotion and radical obedience

"The world can no longer be left to mere diplomats, politicians, and business leaders. They have done the best they could, no doubt. But this is an age for spiritual heroes - a time for men and women to be heroic in their faith and in spiritual character and power. The greatest danger to the Christian church today is that of pitching its message too low." Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*

I long for us to be people of God's Mission. People who **Worship a 'Large God' worthy of our total loving devotion and radical obedience.** People love God first and foremost and that love expresses itself in loving others. And together we will advance the kingdom of God on earth together. Stay tuned, God has so much more to share with us over these next 12 weeks!