

Christ Community Covenant Church
Stone Five, Part 2: A Celebrating Church – Celebrating through Hardship
Pastor Dave Scherrer - July 1, 2012

Celebrating in hardship is largely a function of faith in a Truth that transcends our world.

Thank you for your prayers, cards and concerns (Pastor Dave's dad, Norris, passed away 6/24/12).

The last two years have been hard and fun. I wanted this journey with my dad selfishly. I had left home for college when I was 18 and moved 600 miles away. Susan and I married when I was still in college and we raised our family to adulthood never living closer to my parents than 600 miles. Two years ago at my prompting Dad moved here. He joined this church and became a part of our family here. He got to know his granddaughter Heather and her husband Ben and his great granddaughter Adria, named for my mom, Lila Adria.

The last ten days it has been hard:

Pain

- Agonizing back pain from cracks in his spine that made him scream out in pain.

Confusion

- After being intubated with the ventilator he was confused and that was hard. The morphine made him confused and even a bit adversarial at times. That was hard.

Frustration

- He was tired of being sick.

But there have also been moments of *hilarity, tenderness and spiritual comfort:*

- I reminded him of the time how on a bet with my brother he grew a mustache and Brian shaved off his beard. I told him he looked a lot better than Brian and he laughed pretty hard at that.
- He reached out to me. Thinking that he wanted me to help him shift his position I reached for his arms. But he just wanted to hold me and he said "David, I love you." Almost like he was just thinking of it. I said, "I love you too Dad." Looking back I think that was the moment that he knew he was not pulling out of this nose dive.
- When we broke the news to him about going to hospice, the last word he whispered just hours before his death was a quiet Amen at the end of a prayer.

You have experienced this kind of hardship, disappointment, grief, pain. I know you have because Jesus told us of it:

John 16:20-24 NASB

Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one *will* take your joy away from you. In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

Paul too wanted us to remember that this world of momentary light afflictions is a passing reality that will all too soon be swallowed up in a far more substantial reality:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Illustration: How things (at dad's house) that were beyond value become not just worthless but a nuisance 15 hours later. Curious!

Celebrating in hardship is largely a function of faith in a Truth that transcends our world.

This kind of faith based on *truth not emotion* steadies me, gives me firm footing in times of the breaking waves of life. Celebration and worship at its heart is acknowledging truth not emotion. You see it is easy to get confused right here. Many who worship Christ feel a deep flush of emotion. Thanksgiving, joy, relief, sadness, perhaps remorse. This happens to me in the middle of a song or a time of prayer. But this association of emotion and worship and celebration isn't a prerequisite for celebration. Emotion is too fleeting and fickle. While there may be a flush of emotion in worship, as I said there often is with me, I do not worship seeking the emotional surge. I worship and celebrate because the truth of the character of Christ demands it.

So how will we know that we are in fact a Celebrating Church? We have said our stated value is to be a church that worships well, that celebrates God from the very core of our being. But what does that look like? How do we know from Scripture that we are getting better? We can turn to scripture for that evidence.

Evidence of a 'Celebrating Church'

Philippians 4:4-14

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your **reasonableness** be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, **but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.** And the **peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, **whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.

Briefly I want to look at 5 criteria of excellent worship, of abandoned celebration in this passage:

1. Reasonableness (v 5)

This may surprise you. Again it is important to remember that Truth trumps emotion in celebration. A church that is reasonable is a worshipping church. Next week is our annual meeting and over and over this church has shown that we can engage in the difficult pieces of church life without coming to blows with each other, and this is a church that worships well.

2. Prayerfulness (v 6)

As with all our “Stones” prayer is central.

3. Peace (v 7)

“Peace as a guard” - a sentry at the gate to protect us from the temptations to be bitter and agitated and stressed out by the passing circumstances of life. Peace that passes understanding! Now that is something!!

4. Perspective (v 8)

Where we set our mind, on the truths of God, changes everything. Fixing our eyes on Christ, Fixing our eyes on beauty. Fixing our eyes on the memorable acts of charity that has been performed in our lives. These change us from the inside out.

5. Sharing (v 14)

You have heard it said that if you want to have a good friend, be a good friend. Paul was thankful for the sharing of others in his life. By sharing in the burdens of others our own burdens become lighter.

John 16:33

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

A personal life of celebration is a choice to notice God moment by moment and to acknowledge that he is the giver of abundant life in its simplest and fullest forms. It is singular not corporate, it is personal not public. This life of celebration enjoys life in the form of . . .

Chocolate, going fast, floating on warm water, kittens-puppies, the theater or the symphony, even sports!

However, we need to remember that the Lord said, “Rejoice always.” Even when the temporary circumstances are not so fun.

Paul was in prison when he wrote those words, so that gives us the courage to be thankful and celebrative with . . .

Parking tickets and slow long lines of angry people on hot days doing mind numbing tasks. With unmet expectations, financial setbacks, relational hardships...

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Communion – celebrating the truth of Christ; that he came to give us life and life abundant. In the sadness and disappointments and grieving of life - communion is one of few consistent joys. Until He comes again, we take this bread and this cup and remember Him. What a joy, what bliss to remember Him and worship Him. Thou dost set a table before me, you anoint my head with oil, and my cup overflows! This is the Eucharist! “Eucharistia” – Meaning “Thanksgiving.” The Table of our Lord! Holy Communion.