

Christ Community Covenant Church
Stone 4: The Community Minded Church
Pastor Dave Scherrer - July 29, 2012

Last week we spoke of the character of Christ, of his compassion and his longsuffering, his willingness to sacrifice for the well being of those he loved. He is abounding with mercy and grace, he forgives sin and He is compassionate for the poor and disenfranchised. When we too carry ourselves in these ways we glorify God, by choosing to be like Him. In the meantime, many will be fed and clothed, many will find community and protection, some will come to faith in Christ, but these are side benefits to a life conformed to the image of God's Son. Christ Community Covenant Church desires to be missed.

The Community Minded Church desires to manifest the character of Christ in His compassion, justice and mercy for humanity for the sake of the Glory of God.

The Church is designed for a time such as this! To confront evil and to stand against injustice. In the first and second centuries, when all others were running from the plague in Rome, the Christians stayed behind and ministered to the sick and dying. When little girl babies would be abandoned on the streets, the Christians would rescue them and raise them as their own. Public hospitals and public schools are the idea of the church. Orphanages and ministries to the old and cast away, what we would now call senior care; these were first started by the Church. At the risk of being political, I am concerned for our nation. We rely on our federal and state and local government agencies to do things that the church used to do. Increasingly it seems easy to become indifferent to the plight of the hungry and the stranger and the homeless and the imprisoned father's family, because we don't live with them any more. Because we have come to expect the government to do the hard lifting. That was not the divine design.

Matthew 5:13-16

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

" ***You are the light of the world.*** A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, ***let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

Matthew 25:31-40

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,

I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Ministries of Compassion

Handout of Ministries on back of notes

Hope House (justice, compassion and mercy)
Open Hands (Hungry and homeless)
Denver Rescue Mission (strangers and homeless)
Confluence (neighborhood care)

Assimilation and Small Groups

Lives of Compassion

Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) was an Irish missionary who served in India for 56 years without ever returning to her homeland. Her primary work was with orphans in the southern region of India. She was influenced to consider a career in missions after hearing Hudson Taylor speak about the need for missionaries in China. She applied to be a missionary with the China Inland Mission (Taylor's missionary group) but was eventually turned away because of her poor health. Many of her final 20 years of life was spent in bed due to illness and injury from a fall.

Who do you know?

The Consequence of Compassion – A Life Emptied

And this is a good thing. When you have lived long and well in Christ you will increasingly “disappear.” Not this thing called your earth-suit, but the part of you that insists that you receive the glory and the credit will have less and less power in your life and the Holy Spirit instead will be ruling and reigning in your life. This is the Kingdom Life, recognizing the rule and reign of Christ moment by moment so that God receives all the glory, not me. Your will and your intentions will take second place to the will and the intentions of Christ. In fact, your will will all but vanish. Listen to these words of the Bible. John the Baptist said when someone asked him how he felt when his disciples were leaving to follow Jesus –

John 3:29-30

The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.”

And Paul said this to the church in Galatia:

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

And the model for this Kingdom Life where we give into the will of the Father was demonstrated to us by God's own Son:

Philippians 2: 3-11

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death —
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

This is the famous “Kenosis” passage, which is Greek for ‘empty’ or ‘emptying’. Many theologians and historians believe that this little passage is in fact an early hymn that believers would sing or recite. Now sometimes we get all hung up here on the nature of this emptying when I think Paul’s intention in using this hymn in this letter to the church of Philippi was more intent on instructing the Philippians in how to live than in what to believe in this particular passage. The Philippians had exhibited selfishness and conceit in their relations with one another. Paul’s exhortation to these Christians was to look less to their own self-interests, but instead to look to the interests of others first. The best example of selfless love and humility of which Paul was aware was the example of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Paul said to the Philippians, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (v 5). Paul then quoted the hymn, which shows how Jesus gave of himself, emptied himself, to the point of enduring death on a cross for the sake of others. Paul wanted Philippian Christians to have the same attitude toward one another.

Paul understood that there was a consequence to selfishness and indifference. A loss of community, a loss of power, and ultimately a loss of Kingdom and a failure to give His due Glory.

The ultimate accusation of the selfish Christian - the indifferent Christian - is that they become identified as “redundant.”

The Consequence of Indifference – A Life Redundant

This term may surprise you but hang with me. The dictionary defines redundant as characterized by verbosity or unnecessary repetition in expressing ideas or being in excess; unnecessary and unneeded.

Redundancy is one of the most damning things that your editor can say of your writing. Redundant. Nothing new, nothing worth noting. Interestingly, around 30 Church of England church buildings are declared ‘Redundant’ every year; closed for regular public worship each year. From 1970 to 2012 over 1,700 Church of England buildings had been declared redundant, and of those, about 400 have been demolished. They have so many unnecessary and unneeded churches that they actually have an entire Church of England division called Redundant Church Care.

This redundant church is in Finchfield at OakHill in England in 1875 as a mission church or church plant in a poor part of this little Finchfield valley. What makes this church redundant is that it no longer offers any ministry, no one comes to services. It isn’t needed anymore. It no longer makes a bit of difference.





Pensford's redundant church, excluding the medieval tower and graveyard, is back on the market after it failed to reach its guide price of \$275,000 at an auction in 2011.

And this is the St. Leonard church in Bridnorth, England. All being closed because they no longer have a ministry. Redundant.



I desperately want to live a life that matters to Christ. A life of consequence. But over time I have come to understand it is not by making the *Who's Who of Christianity* that defines success. It is living the Kingdom life and sharing the Kingdom gospel in word and deed.

Living a life that counts is easier than you think. It is not about what you seem to accomplish, but whether you use the gifts and skills that God has given you when God asks you to use them. In Portland I knew a woman who regularly went to what was then called nursing homes and ministered to the feet of elderly invalids. She was not redundant. It is offering a drink of water in Jesus' name (Brian and Amy Moore). It is playing softball (or pickleball – Ken Marquardt) in Jesus' name. It is exercising in Jesus' name (Terri Hughes/Zumba, has raised thousands of dollars for missions over the last couple of years). It is eating in Jesus' name (Rhoda Friesen). It is working in Jesus' name and being retired in Jesus' name. It is going to school in Jesus' name. All of that is the Kingdom Life and sharing the Kingdom gospel. But hear this; it is very intentional and prayerful. Just going to school is not Community Minded; going to school intentionally in Jesus' name for His glory is Kingdom.

Matthew 25:14-30

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip. “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two

bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money.

"After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.' "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

"The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.'

"The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

"Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.' But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.'

Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Jesus has claim on our lives! We are to intentionally invest our lives in the Kingdom and that means being mindful of our community. No matter the cost:

***Theodoret of Cyrus (Cyrrhus in Syria), The Ecclesiastical History
Book V, Chapter XXVI: Of Honorius the Emperor and Telemachus the monk.***

"Honorius, who inherited the empire of Rome, put a stop to the gladiatorial combats which had long been held at Rome. The occasion of his doing so arose from the following circumstance:

A certain man of the name of Telemachus had embraced the ascetic life [he was a monk]. He had set out from the East [most likely Turkey] and for this reason had repaired to Rome. There, when the abominable gladiatorial spectacle was being exhibited, he went himself into the stadium and stepping down into the arena, endeavored to stop the men who were wielding their weapons against one another. The spectators of the slaughter were indignant, and inspired by the triad fury of the demon who delights in those bloody deeds, stoned the peacemaker to death.

When the admirable emperor was informed of this he numbered Telemachus in the number of victorious martyrs, and put an end to that impious spectacle." In the name of Christ, Forbear!