

Christ Community Covenant Church
Responding to the Call
Pastor Dave Scherrer - August 26, 2012

We are now in our last Sunday of our summer series where we have been clarifying our mission and values. If you have missed a sermon and would like to catch up, you can go online and listen or you can download the written copy (& the Welcome Desk). You can also pick up this recently published 5 Stones document in the back of the auditorium.

Illustration: We have been talking about non-negotiable values. Defining our mission means we took on the challenge to boil down all our hopes and dreams and purposes into "one thing" that we should be about. This discussion of 'one thing' has been going on for a longtime...

Last week we said if you have a stated value, it creates a crisis in your life, just like there is now a crisis in the life of our church. Now you must either act on it or be called weak or a liar. If we say for instance we are a Community Minded church we must now act on this call of God.

However, that is not to say that I have to be perfectly formed in order to say that I have a new value. I can say that I am working to become a well-read person, but of course you are not well read to start with. You become what your values state you are over time, as you journey through life in a disciplined way. You stumble along the way but you make progress and over time you find that you are achieving your hope. There is a Bible verse that makes me think of this process.

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The call of Christ – what is it?

...What does it look like? Is everybody called? Or only missionaries and nuns and pastors? If everyone has a call how do we know what we are called to? Is it like a phone call and you answer it and God is on the other end of the line saying in a very deep voice, "O my goodness something terrible has happened in Mali. I need you to go there and fix it right now. Your plane leaves tomorrow!" And so hearing the call, you hurriedly pack and you have a lifetime of missionary work in Africa. And maybe some people get those calls and some don't. Is it like that?

Or maybe you have terrible memories of standing along a wall in 5th grade hoping someone will choose you for volley ball or baseball and no one chooses you till the very end. Then you hear, "Ok, if I have to take Dave I get two more picks of good people or it won't be fair." I was the last person picked for every sport known to man in 7th grade. You stand against the wall waiting for the call and nothing happens. Maybe you think of that when you wonder why it is that you don't seem fit to do any Kingdom work. Maybe you don't think you have the stuff to get picked. All that is bad theology. Let's unpack all of this a bit.

Let me begin by telling you a little bit about what the call of Jesus isn't:

- The call is seldom like the call of Paul in Acts 16, where Paul on the road to Macedonia was blinded by divine light and called by an audible voice. Sometimes it happens but God's call is not always through a mystical experience.
- It is not the guarantee of success or failure. God calls us to obedience not a score card established by our particular culture.
- It is not extended exclusively to uniquely gifted people. In fact it seems just the opposite. "Only broken people need apply!")

- It is not something that happens only from God directly to people. Sometimes He lets the stuff of life help to determine a call and focus.

Let's talk a bit about the call of Jesus.

God's call is universal

These universal aspects of God's call have no concern over who you are and what you bring to the table. For instance there is a universal call to salvation that is for all people.

1. Call to Salvation... The universal call to accept the rescue of Jesus Christ the King.

Jesus you remember is the King of a Kingdom, a Kingdom that is not of this world. Now this does not mean that this world does not belong to God's purview. Only that this world is in opposition to the Kingdom of God. This world is a war with the values and the goals and the purposes of the Kingdom of God. All of us were at one time personally at war with God too. That was until we responded to the call of God *by faith* and made peace with Him by giving up, by surrendering our attempts to rule and reign in our own lives and yield to Jesus':

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

The call to salvation is for everyone, and God patiently waits:

2 Peter 3:9 NASB

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

So, first and foremost the call to Jesus is to be saved from the condition we find ourselves in; deep in sin for which the wage is death and no way to save ourselves. He says "I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by me." He says "follow me when I call and be saved." And then there is the universal call to holiness.

2. The Call to Holiness... This call is universal, it is non-negotiable and applies to every woman and man and child.

The call to holiness is a call away from sin. Do you remember Jesus' words as he ended his 40 day fast in the desert? "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, '*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*' "(Matthew 4:17). To repent is to turn from one direction and to head in a new direction. To turn from Sin.

But holiness is more than that. It is also about a call TO Jesus. FROM sin and TO Jesus. And mysteriously, it is a call to being IN Christ. Listen to these verses from Colossians:

Colossians 3:1-4

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

For we have died and our lives are hidden with Christ in Heaven. But it is more than that too. All of us have been called for a purpose and equipped for that purpose. A Kingdom purpose.

From Paul's letter to the Ephesians we read about these good works:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Do you see how universal the call is to be saved, to be holy and to be about the business of the Kingdom? There are no exceptions to these universal callings.

But God's call is personal too

1 Corinthians 12:7

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

If you feel that God has simply made a mistake and that you have nothing to offer, it is you who are mistaken. The King has supplied you gifts for the church to use in advancing the Kingdom.

"Responding to the Call" Handout

God's call on the Church is also universal . . .

In the same way that God has called every person to common universal purposes that is true of the Church too. When we gather together something special happens. We begin to love each other and we begin to act as the hands and voice of Jesus, as the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 2:4-7

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— and **raised us up with him** and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus** (*So that His kindness is displayed and His glory magnified!*).

God's call on the church is also personal . . .

Not every local church has every gift of the Spirit. Together the church universal has been shown the totality of the Spirit of God, but on any given Sunday, we are limited by those who attend here. We have the gifts that you bring to this church. We are limited by our willingness to share, by our willingness to believe in our giftedness.

Now before you say, "I thought God is limitless" and get all huffy, I am not saying that. In fact, I believe that by divine design our church is experiencing **the gift of limits**. The truth is you can't do it all, and together we can't do it all!

Knowing that 'all cannot be done' gives permission to focus on a smaller set of things which can be done. Limitations are freeing because of the focus they give. Individual churches (like many individual believers), because of Paul's affirmation that "**I can do all things**", think that they "**must do all things**". That leads to a diffusion of resources (time, talents and money) and, inevitably, to the lack of much real accomplishment. Limitations promote effectiveness.

God did not tell Noah to take every animal on the boat--"just" one pair of each unclean and seven pairs of each clean. David defeated Goliath because he only had a sling (Saul's sword and armor weighted him down so much he couldn't move).

Knowing that limits exist, the church must be a good steward of the gifts that it does possess. To be prepared, the gifts themselves must be discovered and acknowledged. To be faithful, the specific services to which they are to be put must be discerned. To be effective, the processes

through which they are to be utilized must be developed. It is not so much how many programs we start and spin, but about our effort. God said love me with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. Or said another way;

Going hard after God

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Three things will help us define our call here and our call on our lives.

Holy dissatisfaction – Because Jesus has made me his own.

Forgetting what lies behind – for the better and for the worse.

Strain forward to what lies ahead – what lies ahead is seeking more of Jesus and living more in Jesus and experiencing more through Jesus and resting more because of Jesus.

This is what it means to respond to the call. Not merely do more, but not being content, not willing to be disqualified, but seeking hard after Jesus. And the rest will take care of itself. I believe that for you and I believe that for our church.

Will you respond to the call?

As we approach this important conversation and vote today the concerns of our church building, we can use these truths to help us focus. We have to be careful, no matter how shaping the work ahead of us is. Is this the one thing that we should be about for the moment, simply building a church? Or is the one thing to be hard about Jesus and His Kingdom and His Righteousness and believe that He will answer our need for shelter?

Isaiah 6:1-7

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said,

“ Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts,

The whole earth is full of His glory.”

And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said,

“ Woe is me, for I am ruined!

Because I am a man of unclean lips,

And I live among a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth *with it* and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”