

Christ Community Covenant Church
Spirit Filled Living in a Broken and Fallen World: Big Talk VS Kingdom Walk!
Pastor Dave Scherrer - October 2, 2016

Communion today!
4CsCaresDay celebration moment

Let's get to our passage for this morning

1 Corinthians 4:14-21

I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach them everywhere in every church. Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. **For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.** What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

What is going on here?

I think, however, though this morning's message is going to be unusual in that it will probably stand out in the Corinthian series as an extremely practical message. It deals with the concept of being a spiritual father. The Apostle Paul, of course, in writing to the Corinthians is dealing with their problems. He's struggling against their weaknesses and their sins and trying to bring them into conformity to the truth of God. They're Christian people for the most part but behaving as if they weren't. And he's very, very zealous and he's very, very earnest as he writes this epistle to solve their problems.

And while in the epistle he is dealing with their problems, such as the problem of division in the first section, the first four chapters, while he's dealing with their problems, he is constantly explaining his relationship to them. He'll say I'm saying this because of this and this...I'm saying this because I am your servant...or I'm saying this because I am the slave of God...and I want to carry out His orders...or I'm saying this because I'm a steward of God's mysteries and I must tell you the truth. And he uses many different metaphors in describing his own ministry so that 1 Corinthians not only becomes a letter dealing with problems in the church, but it becomes a letter that maps out the patterns of the ministry, for we see a church being attacked and we also see a minister attacking the problems in the church. So we get both sides of it.

And as we study the book we're going to see a lot about the church and we're going to see a lot about the ministry in the church, the pastor, the teacher, the leader of the church as well as things applicable to every Christian's life. Now already in 1 Corinthians we've been introduced to different metaphors to speak of the minister or the pastor or the Apostle or the prophet, the one who leads the church.

For example, in chapter 3 verse 5 he is called a servant. In chapter 4 verse 1 the minister is called a slave, a slave of Christ. In chapter 4 verse 1 again he is called a steward of the mysteries of God. And so already we've seen the pastor as a slave and a servant and a steward. We found too that in chapter 3 verse 6 the metaphor of a farmer is used.

But there is one other metaphor that perhaps sums up in a very unique way the intimacy between the pastor and his people and that is in verse 15 of chapter 4, **"For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel."** Another translation puts it this way - **"Though you have 10,000 instructors in Christ you have not many fathers."** Now remember, for the four chapters we've been studying, Paul has really been firing all barrels. He's really unloaded on them against their carnality – for their worldly living. He has confronted their pride, and come against their love of human wisdom. He is especially concerned about

their splits and quarrels over whichever preacher they like the best. They were fractioned into division and he's really been wailing on them. And even at the end of the last passage we studied, he became very sarcastic. And when you get to the place of calculated sarcasm, you're really dealing in strong language. And he's been very strong with them and he will for the next chapters in the book, 5 through 16, be equally as adamant and equally as zealous and equally as stern and equally as strong in dealing with their sins. **But he stops right here in verses 14 to 21 and really tells them why he is so stern and why he is so strong and why he feels that he must speak with such conviction.** And the reason is because he sees himself as their father spiritually.

Now, you know, if I deal sternly with my children and if I deal strongly with their mistakes and if I deal lovingly with their lives and if I struggle diligently to conform them to the things I believe in, it is because I am their father and it is because I do love them. And that's exactly what Paul is saying here. In the very middle of this thing I need to tell you the reason I'm doing this and it is because I have this tremendous sense of responsibility as a loving father to his own children. And in every sense of the word the Corinthian were his children.

Paul says "You may have ten thousand instructors" and the word in Greek here (paidagogos), was not just a classroom teacher. (Paidagogos) This word refers to a slave who was given the responsibility of **the moral guardianship of a child**. He would take the child to school, he would walk the child back from school. He would try to guide the child in moral matters. He would try to help the child in decision making. He would try to make him into a solid man. This particular word refers to a moral guardian. And a child could have (and he speaks with hyperbole here, exaggeration) you could have ten thousand moral guardians. You could have ten thousand people giving you information. You can come to the church here and you can have a lot of different people teaching you but you have only one spiritual father. And Paul says it's me who is your spiritual father and that's the reason I feel about you with such intensity. I'm not just one of the non-family members, I'm not just a slave assigned to do something for you. I'm more than a steward of God. I'm more than a slave of God, I'm more than a servant of God, I am your father spiritually and I feel that special love and responsibility toward you.

As I read this it makes me wonder in this day and age how we are to know what true leadership and especially true church or pastoral leadership looks like. Is it just a Father figure or is it more. I want to linger over this for just a moment because I think it is important for you the congregant to be discerning here in this matter.

What are we to make of 'Christian' Church Leaders? What do they look like?

Now as Paul sometime says, "This is my opinion, it is not from the Lord" - but I think I can find the backing of scripture in my thoughts.

**Christ entered and Kingdom driven
At peace with who they are
'Fatherly/Motherly' disposition
Purposely practice extreme self-sacrifice**



Pelican illustration and stained glass.

Leaders inspire action

Spirit-led courage- courage to move ahead, courage to stand, courage to fall back

Always, always, always are mindful of the sheep

Called, Prayerful, Replaceable

John 10:14-15

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

The key verse in this passage for me is 1 Corinthians 4:20 . . .

1 Corinthians 4:20

For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.

The church in Corinth, like all good Greek communities, valued 'rhetoric' - polished speaking - even if the content is fallacious. It is all about sounding good. Too often, even in the church we give power to the person who can command presence, get people to laugh and persuade by personality, not by the conviction of truth or the strength of their upright living and Christ like character. I am sad today to say that I don't believe that Jesus would make the cut for a number of our churches as the Lead Pastor because of His weak resume and humble manner.

Paul is saying the Kingdom of God is different. So what is the nature of power in the Kingdom of God?

The Nature of 'Power' in the Kingdom of God

First we start with the fact that it is different, very different. Power in the Kingdom of God, just like leadership in the kingdom of God, is different than how the world sees it. Power in this world is the power of position, wealth, and physical strength. We sometimes hear of a military 'show of power' and often times this is Presidents standing at a podium and verbally rattling their sabers – verbally telling another to watch out 'or else.' In this passage, someone in the church of Corinth is talking big. Putting down Paul in order to make himself look bigger. Paul is not in charge here, Like Gen. Alexander Haig after President Reagan was shot, "*As of now, I am in control here in the White House.*" But Paul says power is not who is the loudest, but power ***belongs to the Gospel of the Kingdom.***

Power in the kingdom of God is not in "enticing words of man's wisdom." That has been a regular theme of this letter to this little church. I know this to be true as well. I have tried to *argue* teens into the Kingdom of God. It is rarely effective. We are not in a battle of philosophies and religious worldviews. We are in a battle for a throne, the throne of the heart. So words have power, but as Paul says the power is in the words of the Gospel. The Power is where truth lies. It is in the power of the Gospel that lives are transformed.

And secondly, the power of this kingdom is exercised in the people of God. A new nature is formed in them by an almighty power. The power that will raise the dead in the last day is now exercised in raising the spiritually dead into a life of holiness. The grace received is not in word, but in power: the man does not talk of repentance merely, but turns away from their sins: he does not speak of faith merely, but believes in Christ, and gives himself fully to Him. The power of the kingdom makes strong the weakest. The power of the Kingdom celebrates the humble and makes the last servant the Lord first. And you may doubt it but there has never been more power available to us in the Kingdom of God than there is today. Unparalleled Power!

The Unparalleled Power of the Kingdom Today

John 14:12-14

¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me^[a] anything in my name, I will do it.

The Spirit gives us vocabulary we cannot naturally speak. The Spirit gives us the words we need to witness to our world. The Spirit gives us vitality we cannot naturally summon. The Spirit gives us the courage we need to do the healing work of the Kingdom in our broken and fallen world. And the Spirit gives us victory we cannot naturally secure. The Spirit gives us the power we need to walk in our world.

Talking Less and Serving More - 1 Corinthians 4:20 (communion)

For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. (Communion)