

Vision, Part 2 FCC 2-2-20

INTRODUCTION

Far better to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory, nor defeat. THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1899

Today we will pick up where we left off last week talking about mission and vision. The statement in our bulletin is our purpose statement, which in most cases is the same thing as a mission statement. It is all about present action: *“to labor for the salvation of souls, the edification of the saints, and their growth in the grace and love of God.”* Last week we defined mission and vision, looked at the difference between them, and looked at both the mission and vision of God in the Bible. *Mission is a broad, brief, statement of what we are generally doing on the path toward the vision. A vision is a mental picture of the future, the end result or outcome of our ministry.* Mission is pretty cut and dried. It’s not hard for us as a church to talk about what we generally want to do or should be doing, especially when we read the Great Commission. But understanding what a vision is and how to apply it deserves more attention. Today we will talk about vision and how it applies to a local church setting.

As an individual proprietor, like a farmer, you may or may not set goals for yourself. Maybe you do, if you don’t maybe you should, but you have at least a general idea where you want to go with your operation, not the least of which would be to make money. But as soon as you involve other people in the decision making and in the ownership, you have to have clear goals and clear direction. You have to communicate about where you are going. Or you will go nowhere! That’s true for any organization. Now as a church, you might wonder, why should we have a vision, or a vision statement, if God gave it to us, like we saw in the Bible last week?

REASON FOR HAVING A VISION

Take a look at 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

1Co 9:19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

1Co 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.

1Co 9:21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.

1Co 9:22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

1Co 9:23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

The principle in this passage that I want to bring into our discussion of vision is this: Paul was committed to shaping his ministry methods and goals to fit his ministry context. His theology didn't change. His values didn't change. His gospel didn't change. But his methods and goals were adjusted to meet the unique needs and situations he encountered among different communities and cultures. That's why it's so important for us as a local church to have a vision. Having a vision is all about doing big things for God in ways that are relevant to the needs and circumstances in our context today. It's about taking the vision of God for the NT era and applying it to our local context and expressing it in our own words.

Besides, this is what God has been preparing us for. The gospel of Christ working in our lives will produce in each one of us a zeal, or passion, for some kind of ministry and along with that God will give each of us a set of abilities to contribute to that ministry. That's on the individual level. But the vision of Jesus is to form a people, a body, a household- those are corporate terms- he want us to work together. So the question is, what is our passion as a body- our corporate passion? Where do our individual passions and abilities converge? What do we want to do together? That is our mission. The next question is- where do we go with that passion? Together what are we striving toward? What future do we desire for our church and our community? What is our BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal)? That's our vision- our mental picture of a desired future.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROCESS

The process of creating a vision is just as important as the vision itself. You see, many churches try to put together some sort of statement so that it can fit nicely on the wall in the foyer or on the church sign along the street. They try to figure out what characteristics make a nice vision statement and then create a nice statement. But if your vision is to create a vision statement then your vision is worthless. You can have a vision statement but have no vision. A vision must come from the heart. To create an effective vision, you have to discern your gifts

and passions as a church, and the needs of your community, and have dreamt about what you could do for God as a church, and crystallized it, there's your vision. You can't just brainstorm and manufacture a vision statement. Well, you can but it won't get you anywhere. You have to dream it. Brainstorming is an intellectual process where we throw out ideas hoping something will stick. Having a vision is about discerning what your hearts long to do for God and imagining what sort of future you could create together. To do this you have to have deep, honest, frequent communication about what you want the future to look like. You don't brainstorm or manufacture a vision, you discern it, dream it, imagine it. You can't just put some random goal on a poster because it sounds good, the vision has to fit who you are. That's why the process of discerning and dreaming together is so important.

By the way, don't wait to find a pastor until you talk about vision. Dream up your vision first, and then the pastor that is right for you will catch your vision, he will be drawn in to help you achieve it.

7 CHARACTERISTICS OF A VISION:

1-The vision needs to be clear. It is difficult to accomplish what you don't know, or can't clearly communicate. Our vision needs to clearly describe a specific future reality that definitely does not now exist but that we will create. It has to be concrete, not abstract. It has to have nouns and adjectives.

2-The vision stirs a sense of urgency. There is an immediate feeling that the vision is necessary- it needs to become reality. If you create a vision statement because that looks like the thing to do nowadays, and then it gets put in a binder and nobody can find the binder, then your vision had no urgency about it.

3-The vision needs to be challenging. In fact, it needs to be so challenging that we will need God's help to do it, but we have the faith to believe that he will. A vision is ineffective if it is too small because people will become complacent about it. A vision is also ineffective if it is too big because people will become discouraged. Vision statements are supposed to be challenging and ambitious yet workable enough to evoke the ingenuity of members.

4-The vision needs to be exciting. Your mental picture of the future needs to be something you are so excited to see happen that you are moved to action. You will always want to talk about it. "A BHAG engages people— it reaches out and grabs them in the gut. It is tangible, energizing, highly focused. People "get it" right away; it takes little or no explanation." (Collins, Jim; Porras, Jerry I.. Built to Last, Loc. 2163).

5-The vision is contagious. It is not taught, it is caught. Hearers will be convinced without needing it explained because they will be able to see it in their minds. If your vision is not exciting or contagious, that's probably because it's not from the heart, because you didn't take the time to dream together, to let God grab you.

6-The vision rallies people together. It is so clear and compelling that it does not rely on the personality of a certain leader. The vision has a life of its own. If the vision stays with the leaders then it's not effective. It needs to be everyone's vision. Many churches make the mistake of thinking that the pastor should set the vision, or maybe the pastor and deacons. One of the most common misconceptions about vision and mission statements is that they are just meant for the leaders. Authors Collins and Porras, who coined the acronym BHAG, evaluated a lot of organizations, and found themselves asking, "if "visionary leadership" is so critical to the development of extraordinary organizations, then who is the charismatic visionary leader" of these successful organizations? So many people think the key to progress is having this visionary leader, this charismatic winsome personality. But if the leader is the only visionary person, the group won't get anywhere. A majority of the people have to be visionary people. If people are not visionary, not only do they not see vision or spread vision, but they don't readily catch vision from others either. As many people as possible should dream about what the church could do for God and share their dreams with each other. That's why I'm sharing all of this on a Sunday morning, not at a deacons' meeting.

7-The vision needs to touch you emotionally. Do you feel strongly about this vision? Will your world be better if this vision becomes a reality? A vision is a picture of a better state that we are convinced must come to be. If your vision is only about the future of your church itself, it's an internal vision. An inward-focused vision doesn't motivate people for very long, and it's usually too small to really need God. Vision should have a strong external component. It should be about the desired future state of at least one significant aspect of your ministry context, your community.

THE LIFESPAN OF YOUR VISION

I should emphasize here that a vision is not a one-time thing. It needs to be attainable. But what happens when you attain it? you create another one! It's not so much about having a vision statement. It's about having a vision. And not just one vision, but one after another. Pursuing a vision, achieving it, and

then tackling the next vision. It's not about having one vision. It's about being visionary people. So many companies, organizations, including churches, try to conjure up this vision statement that they think will be the ultimate goal that will pull them together and move them forward forevermore. The problem is that when they do this, these vision statements become so broad and so abstract that they are unattainable. And a vision that is unattainable doesn't get anybody together or get anybody going anywhere. Rather than being energizing, it's draining. Nobody is energized by a goal they can't actually accomplish.

In 1907, Henry Ford, a 43-year-old businessman, stimulated his company forward with an astounding BHAG: "To democratize the automobile." Ford proclaimed: [To] build a motor car for the great multitude. . . . It will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one— and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces. . . . everybody will be able to afford one, and everyone will have one. The horse will have disappeared from our highways, the automobile will be taken for granted." That's a really big hairy audacious goal. But it was also attainable. Cars have been taken for granted for decades now. But then Ford hit a slump because they didn't dream up a new vision to move them forward.

So the key is not just to have a vision, but to be a visionary people. Dream up one vision, and when you're close to attaining it, dream up the next one.

CONCLUSION

Your challenge today is to begin dreaming about the vision of our church. Think- What are our passions? What are our gifts? What are the needs in the world around us? If we channeled them together to transform a specific aspect of our world, what would we picture that aspect of our world to look like when we got done with it?