

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Story: Chapter 29: Paul's Mission - Taking it to the Streets
Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 22, 2012

If you have been following along in The Story, you know that we are nearing the end of the book. Not the end of 'The Story' but the end of the book. The Story continues. God continues to write His history in the Church in your life. You are his continuing Story. God is writing his autobiography in you!

Also keep in mind that we have regularly talked about the Lower Story and the Upper Story as we make our way through these chapters. The Lower Story is the part of the narrative that we see from a worldly perspective, the Upper Story is the part of the narrative that we see from a God's eye view. You too are living a story with a lower and upper perspective. Right now you could be saying to yourself, I got up, I got dressed and came to church, just like a lot of Sundays. On Monday and Tuesday, you may say they are always generally the same; get up, get dressed and go to work. That is the lower story perspective. Not too exciting I admit. However, if instead you started to look for the Upper Story perspective in your life, you will notice that no encounter during the day is by accident. Each endeavor is transformed by a Kingdom agenda. Instead of just going to work, you are going to a mission field. Instead of 'chit-chatting' at the hall copy machine, you are listening to an ever living never dying soul tell the story of their life. You are listening for a chance to witness and to share your hope in Christ. You live expectantly, knowing that every move you make has the very real possibility of being a divinely inspired encounter. You pray moment by moment and you move accordingly. That is living the Upper Story. That is living the Kingdom life. We are going to talk about that this morning as we look at the story of the life of the apostle Paul the subject of the 29th chapter of The Story. You can follow along in the book of Acts too, beginning at the end of chapter 7 and into chapter 9. But first before we go on let's **pray**.

Perhaps you have heard the term "Fishers of Men."

'Fishers of Men'

Jesus had a way with words, with the turn of a phrase. He saw two men who had a passion for the Upper Story and saw that they were fishermen by trade. So Jesus used that idea to capture the imagination of the fishermen

Matthew 4:18-20

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers; Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.

They left their nets and followed Jesus. You know what? That is what you did, when you gave your life to Christ. You were filled with the Holy Spirit and you received power and purpose. You left your plans, your dreams, and your assumptions at the side of the water and gave them to Christ. And you followed Him.

You are now living a life that perhaps looks much the same from a human perspective (the Lower Story) but everything that has to do with keeping score and your motives has now changed (the Upper Story). ***You have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer you who lives but Christ. The life you live in the flesh you live by faith in the Son of God who loves you and gave Himself up for you*** (Galatians 2:20).

And as we learned last week with the giving of the Holy Spirit to His Followers, he then created the church, the Body of Christ. The church is the one and only plan for sharing the love and

power and grace of God. That is why you are here this morning. To receive encouragement and truth so that you can then take these truths to a world that is lost in the power of lies.

The Church is the Body of Christ in the world

1 Corinthians 12:4, 12-13

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The Apostle Paul is a great example of what I hope you know first hand. That the call of God on your life has transformed you! Let's look at what happens when Saul, as he is known when we first meet him, becomes Paul.

Saul becomes Paul

Acts 9:1-9

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

We read in Acts that Saul was transformed. He went from being a Christian killer to a Christian leader. He went on three missionary journeys that took years and he planted churches all over much of the known world of that day. Much of the New Testament was authored by Paul in his letters to the churches. And it was a hard life following Christ at that time. Listen to his own account of his life:

2 Corinthians 11:23b-28

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Why did he do it? God called Paul and he repented and believed and received the Holy Spirit. He was transformed from being a hunter of men to being a fisher of men. We each have been changed and though our work and day by day tasking is much the same, why we do what we do is totally transformed.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

We are changed and transformed and spiritually equipped by the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ to be about a new purpose, do a new task.

New Task

Our new task is to be “ministers of reconciliation”:

2 Corinthians 5:18

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

And not only this is new but we have a new Title as well:

New Title

We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

2 Corinthians 5:20

We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

And finally Paul has told us that our transformed life has given us a new message, and new testimony:

New Testimony

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This part of our journey together as the Church is set . . . but everything is unfolding moment by moment

We do not know exactly where we are going but we know Who we are following.

The Church and her Leaders: Led by God through the Spirit and In Circumstance

I want to share a living example of the Lord leading the church and her leaders through both the Holy Spirit and through circumstances:

About a year and a half ago, we learned from APEX that they had a new source of funding available and that they were going to need this building for community recreational purposes. Initially that meant that we would have to move out completely, but after doing a study of available resources, we approached APEX with the idea of moving to the east side of this property. And as you can see, between you and God, we were successful – able to complete this renovation and occupy in a little over three months. Since that time we have been living with the knowledge that this property is most certainly not ours. APEX signed a letter of agreement with us for a three year period. We are now 14 months into that agreement.

Recently the Council has been grappling with this reality due to God’s direct leading by his Holy Spirit and through various circumstances that have changed and impacted our planning.

The 4Cs Council of Elders has been increasingly aware that living in limbo, without a firm plan in moving forward, has been paralyzing for the church. We have known that we cannot stay where

we are, but our choices in moving forward have seemed limited until we sell the land. Selling the land has been problematic. Commercial property has been slow to sell in this past recession and the land use restrictions put on the land by Westminster's public building plan has made it difficult to market. Since our move to the *east side* of this property at 82nd and Simms, the Council and staff have been in regular prayer, seeking the Lord for direction in moving forward. Recently our hearts have been quickened that God is working to move us forward in our need for a church home. Individually and corporately, God has been leading us to step forward in faith, putting fear aside and instead claiming the promises of Christ.

We have also been prompted to move purposefully forward by some circumstances that seem led by God as well:

1. At the beginning of our negotiations with APEX when it became apparent that we would be in half the building, it had been our hope to establish as long as a five year lease for our current location. APEX was only able to offer a three year letter of agreement and that agreement ends February 2014. At that time they communicated to us that they did not foresee taking over the property any time soon.
What has changed is that APEX has recently made us aware that while nothing is formal, they are beginning a research and development phase exploring the potential of using the east side of this building for future community usage that could come as early as February 2014.
2. Recent professional opinion has informed us that the sale of the land could continue to be problematic for months to even years to come.
3. Empty commercial property is at an all-time high here in the Denver area, making the possibilities of a lease and tenant finish for church purposes potentially affordable.
4. The City of Westminster has expressed their willingness to explore our suggestions to consider building a church on 100th and Wadsworth that is smaller and less expensive than previously approved by the planning office.

With all this in mind, the Council has commenced a proactive stance to seeking God's will and provision for finding our new church building home.

All options are being considered, even ones that we thought previously were not possible. A Relocation Team has been re-formed under the leadership of past Council Chairman Creg Hughes to research the options before us and to bring a recommendation to the Council and ultimately the members of the church. These options include;

1. Building a smaller more affordable church expression on the land at 100th and Wadsworth,
2. Leasing a commercial "box" that we could finish out as a church,
3. Buying existing commercial property (closed school, empty office building, etc.) that we could renovate and occupy.

All these options have certain benefits and various fixed and soft costs. Council is doing an extensive professional review of financial and other comprehensive costs of all options to ascertain the veracity of each choice.

Because we have no guarantee beyond February of 2014 that we will have the privilege of being in our current location, ***we have established that date as our hope to be in a new church home.*** This is a God sized dream – but we have a very big God!

I must say that this may all feel very unsettling. I frankly finally feel like a time of unsettledness is coming to a close. We have been in limbo for so long that we have forgotten what it feels like to be about a clear hope and direction. There is a Lower Story that we can be consumed with here called simply 'moving again.' But the Upper Story of God's grace and power in the life of our church is the more compelling story. That is what we are seeking. I am excited to be getting on with it.

[Letter/Prayer Concert April 29/Town Hall on May 6th]

I use this example of God leading and us following to let you know that I know this is a very inexact science of following after Christ. But in this matter of pursuing a new church home and in every

matter of following hard after Christ we pledge to be about the priorities of Jesus Christ in our world. And that means to pursue Glory, Sanctity and Unity.

Glory – Sanctity – Unity

We know that these are our purposes because Jesus prayed specifically for these three character traits in the upper room on the night He was betrayed: He prayed first that He would be glorified:

John 17:1-5

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Just a little later in that same upper room Jesus prayed for us, that we would be set aside for Kingdom purposes, sanctified.

John 17:15-17

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Finally in this upper room Jesus prayed that we would be unified, that we would be one:

John 17:20-23

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

In January 2000, leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, invited their favorite son, Billy Graham, now 90 years old, to a luncheon in his honor. Billy initially hesitated to accept the invitation because he struggles with Parkinson's disease. But the Charlotte leaders said, 'We don't expect a major address. Just come and let us honor you.' So he agreed.

After wonderful things were said about him, Dr. Graham stepped to the rostrum, looked at the crowd, and said, 'I'm reminded today of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who this month has been honored by Time magazine as the Man of the Century. Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of every passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.

The conductor said, 'Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it.' Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.

The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are, no problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one.' Einstein looked at him and said, 'Young man, I too, know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going.'"

Having said that Billy Graham continued, 'See the suit I'm wearing? It's a brand new suit. My children and my grandchildren are telling me I've gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be a bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this luncheon and one more occasion. You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I'll be buried. I know who I am and I know where I am going. When you hear I'm dead, I don't want you to immediately remember the suit I'm wearing. Remember that I am not afraid to meet my savior.