

**Christ Community Covenant Church
Stone 4: A Community Minded Church
Pastor Dave Scherrer - July 22, 2012**

Our Mission: To Love God, Love Others and to Advance the Kingdom Together

Our *Stones* or Values:

A Family Church

The Family Unit as well as The Church as Family

A Celebrating Church

This has to do with having a heart of worship that allows us to celebrate God under all circumstances

A Teaching Church

Where Truth is shared boldly and Grace abounds

A Community Minded Church

Where the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached and lived out in a lost and fallen world

A Multiplying Church

A church that grows further in Christ in both number and influence

These values have much in common though they also stand alone in helping to define who we are.

"Pursuing Christ and His priorities in the world"

This is a phrase used by our national expression of the ECC. I like how it captures the vibrant Christian life – a life of active following, following hard after Jesus, experiencing intimacy with Christ. And then it also suggests that manifesting the person of Christ in the world by obeying His will. By addressing the things that are on His heart; that break His heart. It gives a sense of purpose to our Christian lives and implies that the gospel has direction. A church that has it in mind to be about the priorities of God must find expression in the pursuit of ministries of justice, compassion and mercy. These are God's priorities.

Isaiah 58:6-10

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?
Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

A Church that values the heart of God cannot ignore the evidence. God loves humankind – all humankind – not just those who have yielded their heart to Him. He loves the so called 'Lost' too. His character is to pour out blessings on us, acts of mercy and kindness and justice and mercy, on all peoples for the sake of His glory. Justice and mercy are the character of God. And if we are to reflect His character we must be about acts of mercy and kindness and we must be about addressing injustice in the world.

Here is a key point. ***We do acts of kindness, not because someone will come to Christ, but because God is glorified when we act like Him. Because our King is glorified when we act like Him and he is merciful, just and compassionate so we too are caring and kind and live to serve.***

The Kingdom Gospel is core to our acts of service

Matthew 4:23

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and ***proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom*** and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The Gospel. What is that exactly and is the Gospel different than the “gospel of the Kingdom”? Are there two ideas being expressed here or just one being examined in a fresh way? When we as 21st century Christians talk about the gospel we are profoundly impacted by some ministries of the 20th century that helped us understand the Gospel by summarizing it into four what they called “spiritual laws”:

*There is a God who loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.
But you have a sin problem that separates you from God.
The good news is that Jesus came to die for your sins.
If you receive Jesus' death, you can be reconnected to God.
Those who are reconnected to God will live in heaven with God.*

Sounds like a good, simple system for sharing the gospel, right? The only problem is that these “Spiritual Laws” don’t include the good news about the kingdom. This summary is true but it does not share the totality of the good news, that God is King and that we are to live our lives differently as we follow His Kingdom values. The Sermon on the Mount found in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew is a description of the Kingdom Gospel in a nutshell and helps us to understand that living our lives under the rule and realm of God compels us to act different.

This brief Gospel presentation threatens to make the Gospel all about me, my salvation and my life in heaven. Where is the church in this gospel? While every line in this gospel is more or less true, what concerns many of us today is that this gospel makes the church irrelevant. The community of believers seems to take a back seat to my personal salvation. And my life in Christ seems to be all about heaven someday, not on living the Kingdom life now.

We have a generation of Christians who do not understand that Jesus has a demand on every human life. With this short Gospel, we basically come away with the picture of Jesus as a “a nice guy” not unlike other great teachers throughout the ages. Who wouldn’t want to accept this blank check offer of salvation? When we put him in the perspective as King of the coming Kingdom we begin to see a dynamic Jesus – not a “nice guy” trapped in history, but a King who is alive and building his Kingdom today, and preparing to return to rule the world. This is the Kingdom Gospel. And this understanding compels us to live differently. More simply and more sacrificially and more other centered.

Now this understanding of a church that values compassion and mercy doesn’t mean that there are more programs. Again, that may happen but it will happen because there is the will of every member of the congregation to love the world well and so we gather together to be about those purposes. In fact programs can be a problem. Eventually we can get the idea that “the church” does those nice things and because they do I don’t have to.

“Every member a minister” – Justice, Compassion and Mercy must never take a vacation

We have seen the face of evil this week. We have seen up close and personal that every act of mercy and justice and kindness and truth for that matter, makes a difference. We are each gifted and there is a demand on our lives to live differently – more mercifully and more generously, than others who do not follow Christ the King.

1 Peter 4:7-11

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Clarene Shelley

Did you know that Thursday July 19th, in Denver was Cheryl Aggus Day?

True Kingdom work does not care who on earth gets the credit as long as God gets the glory!

1 Peter 4:11b

. . . whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

In order for God to get glory from the way we live, we must be engaged in good deeds. It is not so much by avoiding gross sins that God's people display his glory, but rather in the pursuit of good deeds, acts of generosity, works of kindness, ways of love. Since it is God's goal to be glorified in his people, and since Jesus says this happens when his people do good deeds, we would expect the Bible to tell us that God's goal in redeeming a people is that they might do good deeds. And this is exactly what we find. Paul says in Titus 2:14 that Christ ***"gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds."*** Christ died that we might do good deeds of compassion, justice and mercy and so bring glory to our Father in heaven. We are that compassionate church, Community Minded and given to good deeds.