

**Christ Community Covenant Church
Ten Things We Should Celebrate
Pastor Dave Scherrer - July 7, 2013**

A couple of weeks ago at the annual meeting I noted to our church family that it is very important to keep our values in front of us during these times of persevering faith. We have to remember what is central to our church and what we stand for. This next academic year we will take five Sundays and highlight one of our five values. So we will be taking a break from our series on authority to do that this morning. We will be looking at our value of being a celebrating church and that is particularly appropriate today on Communion Sunday.

We have “five stones” that represent our values, things like being a teaching church and a community minded church. I think everyone who has ever attended 4Cs very long would say that we have a high value for family and we love to participate in missions and to share our faith as a multiplying church. We have seen these values expressed this morning as we celebrated with the Kirstin, Dennis and Presley (second service) and heard the testimony of the Browns, our home missionaries with Campus Crusade in Virginia.

As we take today to reinforce our core values we are focusing on the idea that we are a celebrating church. We are the kind of church that takes joy seriously. If that isn't an oxymoron! We want to be known as the church that can take joy in so many things. So our focus today is celebrating.

I'm not sure if we are a truly celebrating culture anymore. We have to establish holidays to celebrate various things otherwise I think we would just get busy and forget. Mother's day, Father's Day, Memorial Day? Great things to celebrate - I wonder if we would if we didn't have a holiday. And our sense of celebration can go a bit sideways - how about St Patrick's and Mardi Gras and Cinco de Mayo – even New Year's Day have become an excuse to drink liberally as though that alone is celebration.

To celebrate wholeheartedly not because there is a Hallmark card created to signify the day but because we are created by God to be joyful and to rejoice all the time is a lost art. We are busy and dour and distracted. We do not discipline ourselves to look on the bright side of life. So today we will. Because as wonderful as it is to reflect on our national independence and on those who risked so much to see our nation formed, there is even more to celebrate for those whose lives are hidden in Christ. We of all people should be the most positive and hopeful, unless of course we have our eyes on the world. Then that will be a harder thing. Let's practice for a few minutes celebrating! Our first one is Children:

1. Children

I have to make an important point. You may be thinking, “But I don't like children, they get on my nerves and they irritate me.” You should maybe look deep inside and see what that is all about. They may not be your thing but Jesus himself celebrated children and found time for them at a time when Rabbis did not do that.

Luke 18:16

¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Our God is a God of life and there is nothing more worth celebrating than Human life, life made in the image of God. Now you may also be saying “I would like to celebrate life. My husband/my wife and I have been trying and there has been nothing but heartache.” I suspect few things are more heartbreaking and emotionally devastating than hoping to have a child or grandchild and not being able to. While these circumstances are profoundly difficult, I believe we must celebrate children and

the life that they are. Children are very important here at 4Cs and we celebrate them. And we can celebrate the church!

2. The Church

Now we can celebrate 4Cs and we should but I am thinking bigger. A lot bigger. I am thinking of not only the church today that meets all over the world, but I am thinking of the church that has gone before us and form the great cloud of witnesses that cheer us on from heaven that we read about in the book of Hebrews. And I am thinking too of those who will soon find Christ even today. 80,000 will find Christ today, 42,000 on the continent of Africa. And the church will suffer today; over 270 will die for their belief in Christ today as martyrs.

The church is the answer for the world today. I am not naïve. I am aware that there is much to mourn today. I read the newspapers. The world is not as it should be. But we celebrate the church because She is the answer for the world today. Only we can participate with Christ as His body to bring hope and peace and life to a hopeless warring and dying world. We are the last, best and only hope. And we celebrate Her with all her struggles and failings, because She is the vibrant Bride of Christ and He is in love with Her!

1 Timothy 3:15

Paul states to Tim; "If I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

1 Peter 2:9-10

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.
¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

3. The Sabbath

Hebrews 4:9-11

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

We get to celebrate rest. In fact, if we are to be true celebrating Christians, we must. The Sabbath was established by God with a dual purpose, so that we would find rest and re-creation but more importantly, so that we could spend the day with God, undistracted and giving glory to God so that He is exalted and magnified. The Sabbath is a wonderful gift and our lives should celebrate the day with rest and reflection and worship.

4. Lives well lived in Christ

Have you ever been to a really great funeral? What a great thing to celebrate a life well lived in Christ. King David lived that kind of life and died speaking the word of God to his children.

1 Kings 2:1-4, 10-11

When David's time to die drew near, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, ² "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, ³ and keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, ⁴ that the LORD may establish his word that he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons pay close

attention to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’
Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹ And the time that David reigned over Israel was forty years. He reigned seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem.

Today we are losing a generation of great men and women who have served Christ for a very long time. Soon Billy Graham will join Bill Bright and James Kennedy, Millard Fuller, Chuck Colson and a score of faithful believers who don’t get to be famous but were just as worthy of celebration. We celebrate these lives lived well in Christ.

5. Music and dance

Psalm 150:1-6

Praise the LORD!

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!

² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

³ Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!

⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!

⁵ Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Ephesians 5:19

Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Luke 15:25

“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

This last verse notes the surprising revelation of a soon to be disgruntled older brother hearing from afar a household overcome with joy when the lost son comes home and is restored to his father’s love. There is dancing. I actually think the Jews were pretty robust dancers. Did you see them dance at the wedding of Tevye’s first born daughter Tzeitel and the tailor Motel in the Fiddler on the roof? It looked something like this:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGBG8mCt59s>

Music and dance is one of the things that unites us and defines us as humans. Our style of expression is different in the west than it is from the south or east, but we all dance and we all sing. To dance and to sing is human and to dance and to sing is divine. We should celebrate dance.

One thought here that may be appropriate. Everything that God gives us to celebrate, we can pervert in the flesh under the influence of the evil one. It is one of the things that Satan uses to defile the world and to confuse us. Under the evil one’s influence we either become judgmental of how others dance or we can use dance to celebrate sexuality or to bring attention to ourselves and not to God. Just because we should hilariously celebrate in our lives doesn’t mean we can be selfish and reckless with our emotions and behavior. Just saying.

6. The saving grace of Jesus Christ

Colossians 1:17-20

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And we know that by grace we are saved through faith, and that is not of ourselves either.

7. Baseball

I couldn't find a Bible verse to back this one up, but I do believe that God has given us gifts and skills and interests that in their pure forms reflect the Glory of God in us. Do you remember the words of Eric Liddell in Chariots of Fire, "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure." Each of us has pleasures that when done in God's manner bring us delight and God delight as well.

8. Trials and Hardships**James 1:2-4, 12**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

This may be where Christians have their greatest victory; finding reason to celebrate when things go poorly or counter to our expectations. Hardships and trials are given, Jesus said, "In the world you will find troubles", but He said that he has overcome the world and that he will never leave us nor forsake us. And these trials fit us for heaven much more so than all the flat, easy roads of life. So the scriptures ask us to celebrate them not begrudge them.

Work done meaningfully

Again this might be one that you missed on the celebration list, but God is aware of our design from creation to work and there is reason to celebrate this. For one thing,

"No one ever drowned in sweat."
— United States Marine Corps

I'm not quite sure that is true, some of us have worked ourselves to death and God does not ask that of us. Our work is about our motives and our heart not our raw production:

Colossians 3:23

²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.

The secret of meaningful work is that it is done as unto the Lord. Brother Lawrence (17th century Carmelite monk), in his little diary Practice the Presence of God would tell us that washing dishes is meaningful eternal work when done for Christ and in Christ. We can celebrate meaningful work!

9. The attending presence of the Holy Spirit**John 14:15-17**

¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

“The Wizard of Oz says, ‘look inside yourself and find self.’ God says, ‘Look, inside yourself and find the Holy Spirit.’ The first will get you to Kansas. The latter will get you to heaven. Take your pick.”

Max Lucado, Experiencing the Heart of Jesus Workbook: Knowing His Heart, Feeling His Love

The Spirit sets us free and the Spirit transforms. What’s not to celebrate? Paul says, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,” and we are most in line with the Spirit, most faithfully obedient, most celebrative, when instead of trying to manipulate people into faith, we simply live in that freedom and let the Spirit do the work of transformation.

10 things I left off:

The beauty of the world

The power of prayer

The Word of God

Baptisms

Our health

Laughter

Heaven

The comforts of home

Family of all kinds

The Lord’s Supper...