

Christ Community Covenant Church
“Advancing the Kingdom Together”
4Cs: Our Mission, Mark and Measures
Pastor Dave Scherrer - January 3, 2016

Happy New Year! Any resolutions out there that you want to admit to?

We are going to use the symbolism of the new year to help move us forward in looking ahead while standing on a firm foundation of how our faith has been built rock strong by the steadfast love and mercies of God.

Maybe someone has asked: What is your church all about? What is distinctive about your church? What kind of marks or impression does your church leave on the community?

For many, the answers to these questions aren't particularly important. But I would suggest that the church that cannot answer these questions is in danger of being something the English call 'redundant.' (I've spoken of this idea before from up front.)



This is the Guildhall on Watergate Street in Chester, England. This is a church that has been declared redundant by the Department of Redundancy of the English Anglican Church. There are thousands of churches that are no longer viable, no longer make any difference. Usually because so few now attend these churches that they cannot take care of themselves and they have become a drain on society rather than a benefit. So the Department of Redundancy closes them – over 1600 churches closed since 1970.

Here is the hard word for us today. I'm going to suggest that it is possible to have a church with many people still coming to attend yet the church is still largely redundant. Churches that are not empowered by the Holy Spirit but instead living according to some longstanding tradition or even a good moral cause do not provide any benefit to the kingdom of God. Only those indwelt and empowered by Christ are doing any eternal good. It is possible to become stable and economically viable and still not have any spiritual worth. Do you believe that?

This means that who we are and what we do and by what authority we do these things are very important questions for a church like ours. We will be spending the month of January giving voice to the simple question, “what makes 4Cs tick?”

Why? Things seem to be going well, why get all distracted by these seemingly small details? Some of the reasons we are going to talk about the next several weeks are that:

1. Our organizational structure serves as a missional marker for 4Cs,
2. The surveys have told us that many do not know our mission and purpose,
3. So many new people (about a 30 % increase since two years ago at this time) may not know them,

Mission Statement, Vision statement, Values statements . . . this can all be way too complicated sometimes but they are good exercises. Having a bottom line moral and spiritual and behavioral compass setting is important in a world where magnetic north seems to be shifting all the time. So we are going to spend a few weeks examining our Mission, our Marks, our Measures and Methods

Our Mission, Our Mark and Our Measures

Our Mission: To love God, love others and to advance the Kingdom together

Our Mark: Life, Light and Love

Our Measures: The Five Stones

- A Teaching Church**
- A Family Centered Church**
- A Community Minded Church**
- A Celebrating Church**
- A Multiplying Church**

Our Methods: Dependent on Prayer

There was an urgency and deliberateness to the life of Christ and I believe that continues now – there is urgency to this life and there is urgency to 4Cs. We need wisdom and a clear mind to do the work of Christ. There is a war going on around us and there are ever living never dying casualties happening right before our eyes.

- Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. *Eph. 5:15-16*
- So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. *Ps 90:12*

What this tells us is that we ought to be about the big rocks. Today we are going to put the spotlight on our mission:

Our Mission: To love God, love others and to advance the Kingdom together

This mission statement is a summary of two seminal passages of the words of Christ the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Let's get to one of the 'big rocks' – The Great Commandment– turn with me to Matthew 22 (also Mark 12 and Luke 10):

Matthew 22:36-40 - The Great Commandment

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

We break our mission into three parts - the first is **Love God** . . .

Love God . . .

Matthew 22:37

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Deuteronomy 6:5

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

This was easy for Jesus. This is a verse that every child in Israel had memorized from the earliest years – The Shema. “Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is One.” Jesus could answer this question directly, without taking time to think of it; and though he knew with what design it was put to him, he thought fit to give one.

That is....we are to love God with all the powers and faculties of the soul, the will, the mind and our affections. We are to do this in the most sincere, upright, and perfect manner, without self-serving motives or hypocrisy, and above all objects whatever. I say this knowing that now in our fallen condition, humankind is utterly unable to perform this. So far from able, that without the grace of God, we have no true love at all for God. In the Mark rendering it adds the clause ‘with all your strength’ (the Syriac, Persic,

and Ethiopic versions), which seems to denote the insistence or urgency of our affections with which God is to be beloved. In *the Mishna*, the Jews describe this command of the Shema following interpretation is given of the whole;

“with all thy heart”, with thy imaginations, with the good imagination, and with the evil imagination; and “with all thy soul”, even if he should take away thy soul; and “with all thy strength”, with all thy “mammon”, or riches; or otherwise, “with all thy might”, with every measure he measures unto thee, do thou measure unto him;”

The next thing you must be thinking is, “How do I show my love for God?” it is the only follow-up question that makes sense. The scriptures tell us the answer straight away:

John 14:21

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

John 14:23

Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

John 15:10

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

1 John 5:3

In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

2 John 1:6

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

ILL: Ripley's Believe it or Not says that the longest love letter ever written was written in 1875 and it was written from a Parisian painter by the name of Marcel de Leclure, addressed to Magdalena de Villeray and he was so in love with her that he wanted to write, je t'aime: a thousand times for every year, so it was 1875, so he wrote je t'aime: one million eight hundred and seventy five thousand times. And not being a fool he hired a secretary to do it. But, he did not want to diminish his expression of his love, so he did not tell her to write it one million eight hundred and seventy five thousand times, but he rather dictated each one to her separately. So he said it one million eight hundred and seventy thousand times and she wrote it one million eight hundred and seventy five thousand times. And Ripley says, “Never was love made manifest by as great an expenditure of time and effort.” It's a nice thought, but that's not true. “Never was love manifested by such a great expenditure of time and effort.” As profound as was this man's love this letter does not come close to demonstrating the reality that we love because he loved us first! God loved us in a way that couldn't be measured when He gave Christ. And secondly when we love God back with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength by trusting and obeying His truth we love God more than that guy loved that lady and we express it not by writing something over a million times, but by a life of obedience. If we want to write a love letter to God we do it with our obedience. Let's keep going and look at the second clause of our mission – *Love Others . . .*

Love Others . . .

Matthew 22:39 – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Love for God and love for your neighbor are vitally connected and cannot be separated - you cannot do one without doing the other. How important is this second commandment? James called it the “royal” or sovereign law - it towers over the rest. Recognizing the command is one thing—understanding and practicing biblical love is another.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” is a very radical command. What I mean by “radical” is this: it cuts to the root of our sinfulness and exposes it and, by God's grace, severs it. The root of our sinfulness is the

desire for our own happiness *apart from God* and *apart from the happiness of others in God*. Let me say it again: the root of our sinfulness is the desire to be happy *apart from God* and *apart from the happiness of others in God*. Loving others is not a question of patting someone on the back and saying, "You're so wonderful, so irresistible. I love you!" You show love by making personal sacrifices to meet someone's need.

Sometimes I'm asked how I can minister to individuals in a large church. It is not by running around to everyone and expressing love, but by making sacrifices in my life to help them grow spiritually. I care enough about them to do what is necessary in my life to bring you all into conformity to Jesus Christ. Death isn't always the price; sometimes love requires the sacrifice of your possessions, your time, or some other precious commodity. "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). If you see someone who has a need, you must meet that need as far as you're able, or you prove yourself to be deficient in love.

"Well," someone interjects, "before we can love someone, we have to love ourselves. This is a popular concept. But it is not what James 2:8 (or the rest of Scripture) teach. So what does it mean to love others as you love yourself? To fulfill the royal law, you are to treat everyone as you would treat yourself - the assumption is that you are already naturally inclined to treat yourself best. Whatever great sacrifices you make for your own comfort, you should make the same for the comfort of others, without respect to their status in life. It has nothing to do with the importance of loving self; it has to do with your service toward others.

"On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Now let's turn our attention to the second part of our mission statement – Advancing the Kingdom together

Advancing the Kingdom Together

This is a thought taken from the other 'big rock' of the New Testament – the Great Commission . . .

Matthew 28:18-20 - The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Initially one of our members early on, when we were first shaping this language for our church, had some trouble with the wording of our mission – specifically the wordage **advancing** the Kingdom. He shared with me that it had a military type feel to the mission rather than a loving feel to it. "What if we simply **participate** in the Kingdom or maybe **engage** in the Kingdom." But as he said those he said "but those don't feel very committed". Then without asking he brought up several of the other passages of scripture that truly have a military feel and he finally said, "OK you talked me into it" and I didn't really say a word. We see the virtual military orders in the outline of the Great Commission:

Authority is established (All authority in Heaven and on earth)

Orders are given (Go make disciples - teaching and baptizing in the Triune God)

Battle supplies are assured (I am with you always)

It's Personal!

For me it's personal and it's personal for me for the church – for you as His church

1 Peter 2:5

You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Communion

When we take communion we are saying I will die for this Kingdom. I will die for this King. I will participate in His death until he comes again. This is a pact to the death.

Discussion Questions:

- What in your mind is a “Mission Statement?” Had you heard our 4Cs Mission Statement before this Sunday’s message?
- For 4Cs, the mission statement serves as a unifying banner above our congregation. It is “Love God, Love Others and Advance the Kingdom Together. What do you think of this “mission”?
- What is your definition of loving God? What do you think of the idea that obedience and love are two sides of the same spiritual coin? Is there any room for sentimentalism in Christianity or is all just raw obedience?
- How do you think our church is doing in the hope of “Loving Others?” How do we demonstrate love one to another in the church? How about outside the church?
- Do you agree with Dave that the communion table is an expression of solidarity between Christ and the Believer? Is “To the Death!” too radical a cry? Is that really what Christ expects of us?