

Christ Community Covenant Church
Advancing the Kingdom Together “The Mark of 4Cs: Life, Light and Love”
Pastor Dave Scherrer - January 10, 2016

Before we launch into the **Marks of 4Cs** I want to go back to an idea that I floated last week at the end of our service where we were discussing our Church Mission Statement. Can you all remember our mission statement built off the two great New Testament passages of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission? Remember? **“Love God, Love Others and Advance the Kingdom Together.”**

I want to go back to the idea of advancing the Kingdom and the somewhat military language of that mission. I want to talk with you for a minute about fighting the good fight.

Fighting the good fight!

I said last week I don't want to be part of simply a stable church, a happily content church. I am not so much about leisure cruise ships as a way of thinking allegorically about God's church. That is never the word picture used in Scripture. A battleship is closer to the idea, and an advancing battleship too - one that is engaged in the culture with all of her heart, soul, mind, and strength.

The Apostle Paul uses the word picture of a footrace a fair amount. “Running the race of faith with endurance.” And that is good too of course. He uses that language when referring to running to win. But Paul is not afraid of the more assertive language of a fight either.

- **1 Timothy 1:18**
Timothy, my son, I am giving you this command in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by recalling them you may **fight the battle well.** (*agon*)
- **2 Timothy 4:7**
I have **fought the good fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
- **1 Timothy 6:12**
Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
- **Ephesians 6:10-12**
Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our **struggle** (*palaios*) is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (“*Wrestling*” - *with blindness as the consequence of losing*).

I think there must be a **Spiritual Disquietness** in all of us who love the Lord.

Spiritual Disquietness

Things are not the way they should be and there are ever living never dying souls at stake - dependent on the church – our church! We dare not be complacent or content. God spoke directly to that kind of church in Revelation and condemned that church, spitting it from His mouth. I hope that is clear to all. I also hope that you all approve and ‘are in’ so to speak. On any given battleship in a war I know that not all of us have the same skills or even the same passion. Some of us are wounded and need care! But you won't be comfortable here at 4Cs if you don't have the same mission. We will follow Christ to the very gates of hell and they shall not prevail against us. Now how we go about that battle means everything doesn't it!?! Let's go ahead and move from our Mission (Love God, love others and advance the Kingdom together) to our Marks – the Mark of 4Cs church, and let's get some help from 1958 for this lesson:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CP3_5HPWA0

The Mark of Zorro only has meaning because of the character of the man behind the mark. But the mark identifies who is at work, and the **three-fold mark** of 4Cs is **Life and Light and Love.**

The Mark of 4Cs: Life, Light and Love

Let's start with the brief study of the Mark of Life:

Life

We start here as a defining characteristic of the Christian and subsequently of 4Cs as well because we draw that characteristic from the very nature of God. God is life. God is a God of life not death. All of Scripture tells us this but our proof text for this morning comes from the gospel of John in the first chapter:

- **John 1:3-4**
All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ **In Him was life**, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
- **1 John 1:1-2**
That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.
- **John 10:10**
The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

God wants us to have life and life abundant and that life is only found in Christ. Only! Isn't it interesting that from that passage we can see that Satan has a *three-fold mark* as well . . .

Satan has a three-fold *mark* as well: Lies, Theft and Murder

Where there is lying, it is always of Satan. Where hope is being stolen by the thief, it is always of Satan. Where there is death, it is always of Satan. Always!!! (Christ's death as an extension of life). So the first **mark of 4Cs is Life** and the second of our three-fold mark is **Light**.

Light

We can go to our proof texts in 1 John and the Gospel of John. . .

1 John 1:5
This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: **God is light**; in him there is no darkness at all.

John 8:12
Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Look at this contrast between our Lord and our Adversary:

John 8:44
You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

What is important to remember here is that truth is a function of light. When you use the word light, you could effectively replace *'light'* with the word *'truth.'* Not only does Jesus characterize Himself as truth in John 14:6 when he states categorically "I am the way and the Truth and the Life," but He also adds in John 17:17 that "[God's] word is truth."

Many can say, "I have told you the truth." However, Jesus did not just tell the truth, He embodied it. He put truth into a visible, concrete form so all that so desire can see it. What credibility that gives! A teacher can present a mathematical, grammatical, scientific, or historical truth, and what kind of a person he is does not matter much. However, if a person teaches or administers moral truth, his example—what he is in his character—is all-important. Do people want to be lectured on purity by an adulterer or on honesty by a liar and thief?

"Truth" in John 17:17 is the Greek word *aletheia*, which means "reality, the manifested, unconcealed essence of a matter." Truth is the reality lying at the foundation of a righteous example. It is pure unadulterated reality. Satan is Christ's diametrical opposite, one hundred percent unmodified deceit. God's entire plan is based on the premise that the converted know that God is true. If He is not true to His Word or to His own way of life, how can He be trusted? We must live by faith in this true Being and in what He says! Truth forms the basis, the foundation, the reality, for a person's conversion. Consider this: There is a personal, living, almighty God whose ways and laws are intrinsically right—they are true. Therefore, a person who has God's Spirit and is honest, who is willing to speak the truth and acknowledge it when it is shown to him, and who will use it in everyday, practical situations must eventually become like the One he models himself after.

The world says it doesn't hold to absolute truth anymore, but I believe that we will see that if we hold to our truth spoken in love we will win many to Christ who long for a firm foundation to live their lives upon and on which to raise their children. We cannot love well without doing truth well. We have been told to speak the truth in love, but we must also love in truth, or nothing has been accomplished for Christ.

We have said here at 4Cs that we will be ***Bold in Truth and Abounding in Grace***. I, as your pastor, will hold to that course till I die. But there is more for us as a church!

Matthew 5:14

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, so that they may see your good works and **give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**"

But Christ raises the bar for us. He defines us as light and he employs us to be light. Not just God is light or Christ, but us – the church!

Male Call: There are two ways to make darkness. One is to do the hard work of making all the light go away, seal it out with light trapping engineering - or you can simply make the eyes blind. Satan cannot cover the light, but he has made the eyes of the world blind to His life and light! We have been called to do that healing work on a spiritually blind world.

And in the ***by the way category*** - The person who feels it is wrong to make a spiritual fuss or impose your faith on others is treading on thin ice. We cannot be mean spirited and argumentative in our approach to others, but we are called to live lives of truth and good deeds done in truth in Christ's name. There is no silent partner in the business of Christ's Kingdom! So there is the ***Mark of Life, the Mark of Light*** and finally for 4Cs, there is the ***Mark of Love:***

Love

Part of my inspiration for this sermon this morning comes from Francis Schaeffer who wrote a little essay that became famous in the mid 1970's called ***The Mark of a Christian***. How many of you remember that little book. It was one of the few Schaeffer books that we could understand! He wrote that we are marked

by our love for one another. Let's look at this idea of love as our Mark. Our proof text for this mark is 1 John 4:7-8;

1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, **because God is love.**

We love because Christ first loved us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. God made him who knew no sin to be made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of Christ in God. How do we show our love for God? By sacrificially and obediently loving others . . .

In the Great Commandment, Jesus said loving each other is like loving God. The two commandments are inseparable. We need to study that too. But for now just marvel at it, and let it motivate you to be engaged with this quest we are setting out on. The Great Commandment is: Love God with all you are. The commandment to love your neighbor is "like it."

In Matthew 24:9–12 Jesus gave a description of what the last times would be like. He described them in terms of hate and love. He said, *"They will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. [So there will be hatred from the outside and hatred on the inside of the church.] And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold."*

So it feels to me like there is a kind of end time urgency to this series of messages. Hate will be multiplied from the outside against the church. Hate will increase inside the church as one betrays another to the authorities. And love, everywhere, will grow cold.

Now with all my heart I believe this dire prediction does not have to be your destiny or the destiny of this church—or even this city. That it is going to be true far and wide does not mean it has to be true for any particular person or church. But if it is not to be, we must know the powers against us. It will be like a spiritual glacier moving over the world and the church. Love will survive and thrive where we consciously torch the glacier with the intention of loving each other rather than hating each other. It will be an uphill battle, against many forces.

We need to show the world another way to relate. Our nation is permeated with a spirit of varying degrees of hatred and rancor and mean-spiritedness. It ranges from Nazi-like skinheads declaring open hatred for Jews and any non-whites, to children killing their parents, to gangs dealing almost entirely in a tone and atmosphere of anger, to radio talk-shows that capitalize on people's unseemly love for cutting people down, to politicians who know that the soundbite is not long enough for a fair consideration of an alternative view, and who, therefore, choose the most emotionally loaded phrase to demonize and undermine not only the viewpoint of the other side, but also the character of its proponent. Every day the newspaper documents a nation of hate and meanness.

We are better than this. Our mission is to be ministers of reconciliation and we must win that war of meanness and injustice with **Life, Light and Love.**

Because God spells love:

S A C R I F I C E and O B E D I E N C E

If *the Mission is our marching orders then the Marks are our weapons in the battle.* We do not battle the way the world does. We cannot stand on the sideline and criticize schools and the government and the economic system. We are the answer to the world problems today. We are not to judge. On the other hand we also do not have the privilege of cocooning or being isolated. We can't run from the troubles of the world. We must be in the world while remaining unstained by it. Our weapons are not of this world

because our striving and struggle is not of this world. Our struggle is against powerful unseen places and principalities! Listen to these words written by Paul to the church in Corinth that speaks to this very truth:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NLV)

It is true. We live in a body of flesh, but we do not fight like people of the world. ⁴ We do not use those things to fight with that the world uses. We use the things God gives to fight with and they have power. Those things God gives to fight with destroy the strong-places of the devil. (*Light and Truth defeats lies, Life defeats murder and Love defeats the thief of hearts*) ⁵ We break down every thought and proud thing that puts itself up against the wisdom of God.

Our mission is what we do and our Marks are the tools by which we win the war. Not the way the world does it but by sacrifice and love and grace and mercy and light and hope and life and peace and obedience and truth. These are swords of the Spirit, the very word of God!

John Piper, retired pastor (2013) of Bethlehem Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota preached a four part sermon with the following titles:"

The danger: perishing
The design: love
The duty: believing
The destiny: life

Prayer

Discussion Questions:

Have you had any further thoughts about the 4Cs Mission Statement . . . "**Love God, Love Others and Advance the Kingdom Together?**" Does it encourage you or does it challenge you? What part of this mission statement captures your imagination?

Dave spoke at church of the idea of the **Mark of a Christian** and he suggested that for 4Cs we long for our mark to be ones of **Life, Light and Love**. Can you think of someone who left their mark on you? In a word how would you describe that *mark* on your life?

"God is Life." Jesus said he came to give us life and that abundant. Have you experienced the abundant life in Christ? What does that look like for you? How would you tell someone else how to experience abundant life in Christ?

"God is Light." Dave mentioned that light and truth can be terms that are used interchangeably? Do you agree with that? What do you think it means for the Word to be a "light unto our path"? How about the idea that we can *light up a room* or someone's life? Is that the kind of Light that Jesus is or is it different than that? When you ask Jesus to *shed his light on you*, what does that mean to you?

"God is Love." Dave spoke of the third Mark of the 4Cs Christian as being **love**. Is that too big an idea to serve us in self-identifying with Christ? What about the idea of *love* being spelled **SACRIFICE**; do you think that is a fair definition? How about O B E D I E N C E/ is that a better word picture for you?

Dave talked about being engaged in the battle for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Is that a good challenge for you or for you - not so much? Below is a blog from the internet that is challenging reading along the same subject. Read it together and discuss what you want to be engaged in in 2016.

I Should be Engaged

I want to be engaged this year. As of yesterday I've been on this earth for more than twenty-three years, and I think it's about time for me to be engaged. I've been asking people on my Home Team what one word they want to hold true for 2016, and when the question was finally reciprocated by my friend Sanford, I couldn't come up with anything. I hadn't found one that quite fit just yet.

I would say seemingly meaningful words aloud to see if their meanings would hold any significance for what I want this next year to be. I rustled up words like depth or rest or value and announced them to myself in the car or in the shower or on my walk to work. Nothing was clicking.

Until I drove to Joshua Tree yesterday morning, and that's when a word so unexpected was whispered into the silence around me: engaged. And I know it's the right word for this next year because it scares me to say it aloud. I knew as soon as I heard it that it wasn't my idea - I'd never ask for something so radical. But as I sit in this snow-covered coffee shop on the side of Bear Mountain, that word keeps repeating itself in my mind to the point that I can feel it making itself at home and warming everything in me like the flat white in my coffee mug.

So for my twenty-fourth year of life I want to be engaged, but it's probably not what you think.

I'm as single as a slice of American cheese right now, which is perfect for me and I prefer it that way. But when I say I want to be engaged, I don't mean I'm looking for a fiancé. I mean I want to be engaged in the sense that I'm mindful of the people and surroundings and culture and the spiritual warfare around me. I want to establish meaningful connections with the person on the other side of my coffee mug or in the booth across from me at dinner or in the passenger seat of my car. I want to lean in and connect with the stories being told. I want to actively console the sorrows being shared. I don't want to go through conversations absentmindedly anymore. Because after two decades of being distracted by tomorrow and by my phone and by what's happening in my peripheral, it's about time I was engaged fully in these moments.

I just finished *A Hobbit A Wardrobe and A Great War* by Joseph Loconte. It's a book about J.R.R. Tolkien's friendship with C.S. Lewis and how the events of WWI shaped their views on life, transformed their writing, and grew them together as best friends. I came across a quote in one of the last chapters from Lewis about what true friendship is and he says,

"You will not find the warrior, the poet, the philosopher or the Christian by staring into his eyes as if he were your mistress: better to fight beside him, read with him, argue with him, and pray with him".

I don't think we'll ever be fully engaged in the lives of others by staring at them through Instagram or Snapchat or by stalking their musical tastes on Spotify (all of which I'm fully guilty). I think engagement happens when we turn off our phones and laptops and TVs and fight beside the people we love and want to know more.

It happens when we sit together in the silence of reading or doing a puzzle together or in the gentle murmur of prayer for one another. I want to be engaged with this planet in my next year of life. I've already explored some of the most incredible landscapes in the past few months of living in California, but it's only one state and I have the world at my fingertips. So do you.

But if we never take the time to stick up for ourselves, to ask our employers for time away to rest and leave our cubicles and occupy our bodies and minds with the waterfalls and mountains and deserts and cobblestone streets of this planet, are we really living? I want to engage in other cultures and environments and languages in this next year. I want to encounter more new places and faces than sticking to the social norms would allow. More than that, I want to engage in the invisible war that's taking place over the souls of the people around me.

I want to be locked and loaded with an arsenal of grace and truth and boldness to bring the good news of hope into the lives that intersect mine. I want to be fully aware of God's presence in every moment and not as much like Jacob who woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I didn't know it!"

John 1:10-11 says, "[Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him."

I don't want to be one of His own who is too busy or distracted or preoccupied to recognize his presence in every moment. I heard a pastor once say, "The holiest moment in life is the one happening right now," and I think he's absolutely correct. Because the enemy has quietly and viciously crept into this world and distracted us with empty connections and excuses of worrying about tomorrow.

C.S. Lewis portrays this in [The Screwtape Letters](#). The antagonist Screwtape maliciously states, "*The present is the point at which time touches eternity...It is far better to make [humans] live in the Future. Biological necessity makes all their passions point in that direction already, so that thought about the Future inflames hope and fear. Also, it is unknown to them, so that in making them think about it we make them think of unrealitie.*"

If I want to be engaged in the holiest of moments, if I want to live fully aware of the battle taking place for the weary, helpless souls around me, tomorrow can (responsibly) worry about itself.

It's a new year, I'm another year older, and I want nothing more than to be engaged. Will you be engaged with me? Will you spend more time being present in the present and interacting with the current landscape and giving the enemy a good dose of his own fear as your heart and mind sync up with these points in time that touch eternity? I think life looks better engaged, regardless of whether there's a ring involved or not.

Because we have a God who's engaged and none of us did anything to deserve his fullness in every moment. Stop for just a second and hear Him gently whisper, "wake up to the life around you, my child. Awaken your senses to the people and places and my presence in this life, and I will wrap you up in light."

<http://corinnerogero.com/2016/01/08/i-should-be-engaged/>, posted on [January 8, 2016](#) by [E. Corinne Rogero](#)