

The Rock: 02-28-2021

Annual meeting message

First reading: None this week

Title: Where do we go from here?

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16

Theme:

Honest self-assessment is the hardest thing to do, but is essential if we to grow forward in the way God has called us

Introduction:

A preacher once said that there are three ways to look at how a church functions:

First: The bottle-neck church

Second: The bus-ride church

Third: The orchestra church

As we take a break from Philippians this morning for our annual meeting weekend, I want us to take time to look at who we are and where we are going. I want to talk about our future.

It has been almost one year to the day since I came to talk to you about the unity of the body, as you were, with Lisa

and I were trying to find what God had for all of us.

I walked us through the first three chapters, looking at a couple of verses a chapter, bringing us into chapter four where Paul lands on how we are to walk and live out the plans and purposes of God.

As a Church, we have one mission (to reach people for Jesus), doing that through the one message (The Gospel).

If the Church isn't doing these two things, they aren't a church, that isn't harsh, it's simply true.

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"

-Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV

It is never "the what" a church is, that's the problem, it's always the "how". How do we become and actually be the people of God -His church here, right now in our time, place and culture?

Now that's the hard part. I say that because of God's sense of humor, because

that drives me to look at the real sense of God's purpose of using broken people to reach broken people.

Now, maybe that's not funny to you, but it is to me, because I know me and well, I'm amazed He can accomplish anything with this piece of work.

But, that's us! The Church, and that's why I understand God's humor, because each year as I age, I understand myself better, and wonder how and why He decided I was the man for this job.

One of the hardest things about growing forward and into the new thing -CHANGING- is understanding our past in such a way that never keeps us there, but instead drives us forward into the future.

The Story:

Where do we go from here? Who are we? Why do we exist? These are not just question's I toss into the air. But, looking at The Rock and the people (you) who are the church, answering those questions is the vision piece of our existence.

The Bottle neck church:

What does that mean? How does that function and look? Well, pretty much like

it sounds, a bottle neck. Brilliant, I know.

It's kind of like an unhealthy version of "the buck stops here". One person, typically the pastor runs absolutely everything. All decisions, directions and meetings have to have that person deciding and being there in order to validate and approve things.

The church, in effect is locked down and only moves as that one person allows. The problem, and there's a lot of them, but the biggest issue is the church is limited.

It's limited in its ability and capacity to do much of anything, and too often ministry and growth, if they happen at all, goes at the pace of one.

That's not healthy, and it's not Biblical.

Then you've got: **The bus-ride church**

Now remember, I'm not making these up, these are just different types of church styles and ways they function. Very helpful as a picture for us to #1 -figure out where we are in this line of thinking and #2 -helps us to know what we are to tackle and to fix AND leave behind as we grow forward into our future.

The bus-ride church is that church that is well, a bus. All the people are on it with only a few potential drivers. It sounds good, and it is, until it isn't. The minute you don't like the direction the driver took.

Then the complaints start, nobody wants to drive the bus mind you because they have been told they can't or more often is the case, they are quite comfortable in their seat just complaining about the where it's going and the how it's getting there.

Really seems unproductive, both of these models, don't they? They ought to because they are! They actually sound an awful lot like the culture, a lot of dis-unity, lack of focus and working together, a lot of unhappiness.

In both of these models -there ends up being a lot of complaining about a lot of things, and a lot of work being done by only a few people.

Listen, this isn't just the church culture, it is culture in general. The most successful people and businesses never function in either of these ways. Those that do struggle to find themselves and any type of sustained success.

So, "NORMAL", whatever that is, becomes what we accept. It's true in our lives, our work, our families, and yes here in our church. This is very practical and applicable to everyday life.

But what is normal? When we say we want to get "back to normal", what do we really mean, and do we really want that?

I ask, because we really need to ask: "What, beyond a setting on your washing machine, is and was our normal?"

From that point of reference, is there anything we bring forward into our new reality as we change? The answer is yes and no. That's what makes the whole deal so hard.

The hard work of ministry. Building a community of believers from all walks of life, with all kinds of gifts, and yes, all kinds of opinions. Directing all of that in such a way that the Bible itself comes alive in the life of each believer.

Any of you ever see the video of the wedding band where the drummer in the background looks like he belongs in Twisted Sister, but is backing Frankie Valli and the four seasons.

He's on the back of the platform playing in his own world while the rest of the band does their own thing. It's actually

funny to watch, and yet at the same time it's a train wreck in the making.

You see, a band, or **orchestra** working and playing in harmony means that unless there is a momentary solo, no one instrument really stands out, the music is played beautifully.

Each instrument has its part, AND each is essential for the piece being played to work and sound just as it is written.

If one instrument goes rogue in the woodwind section, or another brass piece decides they ain't showing up because their part is so small, the whole thing begins to unravel.

Someone gifted at drums, shouldn't be playing the piccolo. And the tuba dude shouldn't be playing the violin.

The church functions best when we understand this. - and it really has two parts to play in the world God has set us down in:

1- Mission

- a. Make disciples
- b. Baptize people
- c. Teach them about Jesus

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

-Matthew 28:18-20 ESV

2- Message

- a. That Jesus died for our sins
- b. He was buried
- c. He rose again
- d. He ascended
- e. Lots of people saw said dead guy very much alive

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”

-1 Corinthians 15:3-6 ESV

That’s our mission and our message. With that we understand that an orchestra always has a director, not because that person is fat-headed or anything of the

like, but because that happens to be their calling and gifting.

This is Bible 101. For some, it may seem old hat and been there done that. But we must understand the culture and understand the church in 2021.

We are so post-modern, that we are pre-Christian, and inside the church consumerism and culture have started to determine how the church actually teaches the Scriptures.

So, to quote Vince Lombardi - This is a football. You want to win championships and be the best, start with and understand the basics.

A healthy church is a healthy orchestra - and God has put us all together -again His humor! He loves us and saw fit to put us here.

And He sets us up for success. He doesn't want us to fail-but that success happens in a certain way:

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of

the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

-Ephesians 4:11-16 ESV

A couple of things I want to focus on, because FOR ME, I want to make life-long followers of Jesus.

To disciple people who then disciple other people, like the Philippian church. I want to do this because that's God's assignment for me -and also for you.

God gave these people Paul lists, and today the pastor/ teacher seems to be primary. Not ego, it just seems Biblical as it has worked out.

Along with the elders /leaders of the local church -our (my) job in this orchestra is not to sing, thankfully, but to equip. (Re-read versel2)

Why? Because when people are equipped (discipled), they are then launched into ministry here at the Rock, doing some form of serving -in order to build each other up. Then into the wider culture where you work and function.

Now, I'm going to admit to you, that I and the elders here need to be and are working on ways to make this process better and clearer. What do I mean? To make clearer how you can get involved, to make the path better to be able to do that and why it's important.

Mapping out next steps for you to use your gifts and grow in Christ. Things like:

- Membership and why that is important.
- What can I do, and when can I start?
- What would be my responsibilities and who will walk with me?

That's our task, starting with me. That is teaching, making disciples and equipping you. Freeing you up to fulfill your role here to the best of your ability.

Now, I have discovered a long time ago that the "accepted norms" can be and usually are a dangerous thing. For

example: 10% of the people do 90% of the work. That's just the way it is.

The problem with that is, I am stubborn and perhaps foolish enough to ask WHY? Why do we have to accept that as the norm?

In doing so, we actually lower the standards to something other than a Biblical community. In other words, it doesn't have to be that way, we are simply settling for it.

As a church, a community of believers, I want our number one priority to be: The Bible is my guidebook for life.

That drives us to always be better, because God's grace in Jesus makes us better -if we step into it. That's why, my primary task on Sunday's is to open this book and teach the book.

That grows life-long followers of Jesus who are discipled into wanting to make other life-long followers of Jesus.

In other words, reaching the lost with a clear understanding of why we know God wants them to be found, and once found how it is, we help in that journey to making them whole.

A healthy church is an orchestra church - Paul, although he doesn't use that

analogy, is saying that here in Ephesians:

- We can attain unity
- We grow into maturity
- We are no longer kids tossed about and confused by the shifting winds of culture
- We speak the truth in Love
- We all grow up into Christ as a healthy group of people -The Church.

Then the culture sees a group of people who are different, and we see ourselves as different and growing together as a community, we act different.

Always looking to be dynamically engaged with the culture and at the same time remaining uniquely different from the culture.

A healthy church looks at that 10-90 principle and says: That can't be the accepted norm. All of us have been put here by God and have a vital role to play in the future of The Rock.

What is it LORD you have for me, and how can I step into it?

Throughout this year we are going to be recruiting, and asking you to not just be prayerful, but to be active -if you aren't already, in growing forward.

I am promising you is that I will do my part, at times as uncomfortable as that will make us, in order to provide, to equip and to help us grow together.

Answering some questions like:

- Why membership is important
- Why it takes all of us to make this work
- What we need to be in the culture we now find ourselves in.

Just like it takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian, it takes the whole body of Christ to make a healthy community of believers and a balanced orchestra, playing the tune of the Gospel in a way that attracts those who have yet to hear it.