

VISION

LOOKING FORWARD

Vision Sunday

1. New Address. Same Assignment.

Nothing about our heart is changing. The only thing changing is our address.

SUMMARY

A building does not make the church. God does. Paul called a church that owned no property God's building, which means a new room cannot change who we are or what God told us to do. What stays the same is everything that matters. Our vision, our mission, teaching and fellowship and communion and prayer, preaching the whole Word, speaking truth in love, being unapologetically led by the Holy Spirit, and living out the fruit that proves the root.

COMMENTARY

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to a church that was fracturing over which leader people followed. One group claimed Paul, another claimed Apollos. Right in the middle of that argument he stops naming leaders and names them instead. You are God's field. You are God's building. He was not describing a place they owned, because they did not own one.

Notice where Paul was standing in Acts 17. He was in Athens, on Mars Hill, surrounded by some of the most impressive religious architecture in the ancient world. In a city built out of temples he said God does not live in any of them. That was not an insult to beautiful buildings. It was a correction about where God actually dwells.

One thing easy to miss in Galatians 5. Fruit is singular. Paul did not list 9 fruits to choose from, as if a person could be strong on joy and just skip patience. It is one fruit with 9 expressions, all growing off the same root. That is exactly why the gifts get the headlines but the fruit proves the root.

1 Corinthians 3:9 (NKJV)

For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

TALK ABOUT IT

Has your sense of being the church been tied more to a place or to people?

What does being led by the Spirit look like in an ordinary week for you, not just in a service?

Which of the 9 expressions of the fruit is God putting His finger on in you right now?

2. A bigger table means room for more.

We're not getting a bigger place so we can look bigger. We're getting a bigger table so more people can taste the love of Jesus.

SUMMARY

The servant in Jesus' story came back and said there is still room, and the master answered by sending him out to compel people in. A room holds people, but a table makes family, and God places the lonely in families. So we reach farther and go deeper at the same time. Nobody owns a chair here, because we would rather give up our comfort than somebody else's soul.

COMMENTARY

The word compel is stronger than an invitation. It carries the sense of urging somebody past their own resistance, and there is a reason it had to be that strong. The people out in the highways and hedges were the poor and the overlooked, the ones who would have assumed a banquet like that was not for people like them. A polite invitation would not have moved them. Somebody had to go press past the shame and bring them in.

Isaiah 54:2 is two commands, not one. Lengthen the cords is reach. Strengthen the stakes is depth. A tent that gets wider without deeper stakes will not stand through the first real wind. That is the danger of growth without community, and it is why a bigger room full of strangers was never the goal.

Paul wrote Philippians 2 from a prison cell, to a church that had a real conflict running between two women in it. His fix was not a new rule. It was a posture. Count the other person as more important, then go look at their interests too. It costs something every time, which is the point.

Luke 14:22-23 (NKJV)

²² And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room." ²³ Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

TALK ABOUT IT

The master said compel them, not invite them. Who is God bringing to mind, and what would compelling look like this week?

Reach or depth. Which one are you personally better at, and what would growing the other one cost you?

Is there anything at church you have quietly started treating as yours? What would holding it open look like?

3. We are (Re)presenting the King.

Excellence isn't vanity. It's worship with the details.

SUMMARY

If the world will put on a first class production for a product that fades, the church can bring our best for the King who never will. That is why the details matter, and none of it is about our own preference. Paul became all things to all men to save some. The King came to serve rather than be served, so His house serves with gladness. And the aim is never for people to be impressed with us. It is for them to look past us and see Him.

COMMENTARY

Look at what Jesus was answering in Mark 10:45. James and John had just come to Him asking to sit at His right hand and His left. They wanted the best seats in the house, and His answer was not a seating chart. It was a towel.

Psalms 100:2 is worth reading in two translations. The NKJV says serve the LORD with gladness. The NLT says worship the LORD with gladness. Same verse. That is not a translation problem, it is the point. What we call serving, God calls worship.

The first person Scripture says was filled with the Spirit of God was Bezalel in Exodus 31, and God filled him for craftsmanship. Not for preaching. For gold, silver, bronze, and carved wood.

Excellence is not a modern church idea. And when the queen of Sheba finally saw what Solomon built, it took her breath, but she did not leave praising Solomon. She left blessing his God. That is the entire aim of doing things well.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV)

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

TALK ABOUT IT

The queen left blessing Solomon's God instead of Solomon. What would need to change for people to leave talking about Jesus rather than about us?

Excellence says bring your best. Perfectionism says your best is never good enough. Which voice have you been listening to, and where did it come from?

Who in your life is waiting on a better picture of Jesus than the one they have been handed?

SOAP

One passage a day. Write out what you see, what it asks of you, and what you are asking God for.

Day 1

Scripture:

1 Corinthians 3:9 (NKJV)

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.

Observation. What is actually happening here, and what stands out?

Application. What does this ask of me this week?

Prayer.

Day 2

Scripture:

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Observation. What is actually happening here, and what stands out?

Application. What does this ask of me this week?

Prayer.

Day 3

Scripture:

Luke 14:22-23 (NKJV)

And the servant said, "Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room." Then the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

Observation. What is actually happening here, and what stands out?

Application. What does this ask of me this week?

Prayer.

Day 4

Scripture:

Philippians 2:3-4 (NKJV)

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Observation. What is actually happening here, and what stands out?

Application. What does this ask of me this week?

Prayer.

Day 5

Scripture:

Colossians 3:23 (NKJV)

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.

Observation. What is actually happening here, and what stands out?

Application. What does this ask of me this week?

Prayer.

Save a seat. Take your place. Pray them in.

Love like Jesus, speak the truth, and let grace do the rest.