

Brandywine Together- Pt. 1: God's Plan A...There is no Plan B!

9/9/18

"I love Jesus, but I don't like the church. If the church just got out of the way more people would start following Jesus." This is what I used to tell people as a younger Christian. My angst with the church was a mixture of some bad experiences, a deeply independent spirit that eschewed authority, and some half-baked theological views. Maybe you can relate.

I believe we are living in a time when many people who claim the name Christian have a casual, disengaged, dysfunctional relationship with the local church. Many associate with Jesus while consciously disassociating themselves with church. Pew and Barna research, Church involvement and membership is on the decline. Church is whatever I want it to be, I can have church by myself, listening to podcast, out in nature, or on Youtube in my pajamas...I don't have to gather with others... I can do it myself. I don't have to be meaningfully engaged with a particular group of people in a location called the local church in order to be a faithful follower of Jesus. Is that true? As I studied the Bible, God radically changed not only my view of the church, but began to heal wounds and replace them with a love for the church...for all of its people...even the really difficult ones!

What I am trying to do this morning, and throughout this short series as we look to the Fall is to expand our vision, passion for and personal engagement in the Church. That as we encounter God's vision and heart for the church through the Word, that we would be inspired and encouraged to say, "I want to be vitally and meaningfully committed to what God is doing in and through the Church", particularly this local outpost of the Global Church that God has you in called Brandywine Valley Baptist Church. Our outline today:

- 1) Jesus' Plan for His Church
- 2) Jesus' Passion for His Church
- 3) Jesus' Priorities for the Local Church

1) Jesus' Plan for His Church

Let's take a look at the first time Jesus ever spoke about the church.

Read **Matthew 16:18-19** In response to Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah.

18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it.

19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Illustration: football coach. Here in Matthew 16, on an obscure hillside in Israel 2000 years ago, Jesus huddled his disciples together to reveal his game plan. **The Church is my Plan A and there is no Plan B. Break!** Guess what? He was right and the Plan worked!

Entire empires, made up of hundreds of millions of people, that were thought to be permanent fixtures, like the Roman Empire, have come and gone, just rubble and ruins. And here we are as the church 2000 year later. We gather here together on Sunday along with millions of other churches around all four corners of the globe. Why have we outlasted empires? Why are we still seeing lives changed and new generations coming to know Jesus? Why will the church prevail until the end of the age when Christ returns? Go back to the text we read- **and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it.** Who is building it? Who is sustaining it from generation to generation? Who is reviving it? Who is empowering it? Who is protecting it? None other than Jesus Christ himself. This is his job description in Heaven...

God in his sovereign decree, in eternity past, chose the church to be his representatives in the world and even beyond the world into the heavenly realms. Ephesians 3:10 God purposed that the church display the manifold wisdom of God to the universe. In other words, You want to know what God is like, go to the local church for a demonstration and a declaration of who God is and what he has done. **The church is like the prongs of the ring that hold up the diamond that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the world to see.**

2) Jesus' Passion for His Church

- He calls the church his radiant bride whom he loves and sacrificed himself for her (Ephesians 5:25)
- He calls the church his family (Ephesians 2:19)
- He calls the church his temple, the place he dwells (Ephesians 9:22)
- His own body (Ephesians 1:22-23)
- His flock that he tenderly cares for (1 Peter 5:1-5)
- He calls us his inheritance (Ephesians 1:18).

If the church is beloved, if the church is the apple of Jesus' eye, if it is front and center for Jesus. If it is central to the plan of God...ought it not to be central to our lives? Shouldn't we speak of the church with love and look to see the beauty in it?

Derek Webb- The Church lyrics

I have come with one purpose
To capture for myself a bride
By my life she is lovely
By my death she's justified
I haven't come for only you
But for my people to pursue
You cannot care for me with no regard for her
If you love me you will love the church

3) Jesus' Priorities for the Local Church

I make the distinction between Global and Local church here. The Global or Universal Church is more general in Scripture, used to describe every Christian, everywhere throughout all history.

But there is also the local church. In fact, the vast majority of references in the NT are talking about the local church.

The questions we want to ask and answer are what is the local church and what should it be doing?

A group of followers of Jesus in a location who commit together to: 1) Regularly meet together for worship 2) Help each other grow in faith and love 3) Prayerfully partner together to advance the gospel.

Priorities for the local church

Regularly meet together for worship (Know Him)

If you read your Bible this shouldn't surprise you. Book of Acts, they gathered regularly to worship. Sometimes daily. In the NT church- started meeting Sundays, because Jesus rose on that day. Outside of very rare circumstances, like frontier evangelism, the NT doesn't conceive of individual Christians outside of vital connection to and regular gathering with local church. Even then they were always sent in teams by who? The local church!

What did they do when they met?

1) Heard the preaching of the Word- Act 2:42- Teaching and preaching of Gospel and God's Word.

2) Read God's Word- 1 Timothy 4:13, Timothy- Devote to public reading of Scripture.

3) Sang together, Word of God- Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs- Colossians 3:16-17

4) Observed Ordinances- Baptism, Matthew 28:18-20, Lord's Supper 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

5) Prayed Together- 1 Timothy 2:1-7 Instructions for prayers

Preach the Word, Read the Word, Sing the Word, See the Word, Pray the Word

These are the same things we do when we gather 2000 years later. Why? Because it's in the Word. If you aren't a Christian, you need to know that we believe this Bible is a really, really big deal. This isn't, "Let's do what is popular, let's do whatever Nate says, or whatever people want to fund." We want to find out what it says and look to understand and apply this in our lives, fully surrendered to it, and allow it to shape what we do here. And isn't this exactly what our soul needs? We need to sing together and encourage each other with the word because we are prone to wander, easily forget and get discouraged.

And isn't this why Hebrews 10:25 says,

Do not forsake meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.

This isn't a cult, not the mob. Vacations, etc. Exhort you to make it a priority because we need you and you need us. Commend those who are faithful.

2) Intentionally help each other grow in their faith and love. (Grow in Him)

Heb. 10:24-25- Listen to the intentionality in this.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Cruise- Lots of buffet, chillax, no work. Being on a naval warship is more like the church.

Ephesians for- Building up of the body of Christ

God wants every member of the local church to roll up their sleeves and get busy doing Heb.

10:24-25. Have you thought about how you can encourage others this week? Someone struggling? Pray for them? Stimulate love and good works? Heart to disciple them?

Now we primarily structure this at BVBC through our classes and small groups. Next week we have connect fair. And Pastor Todd is going to do a whole message on why and how to connect in the body of Christ for mutual spiritual progress.

3) Prayerfully Partnering together to advance the gospel (Go with Him)

Now you may not be a Christian or don't have a tight understanding of what we mean by the word Gospel. The gospel is the heart of Christianity. The theme of the whole Bible. The good news of what God has done to take people who are far from him, near to him. Our rebellion has caused a breach between him and God, every person in the world. Live as if God doesn't exist. We haven't submitted to him, loved him, live with our own rules. This has earned us eternal separation from him. And he is holy and just. But God did something to change this, something we were incapable of doing. Sent Jesus, God in the flesh, live perfectly, die a death he didn't deserve, raise to life. Paid for your rebellion, all your sin, substitute. All who look to Jesus will be forgiven and saved for eternity. He did this because God loves people. And then you also get a community to do life with- the church.

Philippians 1:27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence,

I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together side-by-side, for the faith of the gospel.

"Striving side-by-side for the faith of the gospel", military language. Like soldiers in the battlefield in defense of the gospel and the display of the gospel in word and deed. Character and conduct because it tells the world what God is like! They will know you are Christians by your love for one another. How we resolve conflict, how we care for one another. What will the world learn about God when they look at our lives together as a church? If we are loosely and casually involved, doesn't tell the truth about God. We would support one another as you are looking to share Christ with co-workers, friends, family members

Conclusion (Slide)- Go back to that hillside in Israel with those ragtag group of disciples hearing the game plan of the church for the first time. Can you imagine what that must have been like to hear those words that afternoon, in the shadow of the Roman empire? I mean, if anything was an unstoppable force wouldn't it have been the Roman Empire...one of the largest, longest

lasting, wealthiest, and powerful empires in human history? And Peter? The disciples? Couldn't Jesus have at least found some movers and shakers? Some people of religious prowess, influence and education? And yet, Jesus says- I will build my church. He was right! The early church turned the known world upside down, from town to town, city to city. Jesus' words were not just for the early church, they are for Brandywine! Why not us? Why not now?

Now is the time to get engaged because God's Spirit is on the move here. We are numerically growing, people are coming to salvation, 18 baptisms, in September last year we challenged you to take stewardship of your resources seriously, to faithfully give to the church- many of you responded to that 600k above budget giving, and the vast majority of this is going to paydown debt...and I want to encourage us to continue this momentum, to catch vision of aggressively paying down our debt, eventually paying off our debt so that we can be unleashed to have the resources to fund these three priorities...ministry in our community- West Center City, Marriage and Family Ministry, Addictions... God's Plan A...there is no plan B...are you in the game?

[Watch this video.](#)