

# *Engage the Vision*

## *Matthew 16:13-20*

### *White River Christian Church*

#### **OPENING: I Have a Dream**

[roll video of Martin Luther King, Jr. speech]

-On \_\_\_\_\_, Martin Luther King, Jr stood in the shadow of the Abraham Lincoln monument in Washington DC and drew a beautiful picture of a preferred future that he shared as a dream

-In the wake of a country that was being torn apart at the seems due to racial prejudices, this dream capture the attention and imagination of people from all races because it issued a rallying cry for things to be different and better in the future

-It elicited emotions from all across the world: fear, panic, joy, angst, doubt, and hope

-We stand here in 2009, \_\_ years removed from the announcement of this dream and we can speak to the tangible evidence we see of this dream becoming a reality

-no longer do blacks and whites sit in different sections, ride different busses, go to different schools, drink from different fountains, or eat in different restaurants

-And while there's still much more room to explore in the fulfillment of this dream, the influence and progress made towards this dream becoming a reality is undeniable

-Have you ever had a dream?

-Not just a unconscious moment experienced while in a sleeping condition

-But rather a notion, impression, or call that demanded your full attention, conjured up emotion to the degree you might never have felt before, and warranted sharing this dream with someone else because you were captivated by the potential of it's fulfillment?

-getting married (every little girl's fantasy, and every young couples passion)

-having a family (the desire of many young couples, especially potential mothers)

-type of vocation (children are being asked earlier and earlier to consider their future vocation and if not discouraged, often have big dreams and lofty ideals of how they could find significance and make an impact in the world around them)

-experience or opportunity (many people consider how different life would be if only they could climb to the summit of a mountain, explore the depths of the ocean, take a vacation without the kids, win the lottery, or be elected and promoted to a different place in society)

-What do you dream about?

[funeral home director, hears on the way to summer camp, summer 2003]

-This morning I'd like for us to take a look at another familiar picture of a preferred future that another dominant figure in history shared with the world

-Turn with me to **MATTHEW 16:13-18** (pg \_\_\_\_)

## JESUS' VISION DEFINED

- As Jesus conversed with his followers in this setting, he made a strong proclamation about the future
- Jesus envisioned a day when His followers would become a force to be reckoned with
- Can't you just imagine Jesus looking off just past Peter's eyes and into the distance as he envisioned what the future would look like for His Kingdom and His followers?
- What was Jesus' vision/dream when he envisioned the church?
- First, we have to understand the origin of the word Jesus chooses and is translated church
- so often we picture the church as bricks and mortar, carpet and pews, lights and music, programs and ministries
- Jesus didn't have these things in mind when he envisioned the future existence of his followers

### When Jesus pictured the church, he saw you and me!

- The word "ekklesia" that Jesus uses in this statement of vision refers to an assembly of people, a congregation of believers
- When Jesus spoke of the church, he was thinking of people!
- He was making a powerful statement of declaration about how He saw the future
- He pictured a collection of individuals who had some common attributes that He had spent His ministry on earth describing

- **character focused** (sermon on mount, fulfill the law)

- Jesus' first sermon spoke of the type of people that represented the Kingdom of God
- Those who thought they were Godly in Jesus day had placed their focus on activity more than character
- The law had created great practitioners but not great disciples
- The Sermon on the Mount recorded in the Gospels (**Matthew 5-7**) gives a clear definition of the type of person Jesus saw when He dreamed about the church
- His followers were not the law abiding religious, but radically devoted disciples that were emulating the heart, mind, and soul of their leader
- Jesus confirms that with many clear statements throughout Scripture:  
*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*
- Jesus dreamed of a gathering of people who were more focused on being than doing
- His desire was for His followers to emulate His presence not His practice
- His dream was of character not commotion

- **focused on meeting the needs of others**

- Jesus announced his vision for the church after first proclaiming his mission
- Remember his visit to the synagogue in Nazareth shortly after his baptism and temptation
- He declared His purpose in coming to earth and the fulfillment of the prophecy about him **LUKE 4:16-19**

-He lived out this mission as he went from town to town, place to place, healing the sick, raising the dead, loving the outcast, embracing the poor  
-And his challenge to his followers was to do likewise  
-Jesus pictured a day when people would recognize his followers by the love they had for others

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35*

#### ▪ **prayer dependent**

-One of Jesus' most intentional teachings throughout his ministry was on prayer  
-He not only modeled but instructed his disciples how to pray  
-His life demonstrated the power and practice of prayer, indicating that the type of people who would follow after him would also be completely dependent on the practice of prayer and believe in its power

*"Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'" Matthew 20:21-22*

[Tim and Charles, Whitney King]

#### ▪ **true worshippers**

-In an encounter with a woman with a sorted past, Jesus defined another dimension to the picture he had of his followers in the future  
-She questioned him on the traditions she had come to understand and witnessed being practiced by various groups and wondered which the correct approach to worshipping God was  
-Jesus cleared up her confusion with a picture of what he envisioned of those who desired to draw near to God

*"The time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24*

-Jesus' picture of his followers in the future included an understanding that worship has little to do with tradition, liturgy, style, or order of service, but rather is centered on an embracing of the spiritual dimension of God and authenticity and transparency of the inner self before Him

-What happens on the outside as an act of worship is a direct correlation to the inner self's dependency and devotion to God

-it should manifest itself daily and without dependence on preference

#### ▪ **unified**

-Jesus was a prayer warrior and His most passionate prayers were often on behalf of his followers asking God to unite them as one

-John records one of Jesus' prayers for unity in John 17

-Listen to what Jesus prays **JOHN 17:20-23**

-Jesus pictured a day when His followers were be one in heart, spirit, and purpose because of the love of God living inside them

[wrcc value of unity, elders prayertime, picture of unity from last Sunday]

#### ▪ **servant leadership**

-Jesus spent his ministry displaying the life of a servant and commissioning his disciples to follow his example

*-“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:25-28*

-Jesus modeled this type of leadership when He washed His disciples feet in the upper room and then commissioned them to “go and do likewise”

[elder/pastor ordination in January, creating culture of servant leadership]

#### ▪ **Unswerving Faith**

-Jesus pictured His followers would have an unquenchable faith in Him and the power to bring His Kingdom into reality

-The church is often describe as a flock of sheep with Jesus as the shepherd

-Not a shepherd by any means but understand something about sheep

-When they have complete confidence and trust in their shepherd, they can become fierce and strong, proactive towards a common direction, and protective on one another.

-The picture of sheep as furry, cuddly, pets that are timid and passive is not what Jesus had in mind as the Great Shepherd

-He envisioned a gathering of His followers who were strong, bold, and courageous not because they were capable or invincible, but because of His power and their trust and confidence in him

*“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.” Matthew 11:12*

[quote from Roaring Lambs]

### **JESUS' VISION REALIZED**

-Jesus never doubted His vision would become a reality. And it did

-Immediately following His ascension, the Holy Spirit descended on His followers just as He promised and the church began to advance through his followers

-As we read through the book of Acts, the history of the church, we see the work of God advancing through people just like you and me, who understood the picture Jesus had of his followers and were obedient to His call on their life

**acts 2:42-47**

**acts 4:32-35**

**acts 5:12-14**

**-acts 11:19-26** (church at Antioch, called Christians first)

-The church continued to spread through the pioneer missionary journeys of Paul and others

-And while the history of church is not perfect nor free from moments of utter setback, the progression of Jesus' picture of it continues to become reality more and more

-Fully devoted followers of Jesus have risen to the help make the picture Jesus had of the church become a reality

-And Jesus' words ring true today as we continue to see his Kingdom advance through those who claim Him as Lord and Savior: The Gates of Hell will not prevail against it!

## WRCC Vision

- And we are participating in making Jesus' dream become a reality in our present world
- He continues to build and further his Kingdom by infusing your heart and mine with the dream of what He desires of his followers and for his church
- For the past several months, the leadership of WRCC has been seeking the heart of God for how this church can continue to help fulfill the vision Jesus had of the church
- We've attempted to draw a picture of what His dream looks like in the day and culture we live in and to crystallize His call on our lives as believers living today
- You've had the opportunity to hear some intentionally chosen words that draw a picture of what Jesus' dream looks like to us here at WRCC in our vision statement
- We've posted it on our website, printed it on cards and on the wall, and attempted to share that vision through words and experience so we, individually and collectively, could participate in making Jesus' dream a reality
- So, this morning, I'd like to give you a little quiz
- Pull out your bulletin and turn to the sermon note section on the back
- I'd like for you to take make an attempt at completing the vision statement and filling in the blanks
- Ok, I'll make it a little easier on all of us, let's do it together and outloud

### [WRCC Vision]

*Imagine an authentic gathering of individuals who \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*

*They are captivated by \_\_\_\_\_, motivated by God's love for them, their \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_. They have genuinely been \_\_\_\_\_ by God's grace & love.*

*In the midst of an increasingly shifting culture, they choose to remain \_\_\_\_\_ as they follow \_\_\_\_\_. They are \_\_\_\_\_ givers, truth \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ enhancers, and risk takers that are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ. They \_\_\_\_\_ the lost, \_\_\_\_\_ the found, \_\_\_\_\_ the poor, \_\_\_\_\_ the weak, \_\_\_\_\_ the outcast, and bear each other's \_\_\_\_\_.*

*They consistently remind one another that God's Kingdom is not about their own \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, but all about \_\_\_\_\_. They seek to \_\_\_\_\_ their lives so that others may \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Together they worship and serve, laugh and cry, play and live. Their world is \_\_\_\_\_ because God sent them. Through \_\_\_\_\_ and by \_\_\_\_\_ They are us.*

-Everytime I hear that vision statement I have 2 reactions:

#### 1. I am challenge and motivated to live my life in that way

- I want that to be a description of my life so that my life shines as a bright reflection of my God, my Savior, my Lord
- I want my wife and my children to be loved and lead by a husband and father that made his life count for the cause of Christ
- And I want to part of a gathering of Christ followers who are participating in the redemptive work of God in their community and world, helping Jesus dream of the church become a reality!

## 2. I can't remember all that!

- We've might be slow but we're not stupid
- We just have come to the realization that you might not be able to remember all that too!
- While it draws a beautiful picture of what Jesus has called His church to be, it could be said simpler!
- So, we've really boiled it down to the opening sentence that reflects how Jesus summed up a life fully devoted to God!
- When He was asked to simply define down to the simplest form what God desires of us, Jesus said, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself."* Matt 22:37-40, Mark 12:29-31
  
- So, if you really want to simplify what God has called us to live out as a group of believers in effort to help Jesus' vision of the church become a reality, you can simply say...loving God, loving others
- Those 2 phrases best describe how Jesus lived his life, what he expects of those who follow Him, and a visual from the church that they are devoted to Him
- greatest command, greatest visible sign vision is becoming reality
  - how can you say you love God and not love others (1 John 4:20)
  - anyone who says they're religious must live as Jesus did (1 Jo 2:6)

### Personal Reality

- Here's the kicker: there is no way Jesus dream will become a reality with you accepting His call to follow Him!
- You see, little hand game was wrong: the church is not the building or steeple, it's you!
- Another translation of the word *ecclesia* – "**called ones**"
- The church is a collection of those who have answered the call of Jesus on their lives and are living that call out faithfully, passionately, daily, individually and collectively!
- When Jesus was picturing the church, he saw you!**
- What is required of you personally to make Jesus' dream a reality?
  - **radical commitment**
    - Jesus call is not for the faint of heart or for those who are preoccupied
    - His dream becoming a reality is dependent on people who will place Him first in their life and not look back!
      - "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness..." Matthew 6:33*
  - **LUKE 9:57-62**
    - Jesus is not interested in being 2<sup>nd</sup> to anything in our lives
    - We have so many other things we will commit to before Jesus
      - [Men's Bible Study, Demas, "love the things of this world more than God"]
  - **sacrificial service**
    - Jesus vision of the church demands our hearts and our hands
    - He's counting on us to be His hands and feet, that's the picture He had of the church
    - We get glimpses of this all the time, but still from a small minority of WRCC

-what if everyone of us would, become we are radically committed to Christ, would sacrificially serve those around us

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#### ▪ **intentional investment**

-Research has shown 2 strong trends during this economic cullundrum we've found ourselves in over the last 2 years

- people who have a spiritual aspect in their lives have given \_\_\_ % more to charity than those without a spiritual aspect in their lives
- people, both spiritual and secular, are investing their resource in making a difference

-The Kingdom of God is worth your investment!

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21*

-The heart of Project 3:19 is not about WRCC or Deer Creek

-It's really about you making a intentional investment in the Kingdom of God to help Jesus picture of the church become a reality and keep advancing

-It's about you understanding that it's dependent upon your intentional investment of your time, your talents, your treasure

-And it won't happen with you because **when Jesus pictured the church, he saw you and me!**

#### ▪ **surrendered Lordship**

-Don't miss what Jesus said about the church. He said "I build **my** church"

-Jesus and the whole counsel of Scripture is extremely clear that the church belongs to Jesus

-That's true collectively when it's true individually

-When any of us forget or stray away from the Lordship of Christ in our lives as individuals, the church will often pay the price collectively

-I've been personal witness to the damage done to church, both large and small, when the possession of the church is wrestled with

-And it's never been the music, the carpet color, or the performance of the pastor that is the true root of the issue: it's a heart issue!

-THE VISION WILL COST YOU YOUR LIFE!

-It did for martin luther king, jr

-it did for Jesus

-it will for you

#### **CLOSING: Letter to the Church**

-Jesus penned letters to the church recorded for us in Revelation 1-3

-What would He say to you?

-He's already invited you to let him be your savior

-He's asking you to let him be your Lord

-He wants you to join Him in building the Kingdom and helping the picture He has of the church become a reality

-The world is in a desperate space and in the greatest need of the church being exactly what Jesus pictured it to be and gave His life for it to be  
-You and are responsible for helping that become a reality!