

“A CHURCH’S LIFE WITH VISION”

by Rom A. Pegram (5/29/16)

In speaking about a Midwest church that they had found that finally met their needs, here’s what a couple had to say about the church:

“The church offered great preaching, but we had heard fine teaching elsewhere, too. No, the magnetic quality was *the heartbeat of the church* [*italics mine*]. It was the first time we had encountered a church that was so up front, so clear and so committed to the unique vision God had given to that body.

We became die-hard [attendees of this church] during our tenure in the Midwest because we were drawn by the fact that this was a church filled with people who were living as Christians should. For this group of saints, vision was not an ethereal concept; *it was a way of life*. On more than one occasion, [my wife] and I remarked that we felt as if we had stumbled into Jerusalem in AD 33 and were experiencing the church of Acts 2.”

Isn’t that an incredible statement? Could this person have been speaking about *our* church? Does our church *have* a magnetic quality that would draw others to be a part of our fellowship? Could we be described as the church of Acts, Chapter 2? ‘All good questions, as we look today at what it means to be a church with vision. Let’s take a quick look at what this couple was talking about, as we look at this morning’s scripture and a description of what was going on in Acts, Chapter 2...

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. – Acts 2:43-47 (NLT)

So, that’s what a church with vision looks like! Yes. To be specific, it’s a church full of ‘believers with vision,’ like we described last week...

- people who behave differently—acting out of the mind of Christ,
- people who interact with others differently, never having to wonder about their passions in life—especially the vision that God has given them for life,
- people who produce results differently—in who gets the glory when visionary goals are achieved,
- ... and people who relate to God differently—their relationship with God always being and remaining first and foremost in all that they do and all that they are.

But, besides that, there are some *specific characteristics about churches with vision* that need to be recognized, too. And, we can see these characteristics in this visionary church described in the NT historical book of Acts. First...

THERE IS A SPIRIT OF WONDER & AWE IN THE LIFE OF A CHURCH WITH VISION. Verse 43 says again, “Many miracles and wonders were being done *through* [italics mine] the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe.” You don’t have to wonder if the Spirit of God is present or evident in the life of a visionary church! It’s obvious...

The Early Church—the Church of Acts 2—was a church of vision. Jesus had personally given them the foundation for his vision for the Church before he left. And I want you to look at the Gospel of John with me for just a moment to see that—Chapter 17, verses 20-23. I want you to see what Jesus was praying for ... for the new Church that was being created ... and I also want you to see that his vision was being realized in Acts, Chapter 2—our scripture that we read today. Listen...

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. ²² “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. – John 17:20-23 (NLT)

Can you see how Jesus prayer, here in John, and vision for the Church is realized in Acts, Chapter 2? Can you see that in the description of the Church that we read about in today’s scripture lesson? The Church’s #1 vision and reason for being ... is to convince the world *through their witness* that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God—to witness to that through our corporate actions—how we interact together on a daily basis (not just on Sunday mornings)! Jesus sent his Spirit—the same Spirit that empowered all he did—to walk with the Church throughout all time ... including today!

Regarding the Apostles, because the Spirit of God was *in them*, many miracles & wonders were being seen *through them*. Notice the miracles spoken of here did not happen *to* them, but *through* them. That’s what true miracles do, folks; they happen *through* us—as we pray for others and for their needs; they don’t necessarily happen *to* us... So, how many miracles and wonders have we seen ... together? How many *people’s lives* have changed *through* the ministry of this church? How many *lives of families* have changed *through* the ministry of this church? How has *this church* changed by the Spirit of God in our midst?

Miracles & wonders are still happening today, folks, because of the presence of God in our lives. Acts, Chapter 2, describes the Early Church by saying that ‘everyone was filled with awe.’ When the people of God are one with God—by the power of God’s Spirit, it is an awesome sight indeed! So, *there is a Spirit of awe & wonder in a visionary church*. Secondly...

THERE IS A SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY FOUND IN A CHURCH WITH VISION. They gave whatever they needed ... to see the Church have what it needed ... to minister to anyone in need (vv. 44-45)! Wow, talk about *good stewards*! In light of this scripture, my

question for us this morning would be: *Are we being good stewards of what God has given us to manage, or do we simply have an owner/consumer attitude like the rest of the world?*

One thing I've noticed in visionary churches is that their activity, as a church, is radically different from churches that seek to serve God *without* a vision. The concerns or questions asked of individuals in a visionary church are these: What are we to *do* in this ministry? How are we to *allocate* the resources God has given us? What kinds of relationships are we to *pursue* or invest in?

Many of the characteristics of visionary church activities are associated with *generosity*! For visionary churches (and I'm speaking of the disciples within those churches), *the whole idea of generosity is as natural as breathing!*

- Our *time* is a resource to be used for the Kingdom of God; nothing is more important than using it wisely...
- Our *money* becomes a resource to be used for the Kingdom of God; nothing is more important to those who see *God's* vision for this life...
- Our *relationships*—those we spend time investing in and fostering—are also a means by which God's Kingdom is advanced; nothing is more important than seeing the gift of friendship guided by the hand of God...

And, in all that we are and in all that we do, we become generous people, *not* guided by our own selfish desires, but by the Spirit of God *who helps us to see the needs of others*. This super-natural Spirit of generosity can be seen clearly in the visionary church of Acts 2 ... and others like it today. So, *a spirit of generosity is obvious in the visionary church*. Finally...

THERE IS A TRUE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP IN A CHURCH WITH VISION. People in a church with vision never even think of *not* going to church! What does today's scripture tell us? The people of the Early Church met together; a people of vision will never *stop* meeting together or going to church! That's what a people of true vision *do*; they know where the vision comes from ...and *they want more!* They can't wait to get to church and to gather as the people of God! And, what attitude did they have when they gathered together regularly? They had glad and humble hearts... They enjoyed the good will of all who came, including outsiders (please, hear that clearly). These people of vision—this church of vision—were a people who were *full of joy!* And, folks, that needs to be US, too!

So, how are we comparing ... to the visionary church of Acts, Chapter 2? When people see us 'in action,' is the Spirit of God in our midst obvious? *Are we a people of awe,* because we regularly come into the presence of God together, and see what God is doing in the lives of those in this church ... and the lives of those that this church touches? Is this a place where *generosity*—taking responsibility for making it possible for this church to care for the needs of others—takes precedence? And are we a people who have a true Spirit of Worship eight days a week? *Does gathering together for worship take priority in our lives*—especially over our personal whims, needs, and desires?

Folks, as we close today, pray. Pray, pray, pray... And, ask Jesus if we are an answer to his prayer for the Church ... or are we lacking? If Jesus were to return today, could he say, "Well done, good and faithful servants?" Folks, stay with us, as we continue in the weeks to come ... to learn more about ... and have our eyes opened to ... God's vision for our future! What kind of a church are we going to be?