

Purpose, Vision and Mission
 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, Matthew 28:19
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This morning we are going to look at Purpose, Vision and Mission of the Church. I may just do a message on Purpose and Vision today. And a message on Mission next Sunday.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.
 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

You have probably heard about Rome in the news this week. You may be also aware about how Cardinals gather together to select a new pope after the pope passes away in the Catholic church.

About five hundred years ago, during the protestant reformation, the cardinal Sadolet wanted to bring Protestants and Catholics together. And the reformer John Calvin wrote to this cardinal saying that his life's prime motive was to have a "*zeal to illustrate the glory of God*".

John Calvin had some strong words to say in his letter to the cardinal. Here is an excerpt - "*Rome has destroyed the glory of Christ in many ways – by calling upon the saints to intercede, when Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man; by adoring the Blessed Virgin, when Christ alone shall be adored; by offering a continual sacrifice in the Mass, when the sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross is complete and sufficient, by elevating tradition to the level of Scripture and even making the word of Christ dependent for its authority on the word of man.*" John Calvin

Some say the Protestant Reformation was successful because of the reformers' focus on the glory of God; not tradition; not equating or elevating tradition above Scripture.

What is our purpose as a church? What should you ultimately pursue as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth addresses the issue of idolatry in chapter 10. And in his concluding verses, in verse 31, Paul says do all to the glory of God.

Verse 31 - Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Paul doesn't say "you may do all to the glory of God", or, "try and give glory to God". No, Paul is rather emphatic in the use of his imperative "do". Paul says, "*you must*" do all to the glory of God.

Who is Paul's audience?

When you look at a particular epistle or letter, it's always good to look at the beginning of the letter to see the audience. Here is 1 Corinthians chapter one verse two.

"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours"

Paul addresses the church in Corinth and then using the conjunction "with" all everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So Paul is quite unambiguous in who is pursue the glory of God. The church in Corinth *and* everyone who calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Every church must pursue glory of God.

As I began to work on this message, I just could not help but see how frequently the Old and New Testament speaks about pursuing the glory of God.

So, here are a few places:

- When king David provides building materials for the construction of the temple, here is how he begins his prayer - *"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all"* 1 Chronicles 29:11
- *"Therefore in the east give glory to the Lord; in the coastlands of the sea, give glory to the name of the Lord, the God of Israel."* Isaiah 24:15
- *"Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coastlands"* Isaiah 42:12
- *"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."* Revelation 4:11

The late preacher Charles Spurgeon said that *“To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever’ is the only worthy end of mortal man!”*.

And speaking about the church, Spurgeon said:

“The world is all scaffolding—the Church of Christ is the true building. The ultimate purpose of God is the gathering out of the world as many as He has given unto His Son, Jesus Christ, that they may have eternal life in Him and glorify Him forever...All ministries, therefore, must be subjected to this test—if they do not glorify Christ, they are not of the Holy Spirit” - Charles Spurgeon

Now, if we are able to anything as the church of God, it is only because God has done something in us in Christ – God has called you, forgiven you, reconciled you and put his Spirit in you.

Paul writes this way in Ephesians chapter three verse twenty and twenty-one.

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever” Ephesians 3:20-21

In what ways are we to pursue God’s glory?

- Give primacy to Scripture

John Calvin said that Scripture has its authority from God. I couldn’t agree more. When Jesus was discussing with the Jews about his identity, Jesus points them to Scripture in John 5:39. *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me”*. In John 3:31, Jesus makes quite a staggering statement *“He who comes from above is above all”*.

Our words or tradition do not equal the words of God or Christ. Even when the devil tempted Jesus, Jesus appeals to Scripture by saying, “It is written” three times.

The apostle Paul tells the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthian chapter four verse six to *“not to go beyond what is written”*.

When we say give primacy to Scripture, we also mean that a church ought to preach the teach the whole counsel of God. What do I mean? We teach the whole Bible, the Law of God, the impossibility of keeping the Law, the promised Messiah who kept the Law and fulfilled the Law, the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ and much more.

- Keep the Gospel central

How do we keep the Gospel central? By proclaiming the Person of Jesus Christ – his life, his death and resurrection. Sadly, in some evangelical circles there is this sort of disdain for the proclamation of the Gospel. I have heard some who say we don't preach we just share. Surely you can share your testimony and present the Gospel with others in one-on-one relationship but the New Testament command and pattern has been proclamation or heralding. Those who look down on the imperative of heralding the Gospel simply don't understand the meaning of the words of Christ and apostolic instruction.

- For example, when Christ meets his disciples after his resurrection, Jesus tells them to proclaim the Gospel, “*(Jesus) and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem”* Luke 24:47
- Paul instructed his disciple Timothy to “*preach the word*” 2 Timothy 4:2

We keep the Gospel central by preaching a crucified Christ! Why? When the Lord Jesus Christ prayed his prayer in what is known as the High Priestly, this is what he said, “*Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you*”. We preach Christ crucified because his death brought glory to the Father. There is a glory in death when we live for Christ. Jesus told Peter he was going to die a certain way and Peter's death was going to bring glory to God. (John 21:19).

- Worship God in Jesus name

Jesus said “*those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24). It is the local church that is your place of worship. All the letters in the New Testament were written to local churches, local congregations.

- Unity in the local church

This is a such a key aspect of church life.

How can a church win anyone to Christ if the people in the church are divided? Jesus said that a “divided household falls”. (Luke 11:17). Disunity harms our Gospel witness but unity in love for Christ promotes a healthy Gospel witness.

Paul writes in Romans chapter fifteen verses five and six – “*May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our*

Lord Jesus Christ.” . So unity glorifies God. Conversely, disunity dishonors God.

- Serve others

Another way the church pursues the glory of God is by serving. It is a privilege to follow in the footsteps of our Savior. The Son of Man came not to be served but serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Our serving does not ransom anyone the way Jesus does but our serving ought to point to the Lord of all who came to serve. *“whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”* 1 Peter 4:11

“Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God”
Romans 15:7

We could say a lot more about our purpose or pursuit as a church but these are some reminders.

I want to briefly get to verses 32 and 33 in 1 Corinthians 10 to look at Paul’s aspiration or vision for the church.

³² *Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,* ³³ *just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.* 1 Corinthians 10:31-33

Paul’s strategy is brilliant. He first tells the church to do all for the glory of God in verse thirty one.

But in verse 32 and 33, he balances that high and lofty principle with some practical application.

Live in a way to not put a stumbling block to others. Live for the profit of others.

Don’t become an offense to anyone. Seek not your own advantage but that of many.

We ought to live in a way neither to withdraw from the world not to assimilate into the world or conform to the world’s pattern.

And at the end of verse thirty-three, Paul gives us the purpose clause. This is the vision and aspiration. What does he say? In order that they may be saved.

Notice, Paul does not say, “in order that he can save others”. Paul’s use of the language is very precise. He uses a passive subjunctive. Meaning – the saving is done by God not by Paul. But Paul wants to be used as a means but he himself does not save anybody. And God wants to use you as a means as well.

You have heard what is our church about – “Transforming Neighbors”. That is actually a vision statement. Not a mission statement.

Why? Transforming is something only God does. Proclaiming, teaching, preaching, exhorting, witnessing, evangelizing, appealing, pleading and discipling is what the church does or disciples do. But God does the transforming.

And as we gather a church family, remember God is at work in transforming you.

Two familiar passages as we conclude:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind”

Romans 12:2

You see the way to be transformed is to give your mind to daily and regular renewal.

When the mind is renewed, transformation results and right actions follow.

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

As I close, let me summarize our purpose and vision. Our pursuit as a church is the glory of God. Our vision is transforming neighbors.