



Vision 2016

Message Notes, January 3, 2016

Happy New Year! Many of us are pondering our “resolutions” for 2016 – the desired changes we would like to see in our lives. The tendency is to think *forward*, but effective change begins with looking *backward* – what are the patterns or courses we have been on that have resulted in undesirable conditions or behaviors we want to change? This is the posture we want to begin with as a church – examining our past to see if we have shifted off course in any unhealthy ways.

Moses’ charge to the Hebrews, as they stand at the threshold of the promised land, is a good reminder and model for us. See Deuteronomy 8:10-14, 17-18.

- Remember God’s faithful deliverance and provision
- Remember your tendency to rebel, and to doubt God and rely on yourselves
- Remember God’s discipline to confront your rebellion and draw you back

In crisis, we are quick to turn to God and trust Him; when things improve, we have a tendency to forget and drift from a right posture of surrender, trust and worship.

Pastor Keith senses that, **as a church**, we have been drifting (slightly) off course, settling into more of a rut. He looks first at himself as lead pastor. He recognizes that this has been true for him the past year or so – a drifting from a steady “abiding” posture. Partly because of increased responsibilities, but more than this, simply allowing the myriad daily distractions to squeeze a continual seeking and abiding in the Lord.

A growing church has to continually battle the drift towards institutionalization. This is true for us! It’s vital that we remember our vision, our reason for existing. God called and established us for a specific purpose: **To awaken ordinary people to extraordinary life in Christ-centered community.**

We must realign ourselves to this mission as expressed in the measures of this mission being lived out, that we are, and are becoming:

- *Passionate Lovers of God*
- *Ever-growing Followers of Jesus*
- *Deeply Devoted Brothers and Sister*
- *Generous Stewards of God’s Gifts*
- *Empowered Witnesses in our World*

These are the evidence of the River of God’s Life flowing in and through us as a community of Christ-followers. Keith will be expounding on each of these in the weeks ahead.

Keith reminded us of our “Stop Story”: Years ago, when we were poised to begin building a new facility, God said, *“STOP! Don’t go; stay here for now; you are not ready.”* Many amazing, wonderful things came out of that stopping (for two years!), but the main thing was God teaching us: *“Wait on me. Listen to me. Let me lead you. Don’t follow your bent to do things for me; I am calling you to do things with me.”*



In Revelation 2:2-5, Jesus writes (through the apostle John) to the church at Ephesus. He praises them for many good things, but then he says, "I have this against you – you have forsaken your first love."

Like the Ephesian believers, we can get caught up in doing the right things for the wrong reasons (duty, habit, pride). Love must be our driver. Passionate love for God and compassionate love for each other and the world. We must realign our activities to this heart of love.

Part of this re-alignment is to shift from passive Sunday attendance to engaged participation in the full life of our community – discipleship, relational connection, service, outreach, mission. Every person here is vital and brings something unique to our life together. *You* are needed for our fullness.

As with starting back on an exercise program, our complacent minds and bodies will react at first to getting involved, but if we will press through the resistance, we will find that vitality and joy await us! (Rest assured, our enemy will oppose such renewed commitment to engage in "the extraordinary life of Christ-centered community." This terrifies him.)

How do we overcome the opposition of our own flesh, our culture, our enemy? A survey of the apostles and the early church reveals the answer. They were a people *obsessed with Jesus*! Read over these excerpts: Acts 2:22-24, 32-36, 42-47; 3:3-8, 12-16; 4:7-13, 18-20

May we be such a people. May our obsession with Jesus fuel our devotion. May our love for Jesus compel us. May our faith in Jesus and His gospel invigorate us, not to simply adore and enjoy Him, but to proclaim Him to the world, that *all* might know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Our theme for this year was originally going to be, "Give Me Jesus." But God has given insight that it really needs to be, "Give *them* Jesus." Of course, we can't give what we don't have ourselves, so the first is inherent in the second.

Let's devote ourselves to prayer – for the Holy Spirit to speak to us, stir us up, and steer us back on a strong course of surrender, proclamation and demonstration that will "awaken ordinary people (us and others) to extraordinary life in Christ-centered community."

Happy New Year, indeed!