

Our Vision- Part 1

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 1st Jan 2011

Intro

- If you were asked the question 'What is the most significant speech, or quote of the 20th Century?' what would you reply? Perhaps Churchill 'We will fight them on the beeches' etc. Perhaps the lunar landing 'One small step for a man..' However, perhaps one of the most moving and significant speeches of the 20th Century has to be Martin Luther King in "I Have a Dream" on August 28th, 1963, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in which he called for racial equality and an end to discrimination. It was ranked the top American speech of the 20th century by a 1999 poll of scholars of public address. 46 years later King's words were literally fulfilled when America elected it's first black president Barak Obama.
- As we start a New Year what is your dream? Maybe your dreams have been dashed, maybe hope deferred has made the heart sick. I believe God would have us look afresh today at the dream He has put in our heart, to excite us again to that dream and to give us His strength to make the dream, like King's speech, become a reality.

Read Hab 2:2-4

- Habakkuk had a horrific vision of the Babylonians coming in to destroy nations and questioned God about whether He would allow such a thing to happen. God replied by basically saying 'If I say something is going to happen, it's definitely going to happen, yet those who are righteous will be saved by the ingredient of faith'. Paul refers to this when he says in Romans 'The just shall live by faith' (Rom 1:17). God is basically saying TRUST ME and write down what I say because it will come true. There is something in human nature that believes the bad stuff more than the good. God wants us to be those who dream of His kingdom coming in power despite all oppositions. The bad part of the revelation was fulfilled by the Babylonian exile, but the good part by the return of the exiles, and more fully by the coming of Jesus and the gospel message that we are saved through faith in Christ.
- Hab 2:2 says to write down the vision and make it plain so that he may run who reads it. Although this sounds complex, the Hebrew behind this is 'write it down so it is quick for the readers eyes to run over'- i.e 'write down the vision I give you in a way that is quick and simple to read'. This is what we do when we write out a vision statement.
- This is what we have done with the initials of Brynmawr Family Church. We take the 'BFC' and we incorporate the Church's job description given by the risen Jesus to His Church into these 3 letters. That job description is the Great Commission in Matthew 28:

Read Matthew 28:16-20

- We put it simply as '**B**uilding **F**ollowers of **C**hrist'.
- The Great Commission of Jesus to His Church is to make disciples of all nations- that's what we have been commanded to do by Jesus and empowered to do, by Jesus.
- '**All authority**'- **Matt 28:18**. We have power to build followers of Christ. We have been delegated authority from the One with all authority (Mt 28:18) to do this very

job. Jesus will always be with us in power to accomplish this (Mt 28:20). We are to see the authority of Jesus being established on earth as in Heaven. When He sent out the 12, and the 70 He delegated His authority over sickness and demons to the apostles and they preached the Good News, cast out demons and healed the sick (Luke 9:1,6; 10:1, 17). In the Great Commission this same authority is delegated to the Church to get the job done in power.

-**Mark's gospel** (Mark 16:14-20) records Jesus giving this commission once again to His Church when He speaks to His disciples in a different location and with different words. Again power signs are to follow those who believe- casting out demons, speaking in tongues, handling serpents (Paul on Malta), and being unaffected by poison, laying hands on sick. Mark 16:20 says that the disciples went out and preached and signs followed (as we see in the book of Acts). Although this ending to Mark is not found in all the manuscripts it does occur in a large number of them and so the early Church must have sought to include it in scripture for a reason.

-**The end of Luke** contains a similar commission (Luke 14:46-49) together with a promise of power through the Holy Spirit to fulfill that commission. Acts 1:8 which follows on from Luke's gospel says that we have received power through the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to the ends of the earth.

-**In John 20:21** Jesus said 'As the Father sent Me, I also send you' and then He breathed on His disciples and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit'.

-**So we have in 4 different gospels** the great commission to us given on various occasions and each one with the promise of POWER! We have been commanded to build followers of Christ and also empowered to do so. Hallelujah!

- **'Make disciples'** – Matt 28:19. **BUILDING** followers of Christ. We are to build them in the sense that we both lead them to Christ and also teach them how to follow Him, as we also are following Christ ourselves. It is a process, and we need to be good at every aspect. Our job is more than just evangelism, it also involves teaching, encouraging, building people up to become all they can in Christ. **'Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you'** Matt 28:20- our job is not over with evangelism. We must teach people how to love one another, how to worship, how to follow Jesus, how to use their gifts to build up the body. **'Baptising'**- there is a growth process- repentance and faith, baptism in water and the Holy Spirit, discipleship. We must become excellent midwives and health visitors and G.P's until we see people come into their full stature within Christ's body (Eph 4:13).
- Building **FOLLOWERS** of Christ. A disciple is a learner, one who follows a teacher, Jesus. Jesus said when He called His disciples 'Follow me' (Mat. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Mark 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Luke 5:27; 9:23, 59, 61; 18:22; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19, 22). We are to build followers.
- **'The nations'**- formerly Jews only, now Jews and Gentiles (in Hebrew the Gentiles are referred to as 'the nations') although the Church didn't realise this until Paul was called to the Gentiles in Acts 9 and Peter was called to the Gentiles in Acts 10. See also Matt 24:14, Acts 1:8, Eph 2:6. The ends of the earth must be reached so even though we are to firstly reach our locality with the gospel we must be a sending and releasing Church that sends people into all the world. 'The nations' means progressive geographical outreach (Acts 1:8- 'Jerusalem, all Judea & Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'). 'The nations' also means all cultures- not just those we are comfortable with. Church will look differently according to those it reaches.
- **'To the end of the age'**- this commission will not be replaced by some other vision- it is the call to the Church- all of God's people. We are to be motivated by the fulfilling of the great commission. This means that all of our activities must be governed by this rather than doing things without purpose.

- I have a dream that children who are both black and white, rich and poor, Welsh and English, from Brynmawr and Blaina shall one day worship hand in hand the Lord of Glory, together with those from every nation, tribe and tongue under Heaven. I have a dream that God will use us to fulfill the Great Commission in our day in this nation and in other nations around the world.

Read Acts 14:21-23

- In order to fulfill the Great Commission, Paul and the disciples had a strategy, so must we. When Paul went to preach the gospel he didn't just give out Bibles, or flyers, or a year's subscription to God TV: he worked hard to establish Churches in each locality; so must we. Planting Churches takes time, effort and dedication. Paul wrote to them, encouraged them and visited them, establishing leadership.
- **Our strategy.** Preaching the Gospel and establishing a strong local Church in our community which in turn grows and preaches the gospel and plants Churches into unreached peoples in the surrounding areas, Wales and the nations. The local Church is the 'hope of the world' (Willow Creek quote). We believe in one church, the body of Christ, of which we are a part. We believe in the pattern set down in the New Testament of godly leadership through elders and deacons.

Read Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28

- **Accountability and submission to authority.** Paul was not a loose cannon, and did not send himself into ministry, but was recognised and sent out by godly leadership. He later returned to report back and spent a long time then at his sending church. We live in a culture where people flit from Church to Church or group to group as it pleases them, but this is not the Biblical model. As a Church, we are looking to develop relationship with a larger grouping of Churches so that we can be accountable.
- **Apostolic Centre-** a Church which has the genetics to plant other Churches. It grows individuals with the DNA to go and plant other Churches and return for equipping. Biblical example=the Church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28). Jim Drown's prophetic word.

In our next session we will continue looking at our vision by seeing the type of Church Jesus wants to build.

Summary

- We looked at what our vision should be in the light of Jesus Great Commission, given in each of the Gospels, and the promise of power for us to get the job done.
- We looked at Acts 13 & 14 about how the early Church fulfilled the Great Commission by preaching the gospel in the power of the Spirit, but also sought to establish strong, healthy churches in each locality, and how Antioch was a model of a Church that was outward looking and apostolic.
- In our next session we will looking at the type of Church Jesus wants to build.

Song: *I giving you my heart*