

Our Vision- Part 3

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 6th Feb 2011

Intro

- **In part 1** of our vision I spoke about the importance of having a dream. I illustrated it with what many people regard as the most significant speech, the 20th Century, Martin Luther King in "I Have a Dream", 1963. 46 years later literally fulfilled when America elected it's first black president Barak Obama.
- We looked at the importance of writing down the dream or vision and making it clear (Hab 2:2-4).
- We said that our vision must be to fulfil the great commission of Jesus (Matt 28:16-20) to make disciples. We said that the vision of BFC, Brynmawr Family Church is to Build Followers of Christ. This command is given in each gospel, along with the promise of power and authority to do so.
- We saw how the early church lived out this commission by preaching the gospel in power, but always establishing local churches in each area where the gospel was preached (Acts 14:21-23).
- In Acts 13:1-4 & 14:26-28, we saw how Antioch was a sending Church- an Apostolic centre. Paul was accountable to authority- was sent and later returned to report back. In each Church he established godly leadership of elders and also deacons.
- **In part 2** we began to look at what a healthy Church comprises of. I shared about the 'System's analysis' word I felt God had given me, and the need to be see the overall picture of a healthy church- to know the cylinders of the engine and to be firing on all cylinders. I began to speak about 8 areas I believe are key for a healthy church. We looked at the early Church in Acts 2:40-47 and noted 4 of those areas. This week we will look the other 4 areas using the same passage:

Read Acts 2:40-47

What sort of Church?

Areas we looked at last time:

- **Discipleship- V42** 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine' **Application-** Word and Spirit- becoming more like Jesus by living according to His Word.
- **Evangelism- v41-** '3,000 souls were added'- mass open air evangelism, **v47** 'The Lord added daily to the Church those who were being saved'- the one to one, friendship evangelism, gossping the gospel. Reach all by all means.
- **Fellowship- v42-** 'they continued steadfastly in ..fellowship'. Large groups- 'one accord in the temple' **v46**) and small groups ('from house to house' **v46**). Jesus ministered to the crowds but also dedicated Himself to a small group. The importance of unity- John 17. Brynmawr 'Family' Church.
- **Prayer -v42** - They 'continued steadfastly ..in prayers'. Prayer has been termed 'The Boiler House of the Church'. 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 'If my people' .'Transformations' videos. Revival following prayer.

This week we will look at 4 more areas: The presence of God; Ministry, Mercy and Worship.

- **Presence -v43** - 'Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles'. The word 'then' used here implies a result to everything the believers had sown- i.e. prayer, discipleship, evangelism, fellowship. Because they had responded to God in various areas previously mentioned God was able to light the touch-paper for the whole thing to ignite. They had positioned themselves in faith ready for God to come. We need to do the same- to keep our zeal serving the Lord and loving one-another, but at the same time relying on the manifest presence of God to bring the breakthrough. The fear of God came after the Holy Spirit had come in power- the Church needed shaking up- only 120 are mentioned at the prayer meeting in Acts 1:15, even after they had met the risen Jesus! 1Cor 15:6 says that over 500 brethren saw the risen Lord at the same time- where were they now? In Matt 28:17 it says that when the many disciples saw Jesus at a mountain in Galilee they worshipped but some doubted! It was the power encounter with the Holy Spirit that made all the difference- suddenly people realised- God is real!

John Allison when he had a power encounter at Stoneleigh.

Revival is when the presence of God comes to such an extent that the fear of the Lord affects the whole community around.

Charles Grandison Finney ministered during the 1830's and became known by many historians as the "father of modern revivalism". Directly, or indirectly he credited with conversions of around 500,000 people. It is said that his revival meetings transformed entire towns. It is said that in some towns after the meetings the bars would close down because there was no business for them, and churches would spring up in their place. He stated the following about revival:

1. A revival always includes the conviction of sin on the part of the church.
 2. Backslidden Christians will be brought to repentance.
 3. A revival is nothing else than a new beginning of obedience to God. Just as in the case of a converted sinner, the first step is a deeper repentance, a breaking down of the heart, a getting down into the dust before God, with deep humility, and a forsaking of sin.
 4. Christians will have their faith renewed - they will see things in that strong light which will renew the love of God in their hearts. This will lead them to labor zealously to bring others to him.
 5. A revival breaks the power of the world and of sin over Christians.
 6. When the churches are thus awakened and reformed, the reformation and salvation of sinners will follow.
- We were designed by God for the presence of God (made in His image for relationship- Eden), but when sin came in separation came in. In the Old Testament we see glimpses of God's manifest presence in key situations and in key people's lives. The shekinah glory of God- the tent, ark, temple (Solomon). Shekinah leaves temple in Ezekiel's vision. Through the cross we are restored to true fellowship with God as Father, daddy. When Jesus dies temple torn in two from top to bottom- God now dwells in people- His Church, the living temple. It says in **Ephesians 2:19-22** that we have been chosen as Gentiles together with the Jews to become a spiritual temple where God lives by His Spirit- God has chosen the Church is to be the dwelling place of His awesome presence. When His presence is manifested people notice! In 1Cor 6:19 Paul says that each one of our bodies is a temple of the Holy Spirit. John 14:16-23 God, Father, Son and Spirit make their dwelling in us (through the Holy Spirit)! We are then, both individually and corporately the dwelling place of God by His Spirit! We are commanded to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are all filled there is an overflow which affects the community around us- Ez 47 the river flowing and becoming uncrossable. Peter's shadow, Paul handkerchief, Acts 10:44- Holy Spirit falls on a crowd during the preach, Hebridean revival ("Revival is a community saturated with God.", Duncan Campbell). "God breaking in and upon and over His church like ocean waves upon the shoreline rocks." (Jonathan Edwards). "Revival is the Church falling in love with Jesus all over again." (Vance Havner). "A revival means days of heaven upon earth." (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones).

- Have you been filled recently? Do you need to get back in the river? Do you need to get back your first love? Are you experiencing Heaven breaking through to Earth?
- *I have a dream of a community saturated with God. A community for whom the presence of God is everything. I have a dream of a people prepared, a house where the Spirit of God is pleased to dwell. I dream of every believer in this community regularly filled with God's Holy Spirit and cultivating a lifestyle of hunger for God's presence. I dream of such manifestations of God's presence when we meet, that as God's Church we become revived. I dream of seeing outbreaks of God's glory outside of meetings and in our community. I dream of a body of believers who are so Spirit-led and Spirit-saturated that the glory of God is made manifest to all and indifference vanishes.*
- **Ministry- v43** – 'and signs were done through the apostles'. Here we have the start of spiritual gifts being used to edify and build up the body of Christ. It was not that the apostles were to do all the work, but they were modelling something to the masses who had just got saved, so that they too would be released to do the same to others. Although signs and wonders were the hallmarks of an apostolic ministry as Paul notes in 2Cor 12:12, Jesus makes it clear in John 14:12 that 'he who believes in (Jesus)' will not only do signs and wonders, but also higher caliber ones than Jesus did! We have power tools to get the job done. Paul would later write about the privilege we all have as Christians to share in spiritual gifts (**1Cor 12:1-31**). God has given each one of us a unique role to fulfill in His body, and the body reaches maturity when each part does its part and functions properly (**Ephesians 4:4-16**). We all have a part of the jigsaw to put in, and unless we put our piece in the picture will be missing bits. We belong to each other, so should use our gifts in humility to serve God through serving each other (**Rom 12:3-8**). The Church is not a one-person ministry, but an every member ministry. We are all 'ministers' in this sense (in fact the word 'minister' means 'servant'). Jesus illustrated how we are to serve one another by washing His disciples' feet. Phil 2 says that Jesus humbled Himself taking the form of a servant- He was obedient to the call of the Father to serve us by dying for us. If you say you truly love Jesus, what are you doing to serve His body as He has commanded you? The final commendation from Jesus for each one of us will be related to how we served whilst here on earth- He told a number of parables about servants- some were rebuked for their laziness, whilst others were commended by the master. Let's aim to be faithful with little, so that we can be trusted with much. Let's make it our aim to be the ones He says 'Well-done good and faithful servant' to.

Between the things that are too small for you to bother with, and the things that are beyond your ability to accomplish, you actually DO very little for the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said those who are faithful in the "little things" will be made ruler of much!- unknown

- *I have a dream of every Christian in Brynmawr Family Church recognising, using, and growing in their natural and spiritual gifts for the glory of God and for the building up of His body. A people who cultivate an attitude of humility and service for the benefit of others. A people who see the needs of individuals met through diverse ministries within the Church. I dream of the roles of apostle, prophet, pastor teacher, and evangelist as well as diverse spiritual gifts being received and developed here in Brynmawr and in Wales as a whole.*
- **Mercy - v45** -They 'sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need'. God wants fairplay for the oppressed and downtrodden. True mercy to others springs out of a correct understanding of the extreme and lavish mercy that God has poured upon us, who didn't deserve it, through His generosity shown us in the cross of Christ. Jesus had a heart for the poor- He made the disciples carry around a purse for the poor (Judas was in charge of it), He made Himself poor to serve others, He advocated people selling their possessions and giving to the poor to develop purses in Heaven. How is our purse in Heaven doing? Steve & Pat built up a purse in Heaven.

A man named George Müller (1805-1898) had heard that Bristol had very poor sanitation, and soon after Müller arrived, the city was devastated by an epidemic of cholera, and many hundreds of people died. He visited the sick people, trusting God to keep him from catching the disease. So many people had died that there were hundreds of orphans with no-one to care for them; many were reduced to begging in the streets. George Müller

wanted to do something to help, and it was this that started his life's work for God. Through the power of prayer, together with action George made a difference. He never once asked anyone for money, but brought his prayer requests to God, and saw answers. In his life he cared for 10,024 orphans. He was well-known for providing an education to the children under his care, to the point where he was accused of raising the poor above their natural station in life. He also established 117 schools which offered Christian education to over 120,000 children, many of them being orphans.

Micah 6:8 says 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'. There is something in God which cries out against injustice, and cries out for mankind to display mercy to one another. Band Aid, when 1 film shown of children starving to death everyone suddenly realised what it was all about and shut their mouths and wept. The gospel is good news to the poor (**Is 61:1**). Jesus said when we do something for the least of His children we do it for Him, and that in the great judgement the mercy we have shown in this life will determine our eternal destiny (**Matt 25:31-46**). Tony Campolo has once said 'It would be good for you to have a child you sponsored standing up for you on the day of judgement'. We know we are not saved by works, but as James points out- faith is accompanied by works (**James 2:14-26**).

- *I have a dream of a people who minister God's love, help and healing to the lost, poor, sick, forgotten, unloved, bound, abused, and lonely. I dream of a people who speak God's prophetic voice in our community, seeing God's justice established. I dream of a people who feed the hungry and comfort the grieving. A people whose faith is demonstrated by action. A people known as generous, and giving. I dream of a people who have Jesus' compassion for those who are captives and set them free to serve the Lord.*
- **Worship- v46-47** – 'So continuing daily..praising God'. Worship was not a chore for these believers, but an outflow of their gratitude, and a lifestyle to them. It was a daily overflow rather than a Sunday ritual. **Romans 12:1** says that our surrendered lives to God as living sacrifices are our true worship- it affects the whole of our lives. **John 4:23-24** says that God the Father is seeking worshipers who will worship in spirit and in truth. God wants us to break free from dead tradition and apathy and worship like we really have been raised from the dead! The Church is to be the place where fresh, vibrant, spontaneous, free expressions of worship happen. Just as King David was creative in his expressions of worship to God, so should we be- we are the children of the One who created all things. David danced publicly before the ark of God as part of his extravagant worship, and was highly criticised by his wife, Michal for doing so. Are we willing to be public about our love for the Lord in a culture which is embarrassed and ashamed about bringing up the name of Jesus in public? Muslims are not afraid to show their faith in public places, nor should we be. Graham Kendrick broke some major chains when he got the Church in the U.K and around the world going out on 'Make Way' praise marches, however the Church seems once again to have retreated back into the four walls. In the deep south of America there are so many Christian radio stations, but here radio stations are fearful of even putting out any 'Christian' type comments for fear of losing their license. We need to be influencers of the culture we live in, rather than the other way around- Linda's picture of a harp for us as a Church- highly visible worship here in Brynmawr. Are you progressing forwards in worship? Are you vocal about your love of your saviour? Are you extravagant in your expression of thanks to Him?
- *I have a dream of a community hungry for intimacy with God, expressing their love for Him in open, expressive, creative, lavish, sacrificial ways. I dream of a community where worship is expressed by the sacrifice of lives laid down and a lifestyle of worship rather than an attitude of 'a few songs on a Sunday'. I dream of a people accustomed to bringing contributions of worship when they gather and used to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as they share their love for the Lord. I dream of seeing new songs being written and new forms of expression, through the arts, of our love to God. I dream of people experiencing God's presence as we worship, and getting healed, delivered and set free.*

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.
- We looked at what sort of a Church should we seek to establish?- We looked at Acts 2:40-47, looking at 8 particular purposes of the Church, and the dream of how this can become a reality for us in our situation here in Brynmawr if we remain focussed and obedient to God's call in our lives.
- Our key values- Discipleship, Evangelism, Fellowship, Prayer, Presence, Ministry, Mercy and Worship.

Song: *Jesus Love the Church. Days of Heaven*