

A message from your pastor...

A vision is a necessity for any people. Solomon who had the responsibility of leading a nation said these words:

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. A vision is important because it brings the important into focus. It causes a group of people to rally around a cause that is worthy of their efforts. It is a cause that calls out of them an effort to fulfill a purpose that is greater than themselves. It is an effort that each individual knows is too big for them to accomplish on their own, but at the same they know that their contribution is critical to the success of the vision.

The Lord has given Langston a place and a purpose in our community. As I have spoken to our community, to pastors and to leaders, I realize our community looks to us as the flag ship among churches. A flag ship leads the armada into battle. It engages the enemy first, and weakens the enemy's strength for the small vessels to withstand the attack. The flag ship also carries out the mission of the commander and lifts that purpose to a standard that is worthy of the country for which they represent.

I feel strongly that this is the purpose God has called us to engage. It is our calling as a church, to make paramount the purpose Christ gives us in the New Testament. We face an enemy who is drowning men in perdition. Our mission is to pull them out of the waves of sin. It is the purpose for which our Savior gave His life to, and then gave His life for, to open up a cleansing tide.

This series of sermons is your pastor's heart cry to call you to fulfill Christ's vision for our church. It is a vision that I believe will honor the legacy of our church and our testimony as a Christian. It is imperative that every member unite with us. God has not given us a vision that can be reached by just part of the church. It is a vision that will demand our all. But let me be clear, I believe it to be Christ's vision not mine, and I believe it to be a vision worthy of our best. So unite with me in prayer, as we accept together our purpose, our vision, for our future.

Because He Lives!

Dr. Hampton Drum

Christ's Vision, Our Vision

Sermon # 1

(Text) Luke 14:16-24

Introduction: This message is what I consider to be our Lord's vision. It is His passionate pursuit of the lost. In this passage He leaves no doubt concerning the thrust of His life and ministry. This is His passionate plea for those who follow Him, to cry to the world His gracious invitation.

I. A special invitation was delivered to the dearest. (V.16-17)

A. The invitation went out as a special invitation to his guest.

Luke 14:16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

B. The invitation went out as a specific invitation to his guest.

Luke 14:17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

II. A special invitation was dismissed by the delegates. (V.18-20)

A. Their response reveals the priority of the heart.

Luke 14:18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

Excuses Drivers Gave To Their Insurance Company While Filing a Claim

1. The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intention.
2. A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.
3. The guy was all over the place. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.
4. I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law and headed over the embankment.
5. The telephone pole was approaching fast. I was attempting to swerve out of its path when it struck the front of my car.
6. An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle and then vanished.
7. The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran him over.
8. I saw the slow-moving, sad-faced old gentlemen as he bounced off the hood of my car.

9. Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have.
10. The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth.

B. Their response reveals the purpose of their heart. (V.18-20,24)

Luke 14:18 . . . The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. (V.19) And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. (V.20) And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

Luke 14:24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

III. A special invitation was detoured to the deprived. (V.21-24)

A. It was diverted to those who were debilitated.

Luke 14:21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

The maimed: The biblical days were days of cruel, barbaric men, who left in their wake streets littered with their victims.

The halt: The word halt describes those in that day who were left debilitated by some sickness or deformity.

The blind: These were those who, for some tragic reason, were left to spend their days in darkness.

B. It was diverted to those who were disenfranchised.

Luke 14:21 . . . Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor,

Luke 14:22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. (V.23) And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

In these verses we read the indiscriminate invitation to all who will come. No one is left out, and everyone is invited to come. The Savior with great emotion gives us our marching orders: "Go out into the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in." His concern is that His house will be filled, and that anyone who desires to come, will come."

Conclusion:

On July 7, 1854 Charles Pies was being lead away to be executed for crimes against the state. As

was tradition he was followed by an Anglican priest who was reading the **“The Execution’s Prayer”** from his Anglican prayer book. Pies thought about what awaited him and became greatly disturbed when he heard these words from the prayer: **“Those who die without Christ, experience hell, which is the pain of forever dying, without the release death itself can bring.”** Hearing those words Pies wheeled around and stopped the priest and asked, **“Do you believe that?”** The priest startled by the abrupt question, replied, **“I suppose I do!”** Pies then looked at him and said **“I don’t, but if I did I’d get down on my knees, and crawl across Great Britain, even if it were paved with glass, just to rescue one person from what you just prayed over m**

Christ's Vision and an Appropriate Response

Sermon # 2

(Text) Malachi 3:8-18

Introduction:

Malachi 1:6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? (V.7) ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

“To say that we honor God means that we give Him His rightful place in our lives. He is Lord! Our purpose in stewardship has to do with honoring God by exhibiting trust in Him.”

O.S. Hawkins

Proverbs 3:9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

I. This passage reveals how personal our giving is to God. (V.8-9)

A. His personal opinion is that deficient giving is a crime.

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Galatians 6:3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (V.4) But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

B. His personal response is that deficient giving deserves a curse.

Malachi 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

II. This passage relates how prudent giving brings us closer to God. (V.10-12)

R.G. LeTourneau is a successful business man. Early in his career he made a pledge to give 90% percent and live on 10%. For 33 years he faithfully followed that practice. “It is not a question how much of my money I’m going to give God, it is rather how much of God’s money I’m going to keep for myself.”

A. Prudent giving comes with a promise of God’s provision.

Malachi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Two Powerful Promises for Honoring God with Your Tithes

- An open window of blessing.
- Blessings that you will not have understanding or capacity to receive.

There are three ways in which we honor God with our possessions. We honor Him when *get* it honestly, when we *guard* it respectfully, and when we *give* it generously.

B. Prudent giving comes with a promise of God's protection.

Malachi 3:11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. (V.12) And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

Promises of Protection and Defense for those Who Honor Him with Their Tithes

- He will rebuke the devourer. Is it not disappointing to lose a blessing before you get them because of a devourer? (He is the only one who can rebuke a devourer!)
- He will not destroy the fruit of your ground. This speaks of productivity. (I can't get anything done!)
- Neither will your vine cast forth its fruit prematurely. Fruit before there is a market for it is wasted and unproductive. (I am trained, prepared, and ready for a joy, all I need now is an opportunity.)
- Other nations will call you blessed! (No matter how bad we have it, we all know, there is someone in a third world country that would like to trade places with us.)

Luke 2:19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

When it comes to my own tithing biography, there are many treasured blessings I hold in my heart.

III. This passage reveals our personal guilt when we defraud God. (V.13-18)

A. It reveals how our own conversation accuses us.

Malachi 3:13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD . Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? (V.14) Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

This Passage Reveals God's Knowledge of Our Thoughts

- "It is vain to serve God:" When it comes to your worship, your obedience, and the giving of your resources, what thoughts cross your mind about the worth of serving God?
- "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance," When you are faced with a decision between right and wrong, does it make sense to you to do the right thing?

- “and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?” Is there respect and honor in your heart, concerning your relationship with God. In your day to day life, is there a reverence for His will in your life.

B. It reveals how our own covetousness accuses us.

Malachi 3:15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

What do we say when our covetousness attacks us? Can you say I would rather have less and please the Lord, than have more and displease the Lord?

Conclusion:

Malachi 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. (V.17) And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. (V.18) Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Our Vision Affects our Attitude!

Sermon # 3

(Text) II Corinthians 9:1-15

Introduction: Giving is the place where our faith and our worship intersect.

“The teachings of Jesus show us that there are two keys that determine everything about your eternity. The first key is your belief. This key unlocks the door to eternal life and determines where you will spend eternity. The second key is your behavior. It unlocks the door to reward and determines how you will spend eternity.” **Bruce Wilkinson**

I. There is the investigation of our attitude in giving.

A. There is the past record of our gratitude.

2 Corinthians 9:1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: (V.2) For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

B. There is the present resolve of our gratitude.

2 Corinthians 9:3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: (V.4) Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. (V.5) Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

II. There is the initiative of our attitude in giving.

R.G. Lee “To give less under grace than we give under law is a disgrace.”

A. There is the principle we follow when we give.

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (V.7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

God Principles in Giving

- **A poor return is a direct reflection on what one has sowed.**
- **Giving sacrificially by faith, gives us the opportunity to see God respond bountifully.**

- **The scripture says that giving is an issue of the heart. We are to prepare our heart before we prepare our gift, because if we give begrudgingly we give in vain.**

“The Christian’s motive in giving is vitally important. Our giving must come from the heart, and the motive in the heart must please God.” *Warren Wiersbe*

B. There is the person we follow when we give.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (V.9) (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. (V.10) Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

Mary Crowley founded Home Interiors, Inc. In time, her home decorating talents and business mind made her exceedingly wealthy. She wore two little golden shovels around her neck! *“The little shovel is mine, I can shovel it out. The big one is God’s, He shovels it in ten times faster.”*

Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

III. There are the implications of our attitude in giving.

A. Our giving provokes homage in the hearts of the recipients.

2 Corinthians 9:11 Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. (V.12) For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

B. Our giving provokes obedience in the hearts of the recipients.

2 Corinthians 9:13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; (V.14) And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. (V.15) Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Conclusion:

Our Vision Affects Our Affection!

Sermon # 4

(Text) Luke 21:1-4

Introduction:

I. There is the Savior's description of the situation.

A. The Savior's description of those who were wealthy.

Luke 21:1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

B. The Savior's description of the widow.

Luke 21:2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

***“Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and Me.”***

Sir Launfal

II. There is the Savior's diagnosis of the situation.(V.3)

A. The wealthy made a poor impression with their gifts.

Mark 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

What Mistake Did the Wealthy Make in Their Giving?

- **It is obvious from this passage that Jesus did not like the atmosphere of the temple that day.**
- **It is also obvious that the atmosphere had been drastically affected by the arrogance of wealthy.**
- **Their spirit of independence made them self-absorbed in the clout of what they brought, there was no room left in their heart for worship.**
- **They were more concerned about how it made them look to each other, instead of how it made them look before God.**

B. The widow made a pleasing impression with her gift.

Luke 21:3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

What Did the Widow Do That Impressed the Savior?

- Her appearance was not any different than who she was. It was obvious by her appearance that she was a poor widow.
- To Christ she stood in stark contrast to the wealthy. They were the epitome of arrogance, she was the epitome of humility.
- To most of the people, what she gave was beside the point, but to Jesus what she gave was the point.
- It is obvious by the Savior's comments that her giving was a breath of fresh air in the room. She had come to worship before an audience of one.

III. There is the Savior's determination about the situation.

A. The Savior determined that the wealthy had given out of their abundance.

Luke 21:4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God:

“The others gave out of their material wealth at little cost to them, but the widow out of her poverty gave everything. Proportionally she had given the most.”

John Walvoord

B. The Savior determined that the widow had given out of her admiration.

Luke 21:4 . . . but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

“Nearly 2000 years have passed since that widow gave her two mites and her testimony still inspires us. The unselfish act by this poor widow was a meaningful and refreshing testimony to Christ. It came during the last week of His life, the dismal Passion Week. She came like a refreshing breeze out of the desert of poverty, gave her gift and like a thin mist vanished.” **Nelson Price**

Is it not amazing that Jesus did not restrain this poor widow from tithing because of her circumstances? We never do anyone a favor when we discourage a person from obeying God.

Conclusion: