

Sermon Brief, Helpful links, Discussion Questions

May 2, 2021

CBC "State of the Church" 2021: Ready, Set, **GO!**

Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Thessalonians 1 and 2

Sermon Brief:

1. The local church is a big deal.
2. What does God want from us? What are we supposed to do? What are some of our basic responsibilities? What is God's vision for us?
3. There are a few different ways we might answer that.
4. First of all, we could talk about the importance of gathering together. And I am not going to spend a lot of time arguing for that, because that's literally even just what the word for church means. And so if someone asks for a vision for the church you could talk about the importance of getting together every week at least once a week to hear God's word, to worship God, to remember Jesus' death, and to build each other up.
5. But we don't just gather to gather. We gather to grow. The church is a place for change. In Ephesians 4:15, Paul puts it like this. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ." The most important priority in our lives is to become holy like Jesus and one of the primary ways God's planned to help us pursue that goal is local churches.
6. And so we have to think about how to make our gatherings as God-glorifying as possible and about how to best help each other grow, and we could talk about all that for a while I am sure, but I'm really wanting emphasize a third responsibility. We GO.
7. I am talking about personally taking the initiative to make disciples.
8. Key text, Matthew 28:18-20.
9. **What are we putting an emphasis on this year?** It's glorifying God by obeying this command together, to go and make disciples who make disciples who make disciples.
10. **Why is this so important to us?** One big reason is the fact it's a command from the King of the Universe, and there are a bunch of other reasons as well, but we'll stick with that for now, because the main thing I want to talk with you about is how.
11. **How do we make disciples who make disciples?** The way I want to show you how to make disciples is by watching one of the greatest disciple-makers of all time at work. Jesus is the first greatest disciple-maker. But the second maybe is Paul, and today (and maybe next week) I want to look at Paul and show you several things you must do if you are going to play a part in our mission as a church to make disciples.
12. First, *a disciple-maker tells other people the gospel.* We're going to look at 1 Thessalonians to learn from Paul, but before there ever was a letter to the Thessalonians, there was Paul in Thessalonica talking to people about Jesus and what Jesus did. If you want to read the story, it's in Acts 17. Anytime Paul got to a new city, he looked for ways to meet with unbelievers and talk to them about Jesus, and if we are going to make disciples, we need to find ways to do the same thing. We need to find ways to engage with lost people about Jesus.

13. Second, *a disciple-maker depends on God*. Paul gives thanks for the faith of the Thessalonians. When you give thanks you are giving someone credit for whatever you are thanking them about and when Paul looks at these astounding results in the Thessalonians lives he didn't see it as something ultimately that was because of him but instead was because of God, which is why he continued to labor for them in prayer and this is important, because it reminds us that ultimately, the one who produces fruit in our discipleship relationships is not us, but God.
14. Everything important we want to do as a church is impossible for us to do, whether we are professionals, really trained, or not. We can't change people's hearts, we can't produce spiritual growth, and so we need to be praying, because God can. And it's God's ability to do what is impossible for us to do that gives us hope and should cause us to want good things and strive for good things and attempt even great things as a church.

Helpful Links:

1. [Evangelize the Lost](#)
2. [Connecting with Unbelievers](#)
3. [Sharing the Gospel with the Happiest People in the World](#)

Discussion Questions:

1. God has done many amazing things through ordinary local churches. Talk about something you have seen God do in and through a local church that amazed you.
2. Because the local church is such a powerful and important part of God's plan, we looked this past week at some of God's expectations of us as a local church. First, we said, we are supposed to gather. Compared to many gatherings of people (e.g. concerts, sporting events) our gatherings as believers may appear rather mundane. But what are some of the very big things that are happening as believers gather together week after week?
3. It's important to remember this because sometimes we get excited about things that really aren't that exciting because they look exciting to the world and we minimize what's really important because it isn't very flashy. You might be sitting on a dirt floor in a broken down building with 10 other believers singing hymns and listening to a little old man explain God's Word and doing something more significant than if you were sitting with thousands and thousands of people in the greatest concert hall in the world. What can happen to a local church when we forget that?
4. We don't just gather to gather, God wants us to gather to grow. Look at Ephesians 4:11-16. How does this passage emphasize the importance of growth? What does it say about how it is supposed to happen? Look at Philippians 3:13,14. What does Paul tell us about his attitude towards becoming more and more like Jesus?
5. Describe a time when you saw someone changed by the power of God's Word at work in the local church.
6. What are some of the implications of the local church being a place where people are growing?
7. We could talk about gathering and growing for a long time I am sure, but this Sunday, we wanted to emphasize a third responsibility. We go. Can you remember what we primarily were talking about when we talked about going?

8. We want to put an emphasis this year on being a church that glorifies God by making disciples who make disciples. What do you think it means to make disciples?
9. How does Matthew 28:18-20 explain what's involved in making disciples?
10. To understand better the process of making disciples, we began to look at the life of the apostle Paul. Why might we choose to look at him? What two things were we able to emphasize this Sunday that we can learn from Paul? What stood out to you?
11. If we are going to share the gospel with unbelievers, we have to find ways to engage with unbelievers. Why is this important? What are some ideas you have about how to do that? What are some ways your care group can partner together to do that in the year ahead? What are some ways we at CBC can do that together?
12. Why don't you just close by taking some time to pray for each other's application of this message? What is one area you need to grow in as a result of what we've talked about? Who is one unbeliever you want to share the gospel with? Who is one person you want to intentionally pursue with the goal of helping them become more like Jesus?