

“Livin’ the Dream: Church Wide”
Colossians 1:24-29
October 11, 2015
Rev. Dave Baldrige
Palm Harbor United Methodist Church
Palm Harbor, Florida

What is Church? Hear again some of the words from our opening video (“Welcome to Church,” Outreach) this morning.

“What is church...buildings, pews, piano....or something more. It is a revolution of love and freedom that would change the world forever. Church is not just ancient history.”

No my friends church is not ancient history but should be relevant and practical and should make a difference for us today. The video went on to say, “There are over 300,000 churches in America ready to be instruments of change.” Let me ask a question....in which I hope you will respond....Is Palm Harbor United Methodist Church ready to be one those instruments of change? XXXXXXXX

The video said, “Today you didn’t just come to a building but a revolution 2000 years in the making. We will continue to proclaim the message of Jesus, to help a world that needs Him so desperately.”

Let me personalize it for just a moment, “We at PHUMC will continue to proclaim the message of Jesus to help a world that needs Him so desperately.”

In this Livin’ the Dream sermon series we ask ourselves how do we be the church Christ wants us to be? What does that look like? We are Livin’ the Dream at PHUMC....no super major issues....but we cannot coast. What is the God-sized dream? The dream about His church here at 1551 Belcher Road that we can only accomplish through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this passage that Barbara Odom our Discipleship Coordinator read the Apostle Paul says that “His Body” (The Body of Christ) is the Church. We are the church. We are the Body. We are the Body of Christ.

Let me quote C.S. Lewis who said this, ““The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose.”

Church is spelled C-H-U-R-C-H. What are the 2 letters at the middle of Church. UR. Yes, you are at the middle of this special community called Church. So how do we continue to be Livin’ the Dream. Well, we are to have Christ in us the hope of glory. We are to be mature in Christ.

Our Mission at Palm Harbor United Methodist Church is to GATHER God’s people for worship, GROW disciples of Jesus Christ, and to GO serve the community and the world.

Part one of our Mission is to Gather God's People for Worship. Membership in the United Methodist Church in America is 7.3 million people. However average weekly attendance is only 3 million. What? Less than half of United Methodist members come on any given Sunday. Our attendance at PHUMC is 4% less than it was last year. And yet we by church standards are considered a very large church. Our weekly average attendance is around 900 people per Sunday. Only 4% of all churches in all denominations have that many in attendance each week.

Let me pause and say tonight we have Membership Class from 4-7 p.m. You can still come. Some may wonder....why become a member. Let me address that. It a faith commitment where you in public say that you are committed to the Lord and to the Vision and Mission of this church. It is where you say that you will support this church by your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. Becoming a member helps you to not just attend, but to "belong" to a community of believers. By becoming a member it is a place where you can be held accountable. As members we are connected to each other and connected to Jesus Christ. As a member you make a commitment to ensure that the vision, mission and dreams of this church are carried out for the sake of the Kingdom. See you tonight?

Oh to be Livin' the Dream, but also to begin asking what our God sized dream is. Just the other day I had someone ask me if I were here when PHUMC had over 1000 in attendance every Sunday. Before my time. Now our culture and framework has changed. On a national level "average worship attendance" has become once or maybe twice a month. But let me tell a possibility of a God sized dream. And yes, this is recapturing a part of this wonderful church's past. What if on a God- sized scale that we had to park cars on the east side of Belcher by the retention pond and all the way down to Nebraska Avenue? That we would have to have vans shuttle people back and forth as we worked to Gather God's people for worship. Woo-hoo!!!

Let me show you a nameplate sign I have in my office. **Rule #1: God is Big Enough. Rule #2.** Now did you notice that Rule #2 is blank. Because is Rule #1 is in effect you don't need a Rule #2. Are you with me? Now I got this in my first pastoral appointment in the late 1980's. But beside that nameplate I have a package of tissues that says, "Just Sayin.'" Uh, that was given to me since I've been at PHUMC. Rule #1 God is Big Enough. Just Sayin.' Just Sayin....are you with me?

Now beloved please keep in mind that numbers of attendance is not the most significant factor. Say What?oh, that was the last sermon series. I said attendance numbers is not the most significant factors. Part of our Strategic Plan is Kingdom Growth. You see it is not how many heads are in the pews but how many of those in the pews are devoted disciples and Christ followers. We can fill this sanctuary that seats 1700 up every Sunday, but if we are not growing disciples then it is worthless.

2nd Part of our Mission at PHUMC is to GROW disciples of Jesus Christ. If we are not doing that then we are not doing what we are supposed to be doing. If we are not that then what we are doing here every Sunday is worthless. Let me tell you of a Dream.....maybe a God-sized dream.

Did you know that we are basically out of room here in A building. A building being the building attached to the sanctuary. What if....dream with me we had so many people wanting to meet for Bible Study, support groups, prayer groups, that we need to start using Buildings B and C for that. Woo-hoo!

You can Grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Every Sunday morning we have ongoing classes to assist you. Don't need to sign up...just show up any Sunday and every Sunday. We have an Adult Class at 8:15, 2 at 9:45 and 4 at 11:15. Children and Mid-Hi meet after Children's Moments for their Small Group time. But did you know that also our Student Ministries have Connect Groups----Doing Life together. This for grades 6-12. This is the 12 year they have done these groups. It's not too late parents/students to sign up. They are age specific and gender specific groups that meet on a weekly basis led by one of our screened and trained volunteers. There are some small groups that are still meeting 13 years after they began....they continued to meet after graduation from High School. There is a Wednesday morning Ladies Bible Study, a Wednesday Night Bible Studies for all, and a Wednesday night College Age group. On Thursday morning a Ladies group, a Men's prayer group on Thursday night and various other small groups that you can contact Barbara Odom about.

We, church wide are called to GROW. Mark Batterson, who by the way is one of the authors that Mark Deen's small group is using at 11:15, says this: We are called to advance the kingdom not hold the fort."

GATHER God's people for Worship, GROW disciples of Jesus Christ, and GO to serve the community and the world. Believe it or not I saw this on Facebook, "We will never change the world by going to church. We will only change the world by being the church." Oh let's have the church leave the building.

What is the God-sized dream? Maybe we have a store or run a non-profit business that employs the handicapable (those that may have limited abilities physically, mentally, or emotionally) Are our dreams God-sized?

The Cherub choir sang about it, "God's love is for you, God's love is for me. All sizes and shapes, all colors and styles, old and young, big and small...share His love with everyone."

I flew up Wednesday to see our son Andy at Asbury University. I stayed at Asbury Inn across the street at Asbury Theological Seminary. It was great to be back at both my alma maters. While walking through the Seminary campus they had banners hanging from their lamp posts. It said, "Asbury Theological Seminary----Attempt Something Big....Join God in HIS mission." Interesting timing huh, huh, huh. Attempt something big....join God in HIS mission. Go.

Scripture says the mystery hidden for ages and generation is now revealed. That message is Christ in you the hope of glory. Beloved we cannot GATHER, GROW, or GO without realizing that it is Christ in us that is our hope.

Now in making some of my sermon notes I go so excited, and when I preach as I work on the keyboard my mind and spirit race faster than my hands can type. So I made the mistake of typing, “Christ in you the HYPE of glory.” Well, now maybe that is not a mistake. I am hyped because Christ is in me. Hype means promote or publicize intensively. I want my life to be a hype---a promotion and declaration of Jesus. I want my life to publicize that the only way I can make it is that Christ is in me the hope of glory.

His Kidz sang about it...God you are Incredible, remarkable, stupendous and amazing, full of goodness full of love, full of kindness everyday. Astonishing, exceptionally marvelous breathtaking, you are good, you are great.That’s what I’m talkin about!!!!

That is why we GATHER to worship. That is the God that loved us to send His son to die for us.

The Colossians passage says **(verse 28), “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”**

Church wide we want to proclaim Jesus. We want to teach and GROW disciples of Jesus Christ. We want people not just to be attenders, but mature in Christ.

Went to Chapel with Andy at Asbury University. Chapel is required their 3 times a week. It was a student led chapel. I was challenged and blessed. I remember my years there and a flood of memories—including my first date with Sarah....where I even carried her Bible for her....but I digress. There in Hughes Auditorium where I sat for chapels, my daughter sat for chapels, and now Andy sits for chapels is an engraving up high at the center front of the auditorium. It is engraved large enough to see as soon as you enter, it’s in white letters. It says this, “Holiness unto the Lord.” Whoa....we don’t talk about that much....but isn’t that what being spiritually mature is about....holiness unto the Lord. Is your life a holy one? Are you spiritually more mature than you were a year ago? Are you spiritually more mature than you were a month ago? Are you spiritually more mature than you were a week ago?

Here’s the Dream Church Wide as I read from the Message Bible: “To be mature is to be basic. Christ! No more, no less.” I love it. It’s a kingdom thing.

Last week we mentioned God holding the whole world in Hands. Keep that in one part of your mind. In August of 2007 I received word from our dear missionary friends Dave and Julie Eberhard about a deep prayer concern. Dave and Julie at the time were missionaries in Brazil. Their son Micah was here in the states living and working in Ohio. He was 20 years old and was great in graphic designs and art. Micah was in tragic auto accident in Ohio. Dave and Julie flew home from Brazil. Sarah and I found ourselves a couple of weeks later flying to Ohio as I officiated at Micah’s funeral.

A couple of years later I went to Kentucky to officiate at Dana Eberhards wedding....Micah’s sister. I had always loved a particular pencil sketch that Micah had drawn. At the wedding they presented me with a framed copy of that picture I loved so dearly. I have it hanging in my office.
(SHOW IMAGE)

God does not just have the whole world in His hands, but also has His church. God has PHUMC in His hands. He is holding up this church as we are Livin the Dream as we are Dreamin' God sized dreams. That can only happen as we realize that it is Christ in us the hope of glory... "In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song."

Oh God help us Church wide to depend on you!