

Catalyst Sermon Series 2019 - Summaries

Catalyst is a plan designed to spark conversations, prayer, and build community around the Vision and Mission of Christ Covenant Church for a the re-planting of a church around a 10 year plan through a movement of the gospel at 3100 Covenant Road in 2019.

Our Mission is what we do:

Worship, Life, and Ministry Together.

Our Vision is what we long to see:

A movement of the gospel that will bring personal conversion and renewal, community formation, and generous lives serving others for humble cultural engagement in Columbia and beyond.

I have written these summaries from the sermons that I preached on our vision and mission over six weeks in 2019. I hope these will be helpful in understanding the Vision and Mission of Christ Covenant Church as they express what we value and what we will pursue in the future as a church.

You can listen to the Catalyst Sermon Series at www.ccotc.org/sermons

- Gospel Centrality from Galatians 2:11-21
- Stewarding a Gospel Movement from 1 Peter 2:4-12
- God Seeks Worshipers from John 4
- God Builds Community from Acts 2:37-48
- Generous Lives Luke 10:25-37
- Humble Cultural Engagement John 5:1-17

Week 1 - Gospel Centrality (Galatians 2:11-21)

We began our 6 week Catalyst Sermon Series focusing on “Gospel Centrality” from Galatians 2:11-21. Gospel centrality is what God does that affects everything we do. Gospel centrality has an order, a function, and a power.

Order

The order is, we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by works of the law. I am accepted and loved, therefore, I obey. The gospel is what God does that enables us to be and do what God loves. What do you say? Do you obey and are saved or are you saved and so you obey? Do you say, “I obey so I’ll be loved and accepted by God”; or “I am loved and accepted by God so I obey.”? The questions concerning order are important to answer. The men of the circumcision group believed in Jesus and then obeyed so they would be accepted and loved. But Paul’s order was the order given him by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ obeyed, even unto death, and then was raised from the dead to life. So, no one is justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Those who are justified respond in gratitude, and by faith they walk in love.

The German reformer, Martin Luther came to know this order by reading Romans 1:17, “The righteous shall live by faith.” He said, “Then the entire Holy Scripture became clear to me, and heaven itself was opened to me. Now we see this brilliant light very clearly, and we are

privileged to enjoy it abundantly” Have you broken through? Do you see the order? How is the gospel functioning in your life?

Function

The lines of the gospel are to run deep and wide in our lives. The gospel is not first principles or the basics for baby Christians, and then when mature we move on from it to the more mature or the deeper things of the Christian life. The gospel is not everything but it affects everything.

The apostle Paul looks at the apostle Peter and says, ‘You’ve forgotten the gospel,’ or ‘You’re not walking in line with the gospel.’ He’s saying the gospel affects every area of your life. So your behavior toward the Jews and the Gentiles proves you’ve forgotten the gospel. The gospel has a breadth. It is a foundational belief that you see everything through. The gospel lines go out into everything. It affects relationships, eating, drinking, sexuality, money and possessions, everything.

The function of gospel centrality begins at the heart affecting our deepest loves. In Jesus Christ, our hunt for deep significance, to justify ourselves by who we are, what we do, what we have or can achieve, is over. When Paul addresses Peter he directs the gospel to function at the level of his heart. It is from here his life functions.

Paul doesn’t go to fear or racism or social standing or manners. He doesn’t tell him to stop trying to justify himself through these. He knows that he may stop, but he’ll go back because it’s what his heart desires, or he’ll exchange it for something else. He knows if you’re really going to change then your heart has to be enveloped by the gospel and its value. The gospel is the only form of worth and value that’s not achieved, it’s received. When you are believing the gospel from the heart life doesn’t go up and down according to how you’ve done, your success or failure. The gospel does not function on your record, but on the record of Jesus in your place. It’s the end of your desperate hunt for personal value or to matter, the enduring hunt is over, the struggle to matter is over. You may say, “I believe the gospel but I am desperate to find value and worth.” Take a look at your striving. What does your striving tell you? What are you pointed at with your heart? Paul is not putting pressure on his will, he says remember the gospel. Paul is saying, ‘You don’t have the right or the need to feel superior to others because of the gospel. This is how the gospel changes us.

Martin Luther said about Galatians 2:14, “The truth of the gospel is the principle article of all Christian doctrine, most necessary is it that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually.”

We’ll never change by moral reformation, or by simply applying biblical principles to our lives, but by worshipping around the gospel and thinking its implications out broadly into our lives, into the depths of our being.

Power

Gospel centrality has a power. The power of the gospel is in our union with Christ. “I no longer live but Christ lives in me.” The power of gospel centrality is our lives hidden in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all our past, present and future needs.

You go into Christ and you disappear. God looks at you and sees Christ. He sees you in the beauty of Jesus. The beautiful life you should have lived he lived. The horrible death you should have died he died. You live now out of gratitude and joy in him. This is the beginning of a powerful life. The gospel is everything God does to rescue us, that changes everything about us and what we do. When we behold the height, the depth, the length and the width of this love of God in Christ lives change, churches change, and cultural changes as we're humbly engaged.

As Charles Wesley wrote,

*“Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
Amazing Love...”*

The Religious Disease

We all need to live gospel centered lives. Our personal lives and our corporate lives in the church are riddled with the infectious debilitating disease of religion. Religion breathes the air of - 'I believe, I work, therefore, I am saved, justified, and I matter.' A religious life is anxious, selfish, and relationship destroying, even with the God we say we believe in and the people who share our religion. We're never sure we're doing enough, so we live in anxious fear. We believe and do what we do for God and others out of a desire to get what we need for ourselves. We live in conflict with ourselves, God, and others because we're never sure about ourselves, God, or others, if our best interests are really being served. In the religious life we “do the right things” to justify ourselves.

The Gospel Cure

The gospel is the power of God to break the chains of this self justifying life. It is through the gospel that we hear the truth about ourselves as sinners, the truth about God in his grace to uphold his righteousness and love sinners accepting them through faith in Jesus Christ, and the truth about a responsive life of gratitude, love, and faith in Jesus Christ affecting our whole lives.

These truths lead us to the reality that the gospel must be central to who we are, what we believe, and what we do as a church. Therefore, you will notice that the gospel is central to our worship, our life together, and our ministry toward others. You will find the gospel in all our worship services. It is not only the centerpiece of the preaching, but it is the story line throughout our worship in prayer, singing, reading, preaching, and the Sacraments. We must be being renewed by the gospel each week as a church, but also each day as individual members of the church. Therefore, we teach the importance of preaching the gospel to ourselves, and seeing how every area of our life is to be affected by believing and living out the gospel. The gospel is central to what we long to see, and what we do as a church.

Week 2 - Stewarding a Gospel Movement (1 Peter 2:4-12)

A gospel movement is necessary for gospel centrality to be effective and not just “believed”. Stewarding a gospel movement requires God's presence, his gifts, and his grace.

Presence

A gospel movement is not something the church can produce. A gospel movement takes place through the church, his covenant people. The gathered people of God, "a spiritual house" (1Pe.2:5), is where the presence of God dwells by his glory. The triune God brings about a movement of the gospel in his church. He works to bring movement, renewal, and reform by the dynamic working of the Spirit in the preaching of Jesus Christ through the whole counsel of his Word, the faithful observance of his sacraments, and in the nurture and discipline of God's people. This movement of God in his church is necessary because the default mode of the human heart is works righteousness - we obey to be accepted, loved, and justified. Therefore without this gospel movement we crush personal and corporate life, but with gospel movement we see lives personally and corporately flourishing even in winter.

Gifts

A gospel movement is not dependent upon human ability and riches. A gospel movement takes place through the church that receives the gifts of Jesus Christ in the gospel. God the Father gave his only Son as our Prophet to speak the words of God to us, as our Priest to serve us by his compassion and sympathy, pray for us and give his life for us, and as our King to rule over us and serve us with all his gifts. The church is now the place of those gifts on the earth.

The church living in Jesus Christ is a kingdom of priests and a royal priesthood proclaiming the wonder of God who has called them into the life of Jesus Christ (1Pe.2:5,9). God is sharing his gifts with the world through his church. His church tells of the wonders of him who has called and loved her. His church loves the world giving their lives with the sympathy and compassion of Christ and praying for her. His church is royalty cultivating the gifts God shares with her in her various callings to overflow in generous service to those in the world. The church stewards God's gospel movement when she participates in the gifts of Jesus Christ.

Grace

A gospel movement is ignited by the grace of God. The church cannot stir herself up to love and good works that flow from the gospel. She must rehearse to herself, preach to herself, breath, drink, and eat the free, loving, and expensive grace of God. The church is chosen freely (1Pe.2:9). The church is God's most treasured possession of all that he has (1Pe.2:9). The church, who had no name and who had received no mercy, has received mercy and is called the beloved of God through the costly life and death of Jesus Christ (1Pe.2:10; Hosea 2:23). The church will carry out a self loving, self protecting, judgmental life that slowly declines into her death, unless she is weekly stewarding the free, loving, and costly grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

The church is God's chosen living organization or institution. A church without the dynamic movement of the gospel is like a person on a life support machine. They may survive because of denominational affiliations, endowments, or a small overworked group of loyalists. But in the end they will die. Christ Covenant Church desires to be a movement of the gospel, a living institution stewarding the presence, gifts, and grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We looked at God Seeking Worshipers in the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4. In this text we saw God seeking a diversity of worshipers, he changes the workers he seeks, and he has the power to change his worshipers.

A Diversity of Worshipers

God Seeks a Diversity of Worshipers Everywhere. In John 4:23 Jesus tells a woman of Samaria that God the Father is seeking worshipers. The woman that Jesus meets at the well outside the city of Sychar does not understand what Jesus is doing in her surroundings asking her for a drink of water. She does not understand that God through his Son Jesus Christ is seeking her as a worshiper. She's not worthy of the knowledge and enjoyment of God. She's rejected him in the whole of her life, but he's not rejecting her. He's seeking her no matter what she's done or not done, who she is or is not, where she lives or where she doesn't live. God is seeking a diversity of worshipers everywhere, not because he has need of them, but because our need of him. We should marvel at his goodness that he has sought us. We should expect him to fill his church with a diversity worshipers from everywhere. We should not expect him to build a social club that we're comfortable with, but a church of a diversity of worshipers from everywhere. We must get rid of everything that hinders our embracing this reality.

Changing Worshipers

God Seeks to Change Worshipers Everywhere God is seeking true worshipers among false worshipers. The woman of Samaria is a false worshiper, and so are we. She worships falsely as a religious person and as a relational person. As a religious person she worships what she does not know. She worships a religion that ignores the salvation of God by grace for a the religion of self effort. She tries to make herself acceptable to God by what she does and what she knows. In relationships, she seeks her souls satisfaction in being needed, loved, or accepted by men. Jesus is there to change her from a worshiper of the creature to a worshiper of her Creator and Savior. He reveals himself to her and makes a promise to satisfy her deepest longings and souls thirsting with the sweetness of himself as the living water. He's there to change her relationship with God in the depth of her soul by satisfying her in himself, and this will change her in her relationship with others. But how does this happen in our lives?

The Power to Change Worshipers

God Has the Power to Change Worshipers Everywhere In order for Jesus to change a diversity of worshipers everywhere he had to thirst. The living water Jesus promises to her and us can only be experienced if Jesus takes our sin of false worship to his own life and suffers the wrath of God in our place. That is what he did on the cross. He cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And then he cried, "I thirst". For the first and only time in the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, God the Father turned his face away from the Son as he poured out all his wrath upon him for all the false soul satisfying worship of those God loved as sinners. It is knowing and experiencing this depth of the love of God in Jesus Christ at the cross that is the power of God to change us from false worshipers into true worshipers by the Spirit. We must rely upon the Spirit of God to reveal to our hearts the truth of God as it is in Jesus Christ to satisfy our deepest thirsting with all that he is for us out of all that he's done for us. This is what brings personal conversion and renewal to shape our whole lives toward God as worshipers and toward man as conduits of his love. God seeks a diversity of worshipers everywhere and powerfully changes them so that we worship together, share life together, and do ministry together. We live our lives out of what we worship.

Week 4 - God Builds Community Acts 2:42-47

We looked together at how God forms community in Acts 2:42-47. We saw what God's community is, what that community does, and what keeps that community growing.

What God's Community Is

God's community is a common participation in God through faith in Jesus Christ. The first church in Jerusalem "were together" (Acts 2:44). The church did many things together, but their doing together was the result of their common relationship to God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. God built his community by grace. The community that God builds were together, not because of the sameness of language, race, sex, societal status, or culture. They were together in the midst of great diversity because of their relationship to God in Jesus Christ.

What God's Community Does

The three activities of the early church that was together was learning, loving, and liturgy. They got together to sit under and learn from the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). They did this in large groups at the Temple, but also in their homes. The apostles' teaching was the knowledge of God and his will revealed in Jesus Christ through the Old Testament Scriptures. God's community loves to learn of Jesus and his righteousness.

Secondly, this community loved. They had fellowship with one another. They were together with glad and generous hearts (2:47). They ate together and showed hospitality toward one another (2:46). They met one another's needs out of what God gave to them (2:44-45). They found favor with their neighbors also (2:47). They did good to all especially those of the household of faith.

Third, this community did liturgy. They heard the word of God preached, they celebrated the Sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and they prayed together, praising God, confessing their sins, and make intercession for others (2:38-42). They met together in the temple for liturgy and even in small groups in their homes. Their community practiced liturgy - the habits of worship that shaped and formed their lives.

What Keeps God's Community Growing

God's community grew because they delighted in God and this was expressed in their words and deeds (2:47). Their life and their words were the expression of their glad hearts in God. This was infective toward one another in the community and those outside of the community, who God was bringing to the community through their words and deeds. The community that God built did not put up walls. The same grace that drew them into the community in their common participation in God was expressed through the lives of the community causing them to grow in maturity and exponentially.

At Christ Covenant Church we long to see a movement of the gospel that brings about personal conversion and renewal creating community. We value a community that is a common participation in God through faith in Jesus Christ expressed in the diversity we seek and God brings. We value a community that learns together, loves together, and does liturgy together. We value a community that continues to grow together as we express our delight in God through words and deeds.

Week 5 - Generous Lives Luke 10:25-37

A gospel centered church does more than build and grow in community among one another; it also connects us to those living in our city and community who do not yet know God through faith in Jesus Christ and who have needs that can be met by generous lives expressed in mercy and justice.

We learn from Luke 10:25-37 that a movement of the gospel connects God's people to other people in the overflow of God's generosity in Jesus Christ. There is a Foundation, an Animation, and a Motivation for the Generous Lives of God's church.

Foundation

The Foundation for generous lives is founded in God's justifying grace in Jesus Christ. The lawyer in our story thought he knew and kept the law better than Jesus. He put Jesus to the test and sought to justify himself, when his life was measured by God's law, he should have cried to Jesus for mercy. No one is justified by works of law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ. A life of self justification leads to judgmental and broken relationships with others in need. But when we are poor in spirit we are blessed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and being accepted and loved in him, having all our sins paid for and taken away, we live generous lives toward others in need of his words and deeds. Generous Lives are founded on being justified in Jesus Christ.

Animation

The Animation of Generous Lives is loving, serving, and doing justice. The justifying grace of God in Christ propels us into a loving relationship with our neighbors. The lawyer seeking to justify himself asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbor?'. The Samaritan in Jesus' story had a loving compassion on his neighbor in need. Our neighbors are people of varying nationality, race, sexual orientation, social strata, beliefs, and practices. Our neighbors are orphans, widows, hungry, thirsty, naked, and people of fear. Our neighbors are those God places in our life who we're called to love. Generous Lives loves those in need with the same resources, passions, and efforts we love ourselves.

Generous Lives are animated in serving. The Samaritan in Jesus' story served. He was not traveling to be served but to serve and give of his life for his neighbor in need. He served him in the present, and he served him so that his needs would be met in the future. It is more blessed to give than receive. The great ones in God's kingdom are those who serve their neighbors with their words and deeds. Serving is the animated generous life of those justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Generous Lives are animated in doing justice. Doing justice or living in righteousness is not merely avoiding gross sin and being generally obedient to God's law. Doing justice is a generous justice toward our neighbors in need. The Samaritan in the story disadvantaged himself for the advantage of another. Wicked people disadvantage others for their own advantage. Therefore, God calls his righteous children in Jesus Christ to the animated life of generous justice. Generous justified lives do justice is everyday generosity in the community we live. Generous justice is a sharing out of the wealth of our basic resources to meet others

needs. If God could draw a storyboard of the animated life of his kingdom it's pictures would tell the story of generous lives in loving their neighbors by serving them in their needs through generous justice. But what motivates our generous lives?

Motivation

The Motivation for generous lives is not obligation but the substitutionary love of God in Jesus Christ. In the story Jesus is telling his lawyer friend the Samaritan is not obligated by anything in the man he shares his life with in generosity. There is animosity between the Samaritan and the Jew. There is nothing that merits the Samaritan's generous life. This story is not a moral tale to guilt us into doing good to our neighbor. It is a story of God's unyielding, undying love for us in Jesus Christ. We are those on the road in need. We are those torn by an unyielding world of ours and others sin. Jesus is the unwanted one who gives all that he has in his own life for us that by this undeniable substitutionary love he will be the one we want to meet and satisfy all our deepest needs. And when he fills us with this love in himself we're motivated for a generous life toward others, not because of anything in people, but because it is our joy to see him meeting the needs of others through our lives in him.

Week 6 - Humble Cultural Engagement (John 5:1-17)

At Christ Covenant Church we long to see a movement of the gospel that will bring about generous lives in words and deeds through a humble cultural engagement. We are saying that we believe a gospel shaped heart will create humble Christians who engage the world in their work. God has served his church so that his service continues through her in a public cultivation of culture. He does this through our work, our callings, our places of service in the culture we live serving our neighbors. A movement of the gospel expresses itself in our public faith in this world. In John 5:1-17 we see Jesus is the ultimate example of humble cultural engagement. He is the second Adam come into the world to accomplish salvation and cultivation for a new creation. He's the culture maker. He says, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (Jn.5:17). Here we see what work is, what's wrong with work, and how our humble engagement in culture through our work is restored.

Work Dignified

Jesus dignifies work. In pagan cultures work is an evil that the gods leave to the creature. Marduk says in the Mesopotamian creation myth, "I will bring into being lowly primitive creature man. That will be his name. To him will be charged all the labor, so that the gods may have their ease." But the Scripture says, my Father is working until now, and I am working. Jesus who is God, and one with God the Father, is saying that work is good.

When God created the heavens and the earth he created all things good. And when he created man and woman as his image bearers to cultivate culture he expressed this as very good. The Triune God created a paradise for his creatures to live and in that paradise he created work. When God who has been working from the beginning created his paradise, he created it with work. You can't have bliss or paradise or a utopia without work. That's a high view of work. But the first Adam failed to retain the image of God as a worker.

Therefore, Jesus Christ came as the second Adam to restore the image of God and renew his creation. And he came working. He worked as a carpenter for most of his young adult life, and then began a ministry of word and deed until his death on the cross. In John 5 he is working to

bring joy into the feast in Jerusalem by seeking and saving the lost, showing compassion and restoring wholeness to the lame, teaching the Jews how to rightly understand their days and their God, and leading them to faith in him who works for them. God the Father is using the work of God the Son to love those in the world through work. We can all participate in humble cultural engagement by recognizing that all our work is dignified by the Lord Jesus Christ coming into the world as a worker, a culture maker, a cultivator of the world.

Therefore all work is good. We don't have to spend our days trying to get out of work. We can participate in all kinds of work seeing it as the way God is loving our neighbors through us. We can understand that all kinds of work is valuable. There is not one kind of work that should be valued over another. Christians should put away their snobbery in regard to work. We tend to value "white collar" work over "blue collar" work. We value "professionals" over "working class". God uses all kinds of work to love his creatures in his creation, and our humble cultural engagement embraces this truth whether we're laying brick or doing heart surgery, changing a diaper or preparing law briefs, teaching children or managing financial portfolios. And because God dignifies work we should do our work well. The best way to honor God in our work is by doing the best we can in whatever he gives our hearts and hands to do. But just as we see God dignifying work in Jesus' work in our text, we also can see what's wrong with work in our text.

Work Corrupted by Sin

Why do we find work frustrating? Why do we find work difficult? Why do we want to get away from our work? It's here in our text. Here's a festival. A celebration of God's salvation among his people. There should be celebration, rejoicing, people loving and serving one another. But instead man is looking out for himself. Here's a place where the lame, blind, deaf, and suffering come, but no one's helping the invalid. The Jewish religious leaders are contentious, angry, and uncaring toward the helpless poor. Israel was meant to be a blessing to all the nations. They were a people through whom peace, shalom, would come to all kinds of people, their own and outsiders through their culture making, their cultural engagement as the image bearers, the redeemed people of God. But they're not. They don't want to help their neighbor in need and they want to destroy the life of Jesus. What has happened to work?

Work is corrupted by man's image breaking and it's results, self seeking. When man turns his work into a substitute for God he works for himself. Man works to 'change the world' because he needs to get salvation from his work. A person needs meaning, significance, importance, and justification from his work when he does not trust God's work for him or her in Jesus Christ. The image of God in man was defaced when sin entered the world. He no longer saw the created things as gifts from God to be used in cultivation of culture for the glory of God by a dependent trust in God. They became things he would use for self salvation. So he would use them to make a name for himself. This idolatry lead to the destruction of culture as it rejected the knowledge of God and his righteousness through a dependence on his work and to be his workmanship for the love of others. Andy Crouch says, "Instead of relational and cultural diversity, human beings now seek domination and uniformity. Instead of using our reason to celebrate and care for God's world, we use it to exploit the world. And instead of caring for one another in our vulnerability, we take advantage of one another's vulnerability." This is image breaking to make a name for self rather than the glory of God and the good of our neighbors in our work. But God.

Work Restored

In John 5 Jesus is revealed as the one working to restore work in the hearts of his restored image bearers. Work is only restored to the proper place of being for the glory of God and the good of our neighbors when Jesus is working for us. Humble cultural engagement requires faith in Jesus Christ. It requires salvation in Jesus Christ and renewal in that salvation day after day. Jesus came working to restore his creatures and his creation by working to accomplish salvation through a perfect righteous life. He worked by the sweat of the brow as he kept the law of God perfectly in all his work in our place. He took on the thorns as he wore them in the form of a crown upon his head suffering the wrath of God in the place of sinners. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to defeat the work of sin and death, and to work on behalf of his own forevermore, even preparing a place in his for us in his presence. It is faith in Jesus Christ, a dependent trust in his work, that restores our work. It is being filled with all the fullness of God with a knowledge of his loving work on our behalf that makes us his workmanship prepared to walk in his works in the earth for his glory, not self glory, and for the good of our neighbors in love. This is image restoring by grace. We work in gratitude by faith loving in every area of the work he's prepared for us to walk in. It does not have to be 'world changing' work. It's ordinary but restored, and it's how he restores all things to himself. He restores image bearers for humble cultural engagement.

A Brief Explanation of Humble Cultural Engagement

This was written for The Chronicle and it may prove helpful in better understanding humble cultural engagement.

To many, phrases like, "Cultural Renewal", "Cultural Influence", or "Culture Change", sound suspect. When these phrases are used by the church, the suspicions rise even higher. We may think these expressions sound like a political takeover by those who are religious. In a western context we say, 'Keep the church and the state separate.' But it is naive and intellectually dishonest to deny that anyone who wants to see culture move in a certain direction holds to a particular worldview or view of "the good life" that they would like to see have a greater influence on society in general.

In our Western context people would say that a person's religious views are private. Those views are not to be expressed in the realm of their work or callings. To let their views influence their cooking, writing, music, banking, or farming, is to impose those views on others. This view of things keeps "the facts" or the public sphere separated from morality or faith, the private sphere. However, in other cultural contexts outside the west all of life is integrated. A person's views of God, human nature, and moral truth, which are "private", are not to be kept out of a person's "public life." But humble cultural engagement is fit for a western cultural context, or any other context, as we learn to be followers of Jesus in all of life.

The church is always responding to the culture. There are four ways the church has in general responded to or engaged culture. These can be defined as: countercultural, culture-controlling, culture-assimilating, and cultural tipping point. Counterculturalists believe "the church is not called to transform culture but rather to form countercultures that bear witness through modeling alternative values". Culture controlling churches believe that governments and the laws of the land should be explicitly based on biblical principles. Those who are culture-assimilating believe that God is revealing himself and his will through political and cultural movements of social liberation. Therefore, the church is to be liberated to mirror these movements. The culture-tipping point view believes that if enough people are evangelized and changed by the

gospel then culture will change. There are negatives and positives in these four views, but not any one of them is the way of humble cultural engagement.

- Humble cultural engagement emphasizes a countercultural, gospel-centered Christianity that does not make its countercultural position the exclusive witness to culture.
- Humble cultural engagement emphasizes evangelism, church revitalization, church planting, and discipleship which helps Christians learn to work in their callings in a distinctively Christian manner.
- Humble cultural engagement recognizes God's common grace which calls Christians and churches to work with others in a community for the common good of all.
- Humble cultural engagement emphasizes cultural leadership that demonstrates a truly just society is one that recognizes "the value-laden and commitment-driven nature of all knowledge and all institutions."

What is the biblical worldview that constructs a humble cultural engagement as outlined above? It is rooted in the doctrines of Creation-Incarnation and Kingdom-Resurrection. It is the doctrine of God's good creation and his willingness to re-enter it in the incarnation of Jesus Christ that leads us to see the importance and value of all things created. God is the artist of and investor in his material world. He delights to create, sustain, and cultivate his creation. Therefore, we cannot say that the preacher "does the Lord's work", while the banker "does worldly work". It is God the Holy Spirit who daily gives life to the dead through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:4), and who renews the material world (Psalm 104). Therefore, God invests his renewed image bearers who live by a humble faith in Jesus in all areas of his good creation to labor alongside others to engage in a participation of God's good work. Yet we all know that God's good creation is infected by sin.

God is king of all that he has made, and man is in rebellion to God and his kingdom. This rebellion is revealed in man's sin stemming from his nature of sin. Sin has caused an unraveling of all relationships in God's creation. Wherever God is not acknowledged by his creatures as King, there is a poverty of relationship to him, oneself, others, and the world. When those in God's creation do not honor them as their King, they acknowledge another god or idol. Every human engagement in this world puts forth something other than God—financial profit, individual rights, human reason, group power—as the ultimate value and goal. This always leads to human poverty individually and corporately.

It is the doctrine of God's kingdom that promises a renewed creation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Every part of the world is broken by sin, and it is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that promises its renewal - hearts, relationships, communities, and practices are renewed by his reconciling work (Col.1:16-20). He is doing more than saving souls by his death and resurrection. The Lordship of Jesus Christ is affecting all of human life. The church is to be a renewed creation in which the world can see what family life, business practices, race relations, and all aspects of life can be under the kingship of Jesus Christ. According to the doctrine of the kingdom, we can understand the world only when we realize that it was originally created good in itself, that it is fallen and marred by sin, and that it can be redeemed under Christ the healing King. This leads the church practically into humble cultural

engagement. Our lives are to be lived as a public faith in Jesus Christ in the city and the community where he has invested us for his glory and others good.

Conclusion

We believe that what is outlined in these summaries best describes what we value at Christ Covenant Church, and what we long to see. Therefore we ask that you would be engaged by talking about these values through Catalyst Conversations through March 2019. We also ask that you would commit to praying for God to allow us to see them worked into and out of Christ Covenant Church for his glory and others good. We will be having corporate prayer times to this end beginning in April and will run through June. Finally, we would ask that you consider how you can help us plan for the next 10 years in the life of this church in accord with our vision. You will be hearing more about planning times which will begin at the end of the summer and go into the fall of 2019. Thank you for participating in Catalyst 2019.