

“A Visionary Church!”

Matthew 9:35-38

Intro. – A Bruce Barton said, “I do not like the phrase: ‘Never cross a bridge till you come to it.’ The world is owned by men who cross bridges in their imaginations miles and miles in advance of the procession.”

It is significant that you and I dream dreams not about things but about the future of the Lord’s Church here. Jesus Himself envisioned the world when He gave the Great Commission: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation...” The Apostles and the first century church *caught the vision* so to speak. This is illustrated in what Holy Spirit inspired Paul wrote in Colossians 1:23 “...*This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven...*”

Do you sense the need for such visionary thinking? Is the local church work here looking ahead, viewing the harvest like our Lord and the early saints viewed it? Can this church enter the enormous doors of opportunity put before her and set to the task? Are we a church with *vision*?

Purpose: to better understand our need for *VISION* in the Lord’s work right here at Christ’s Church in Eaton

I Vision of a Great WORK

A. A Church Ever Deepening its Faith

1. Romans 8:6 “*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*”
2. Fruit of the Spirit will be evident – growing in consistency (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.”
3. A church deepening its worship and service is always growing in the Faith!

B. A Church that is Mission Minded

1. Convinced the church that *goes* is the church that grows!
2. Must be *beacon of light* in Jerusalem (own community), Judea (state of Indiana), Samaria (uttermost parts of the earth).
3. Illus. – steam engine can’t generate any more steam than enough to pull itself and blow its own horn is of little value to the railroad. – i.e. going beyond these walls is not optional – imperative!

C. A Church Utilizing its Space

1. Two problems I would wish = problem of seating people in worship/classrooms and parking cars..
2. For what purpose was this building built and dedicated? Buildings are built to be used and filled – better to fill than it is to build just for the sake of building...
3. We can/will do this when we work – if we go people will come – no short cuts – equation to growth: $G=NPW$ (Growth = Number of People Working).

D. A Church With an Ever Expanding Bible School

1. The difference in attendance in Bible School and Morning worship is a sad reality...
2. Bible School is *study in the Word, work/service and fellowship* = presently don’t know of a better means available in our situation to enhance these three areas.

E. A Church With Plans for the Future

1. Goals/aims must be second nature to our thinking
2. Where do we hope to be in the near and distant future? How then do we propose to get to that point? Where does God fit into the mix?
3. Talk is cheap... but talk can lead to plans... herein lies part of the vision of a great church...
4. Some may be saying, “But, these are so far-reaching in nature...” Why not go out on a limb? Isn’t that where the fruit is? Must be part of something so “out there” that unless God is in the forefront of what we plan and do we will miserably fail.

II Vision to EXCUTE this Great Work

A. Be Alert

1. Active, zealous, enthusiastic, wholehearted, eager, passionate, fervent, totally = i.e. intent upon doing nothing more AND nothing less than the will of God.
2. Been said, "Dreams never come true unless we wake up."
 - Illus. – Preacher read an ad from a railroad company that wanted number of "sleepers." Wrote back and offered the train company his entire congregation... Not the case here but we can always improve...

B. Be Opportunity Conscious

1. Illus. – Shoe salesman went to certain part of Africa. Sent word back "no market, no one wore shoes..." Second man sent word back "send shoes, great opportunity, no one wearing shoes."
2. Difference? One was opportunity conscious the other was not. Same holds true in church settings..
3. Remember rich man in Luke 16:19-31? Lifted up his eyes in torment because passed by the opportunity to do what was right = equation: opportunity + ability = responsibility.
4. Illus. – picture with elephant... what do you see? How many legs? Doesn't really matter = point being focus on matters that have significance...

C. Be Optimistic

1. Three classes of people in local church: 1. pessimists... 2. optimists... 3. peptimists "we did it!"
2. Language of pessimists is "we can't do it" = language of 10 spies of Canaan... & Pigpen Illus. ...
 - Philippians 4:13 "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*"

D. Be Unhindered

1. Again, Israel concentrated on the obstacles through the 10 spies...
2. Mark 2 four brought paralyzed friend to Christ who were beset with obstacles; nevertheless, overcame these hindrances...
3. Heard said, "Obstacles are those matters we see when we take our eye off the goal."
 - Hebrews 12:1-2 "*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*"

E. Be Forgetful

1. The past is valuable as a guidepost, but dangerous as a hitching post. = can't afford live in past...!
2. Looking ahead is God's way of keeping you and me from falling behind!

III Vision to REALIZE this Great Work

A. We Have the Funds

1. Physical blessings we have speak of this... we are a blessed people, make no mistake about it.
2. Ever notice we never try impress anybody with our poverty until it comes to giving Lord's work?
3. Without exception, if every wage earner here would simply give as the Lord has asked, there would never ever be another financial concern for this local congregation!

B. We Have the Talent

- absolutely no one here without ability(ies) that aren't needed in the work of Christ's Church...

C. We Have the Tools

1. Building, land, tools within, etc. all being maintained/utilized... and we owe nothing to creditors!
2. We are in a position to do more right now than most local churches every think of doing...

D. We Have God Who is Able

1. Ephesians 3:20 "*Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*"
3. Make no mistake, our God wants in the worst way to bless and use you and me to His honor!

Conclusion: In Bedford, OH a town just twelve miles from Cleveland, two charming and attractive girls lived. One of these girls was dating Rutherford, but her parents vigorously opposed their courtship on the grounds that young Rutherford had no future. James was the other young man who dated the other girl from Bedford. Her parents objected to their courtship as well. They also didn't see any future for James as he, like Rutherford was not from a family of "means." The amazing coincidence of the courtship of both these young ladies is the fact that both refused future Presidents of the United States – Rutherford B. Hayes, 19th president and James A. Garfield, 20th president. My point? They certainly were not persons of vision.

When Scripture speaks of looking out and seeing the fields white unto harvest, it also speaks to our keeping our eyes on the cross. Not crossed eyed, but eyes on the cross.

Thus, to be a part of a church with vision, we summarize and conclude with the following: We need each other: each others' prayers... faithful presence... participation... perseverance... personal devotion...

Our Lord asked us to pray that more workers be sent into the fields ready for the harvest. He was asking you and me to be a part of a church with vision!