

Year End Message

Title: “Looking Ahead to 2011”

Selected passages ~ January 2, 2011

OBJECTIVE: To cast a vision, purpose, and passion for ministry in 2011.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests
- Offering envelopes for 2011
- Prayer gathering – tonight @ 6 p.m.
- 2010 budget – praise!
- Jan. 9th – “Christianity 101” class begins – 2 p.m.
- Read thru the Bible in 2011
- SWCBA Annual mtg.

Opening prayer

What are your plans for the New Year? Are they any different from your plans in 2010 or for the years before?

There is nothing magical about January 1st. Plans made at this time of year are not more likely to succeed than if we made plans on May 17th or August 4th. However, the New Year feels like a new beginning for many – a fresh start.

This sermon is a bit different from the other 51 sermons during the year. On this Sunday, I always preach a sermon that tries to cast a vision and passion for ministry in the New Year.

So today – on the 2nd day of 2011 – I want us to think about the direction of our church and what we will try to accomplish in this year and beyond.

There are two key commands that Jesus identified as crucial. Both together are known as the “Greatest Commandment”. Jesus makes reference to this command in Matthew 22:36-40.

Read 22:36-40

We can boil this down to:

Love God

Love your neighbor

Remember that love is an action word – a verb. Loving God / Loving our neighbor is not dependent on our feelings of love or affection for them – but this love is a giving love – a sacrificial love – a love that looks to the object and desires to serve them and meet their needs.

Love God

What does this mean? How do we love God?

Jesus gives us the answer – “...with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.”

In other words...with your entire being. Love God with everything you are and everything you do. Going to church on Sunday – and then going home and living your life the rest of the week in a way that disregards God – does not love God. Loving God involves obeying God at all times.

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” John 14:15

Love your neighbor

Remember...Jesus defines your neighbor as anyone you encounter that has a need (Luke 10:25-37). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus told us who our neighbor was and how to love them.

In the parable, thieves robbed and severely beat a man, and left him lying by the side of the road - half dead. Two religious leaders walked by the injured and dying man and offered no help. The Samaritan came upon the man who had been robbed, but he didn't start teaching to him or advising him of how dangerous it was to travel on that road alone – he simply cared for him.

In this parable, there is no conversion, no religious preaching...simply an example of love toward your neighbor. So, according to Jesus, your neighbor is anyone you come upon – and you love them by meeting their need.

Now...let's look at our mission statement – and how it fits with Jesus' directives for the Church.

CDOBC Mission: *“Helping people become mature followers of Jesus”*

This mission statement has within it both evangelism (*“become”*) and discipleship (*“mature”*). We want people to come to faith in Christ – and to grow / mature in their faith.

This mission statement comes from Matthew 28:19-20 – a passage known as:

The *“Great Commission”*

Read 28:19-20

We can boil this down to:

Share the Gospel...with everyone...

“...all nations”

“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for *all the people*.”

Luke 2:10

To have a solid commitment to the Gospel is no small issue – especially in the current church culture. So many churches who have a long history of standing upon this Biblical truth have abandoned these things for a message of acceptance and good intentions. So many churches have decided that Jesus is *not* the only way to the Father (John 14:6), and have become more concerned about the opinions of critics than the opinions and truth of God. The move away from the truth of Christ, to the values and demands of the culture has caused much confusion among

believers in those churches and has greatly diluted the clarity of the Gospel to the unchurched and unsaved.

History shows us that the drift will always be away from the truth – away from God and toward human control, human passions, and human independence.

Now some believers and churches think that all we need to do is preach the Gospel.

The problem is that the Gospel is larger than preaching and teaching...it involves action – both the action of obedient Christians living according to the truth – and the action of Christians expressing love to one another and to the unsaved world. Limiting the work of the church to *preaching* the Gospel does not satisfy the full calling of the church – nor does it encompass the full impact of the Gospel.

So...the ministry of our church must include faithfully preaching the truth of Scripture – especially as it relates to the Gospel.

But...it must contain more than the preaching and teaching ministry – more than the discipleship ministry that the church has traditionally known.

Love God

Love our neighbor

Share the Gospel...with everyone.

This is a pretty good “to-do” list for our church!

But, let me change our perspective a bit – and look at ministry from another angle.

What is the heart of God most concerned with?

The heart of God is revealed in Scripture, so we can know the heart of God by reading what the passions of God are in the Bible. We see God’s heart most clearly in the

commands He has given us – to Love God, Love our neighbor, and to share the Gospel...with everyone.

If we – Canyon Del Oro Baptist Church – want to be blessed by God and if we want to be busy with the work of God – shouldn't we have an idea of what God's heart is most concerned with?

Now, I'll admit...it's a difficult question to answer – because 1) I think there are many correct answers, and 2) I think it's a bit presumptuous to corral the heart of God into one or two specific passions.

But – we must ask this question – and try to answer this question – in an attempt to put our energies into ministry that will most effectively advance the Kingdom of God here in Oro Valley. The question I am proposing asks about the heart of God, but another way to ask the question is: “*Are we doing God's agenda, not our agenda.*” Are we – CDOBC – serving and working in a way that is aligned with God's agenda – His heart?

The first – and a very common answer about the concerns of God's heart uttered in churches that are Biblically focused – is “*Our Sin*”. God's heart is deeply concerned with fallen humanity. After all, the Gospel is the “*Good News*”, as the angel told the shepherds, “...in the town of David, a **Savior** has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11).

This is indeed the blood that flows in the arteries and veins of our church. We take seriously the issue of human sinfulness and its resulting effect of separating us from God and one another. The only cure for our sin is to place our faith in Jesus Christ – in His atoning death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. As a church, I believe this truth is preached from the pulpit, it's taught in our Sunday School classes, Pastor Scott teaches this in our Youth Ministry, our AWANA kids hear this message, and it's taught and discussed in our Men's & Women's Ministry gatherings

and Bible studies, the 20+ missionaries we support around the world teach this truth, and this is taught in all the other ministries our church is involved with.

Let's go back to the heart of God.

“Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.”

Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision

So what breaks the heart of God?

God's heart was filled with pain because of the sinfulness of man.

(Genesis 6:6)

We know that Jesus' heart was broken when his friend Lazarus died (John 11:35).

We know that when Jesus saw the harassed and helpless, He had compassion on them (Matt. 9:36).

Human sin - Human suffering – human pain – human dysfunction - all of these break the heart of God.

Is there human sin, human suffering, human pain, human dysfunction in Oro Valley?

Over the past few years, I've spent a great deal of time thinking of our Oro Valley neighborhood...our “neighbors” and what the greatest needs in this area are. Of course, there are many needs and we can't meet them all right now.

Family issues - step-families / single moms / marriage support / parenting issues

Financial issues – budget / retirement planning / stewardship issues / debt / credit

Death of a loved one

Military – helping vets returning from war / helping military marriages / helping military kids

Drug use

Crime

Education

Teen pregnancy

Lot's of issues.

When we look at Jesus, we see that a large portion of His earthly ministry was geared to alleviate human pain and suffering. His ministry of healing and meeting the legitimate needs of people was not less important than His preaching and teaching.

How are we doing?

Does Oro Valley see Canyon Del Oro Baptist Church as a place that helps with these needs?

Does the leadership of our town know that if there is a problem in one of these areas that they can all on us for help?

So – as we look at CDOBC – how is our ministry proportioned? Is it all preaching and teaching...or is meeting the legitimate needs of people a significant part of our efforts? Before answering that question, keep in mind that the people Jesus had compassion on and worked at meeting their needs were not His disciples – and the vast majority of them didn't have faith in Him!

Our salvation is not just something we will use in the next world, but something we are to use to redeem and transform this world. So, how can we use our energies not just for our own eternal future – but to impact the things God's heart breaks over...the things that the heart of God is most concerned about?

“The probability that we may fail in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just.” Abraham Lincoln

“Vision without action is merely a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world.”

Joel Barker

Application

My desire...as your Pastor...is that CDOBC makes an impact in Oro Valley – that expands the Kingdom of God...that adds more souls to the Family of God.

I don't believe we can accomplish this if we don't have a balanced ministry that shares not only the truth of Christ, but also shares the love of Christ.

Loving our neighbors...the people of Oro Valley and N.W. Tucson requires us to work in some non-traditional ways.

Step-family

Grief support

Operation Eternal Freedom

Be involved

Be in prayer

Be supportive and encouraging

Be a promoter