

Lake Cities Community Church
March 30, 2008
Pastor Craig Schill

“A Balanced Vision”

Introduction:

I would like to give you a visual illustration of my vision for our church. Here it is – A level. My vision is that we would be a balanced church – that we would keep the bubble in the middle. I realize you might consider this a bit boring – to be balanced is boring when we live in a world of the pendulum, which swings from one extreme to another. If you start a new church you have a menu in front of you. You could be a purpose driven church, a Willow church, A Harvest church, a traditional church, a contemporary church or an emerging church. I would like for us to be a balanced church.

Do you remember those Snicker’s Billboards that combined words? I have a new word for a balanced church – *Tramergorary*. Traditional – emerging – and contemporary. I want to talk with you this morning about having a balanced vision.

Vision is a biblical term. God gave visions in both the Old and New Testaments, as supernatural revelations of the future. He gave Samuel a vision of what would happen to Eli’s wicked sons. He gave Paul a vision that led him to go to Macedonia. Visions are about the future and the journey into the future. Does Jesus have a vision for His church? Yes He does! And He has revealed it to us in the Bible – to guide us so that we can become the type of church that pleases Him. It is not really my vision, or even the elder’s vision I want to talk with you about – but Christ’s vision for *His church*.

This vision is grounded theologically in our four purposes. Let’s review. What is our first purpose? (Worshipping). Our second purpose? (Growing). Third? (Loving) Fourth? (Sharing).

As we begin, it is important for us to understand that *these purposes are not unique to LCCC*. They are our expressions of the biblical reasons why God created the church, they are true not just for our church but for any church, not matter how large or small, how traditional or non-traditional. Wayne Grudem, in his Systematic Theology, said, “We can understand the purposes of the church in terms of ministry to God (worship), ministry to believers (nurture – which we call growing and loving) and ministry to the world. (evangelism – which we call sharing)” (Systematic Theology, 867-686).

Worshiping, growing, loving and sharing. Today my purpose not to share any new information with you about our purposes, but to review why we exist and what it is that we are trying to accomplish. It centers around our four purposes.

Worshiping

We begin with the purpose of worshiping. Jesus said, “**But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.**” (John 4:23). The church exists to gather people in the worship of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But worshiping is the most difficult purposes to understand? What does it mean to worship? Sometimes worship is described very broadly, as everything we do – is that it? Sometimes worship is described as singing or music – is that it? Sometimes worship refers to a worship service, like this morning. Is it? Maybe the lack of clarity about worship is the reason why this purpose is virtually ignored in churches today. George Barna reported, “Even though churches build their primary weekly event around the concept of worship, and call the event a

“worship service,” less than one out of every five churches rated worship to be a top ministry priority.”

Worship is stated as our top ministry priority – so what is it? When you think worshiping, I want you to think of the three pillars of worship that are found in Scripture. Do you remember these when we talked about them a year ago? The first pillar is “to remember.” Remembering and worshiping are closely linked in Scripture. The Psalmist said: Psa. 22:27 - All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations will worship before You.” In the New Testament at the Lord’s Table Christ calls us to worship him, how? By remembering his sacrifice. This is my body...do this in remembrance of me...This cup is the new covenant in my blood...drink it in remembrance of me. 1 Cor 11:24-25. A big part of worship is remembering. God know that we have short memories. Like when we pull out an old photo album and are ushered back to that time in our lives, as we remember truths about God we are ushered into the reality of God’s presence, which leads to the second pillar.

The second pillar is to submit. When a person in the Bible entered into God’s presence what happened? They typically fell on the faces before him – literally – nose to the ground. The Hebrew word for worship *histahavah*, which means: *To bow down before a higher person (HALOT). “To prostrate oneself.”(NIDNTT).* The word itself is a physical word picture of what it means to worship God – which is to submit before Him. You can’t worship God with an arched back. You are not truly worshiping, unless your heart is submitted before Him, and that leads to the third pillar.

The third pillar is obedience. The outworking of true submission is obedience. Our icon for worshiping is a crown and the color is purple to remind us that Jesus is King of Kings – who

expects to be obeyed – and when we obey – we worship. Jesus said, “He who has my commandments and keep them, that is the one who loves me” (John 14:21a).

Remembrance, submission and obedience – that is the language of worship.

But - you ask, what about our value of historic Christian worship. Yes – that is in our mission statement and as such, a distinctive of how we seek to worship God corporately. The Church Calendar and Creeds help us to remember truths about God. Communion brings us to the Lord’s Table each week. Worshiping is our first and primary purpose as a church.

Growing

Our second purpose is growing spiritually. The assumption behind this second purpose is that we have not yet arrived at spiritual maturity. We don’t obey or submit as we should. What is the goal – it is in: **Philippians 2:5: “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

That is our destination – to be like Jesus in our attitude and behavior – and the church is a place where people are challenged to grow-up spiritually. Paul said to the Corinthians “**Do not be children in your thinking, but be mature**”. 1 Cor 14:20.

I don’t know if you remember Pete the Plant. My ugly but lovable plant that followed me for years in and out of various offices. The problem was it just didn’t grow. I don’t know why, he just didn’t! But – when we moved to Texas – he must have known that everything is bigger in Texas – and Pete grew and grew and grew! That is my prayer for this church – that a person, perhaps who has been at the same spiritual age for years, is now challenged to grow and take the next steps of faith in their own life. One of Peter arms fell off the other day – and here is 2nd

Peter – just the same size as his mother plant was a few years ago. I think I will donate 2nd Peter to the church – and we will see if he will grow in our 2nd year of ministry. I hope you will grow.

We desire to be a church that worships God in a biblical way – remembering who He is, submitting to Him and obeying Him. We grow in worship as we grow in spiritual maturity. And where is that best done? In am with loving relationships.

Loving.

Each biblical purpose for the church is critical, but our call to love one another is like the sparkplug in a car – it what ignites everything else. Jesus said, [John 13:34](#) “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [John 13:35](#) “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Paul said to the fighting church in Corinth – If you have the best teaching, and the best worship service, but you do not have love – then you have nothing! Zero!

I was so encouraged Good Friday – two visiting families remarked to me later at how warm and loving you made them feel. You left a lasting impression of love on them, which makes Jesus smile. If we are at all pleasing to the Lord, it will come out of our love for one another. A love that looks out for the other person’s interest ahead of our own. A love that goes above and beyond the call of duty – *hesed* love that we saw in the book of Ruth.

Insomuch as God demonstrated His love to the world by sending his son Jesus Christ to die for the World. Jesus demonstrates His love to the world through His church. That is our third purpose.

Sharing

Jesus Christ has gathered people to Himself to worship Him, and to create a place where believers can grow in their faith in an environment of sacrificial, generous love. The last purpose completes God's call for the local church – Sharing the good news.

Let's try something we did a year ago: When I say, "When you have good news" – you respond by saying, "you share it." OK? "When you have good new!" "You share it." The church of Jesus Christ has been entrusted with the best news in the history of mankind, the gospel message. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the sweetest, most beautiful, most dazzling message known to mankind. And when you have good news? "You share it!"

It is like a gift. That is why our icon is that of a present. Salvation is a gift – a good and joyful gift - you can't earn it or buy it – is has to be given to you. *"For the wage of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life, in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Jesus wants His church to share this good gift with other people. Paul wrote to the local church in the city of Rome:

Rom. 10:14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Rom. 10:15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"

It might help you to think about sharing in term the good news in three levels. The broadest level is global missions. As a church we now support three missionaries – the Mill's, Klausli's and Martin's. Some outsiders have commended us for supporting missionaries so early in our existence – like it is a strange thing. How could you start a church and not very quickly have it reflect God's love for the world through missions? It would be like starting a McDonalds, but not selling Big Macs. It would not make sense!

The second level of sharing is local outreach. These are events that our church sponsors to get you and I into the community with the love and message of Christ. For example, the Rowlett Bike Rode outreach is coming up on May 3rd. This is the good work that we learned about in Titus. The third level is personal evangelism. It is good for us, corporately, to have intentional plans to share the good news, but you also individually must take the message of Christ to where you live and work and play. Jesus said, “**You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and then to the remotest parts of the earth.**” Acts 1:8

Balance in Everything - Application

Worshiping, growing, loving and sharing. I trust that you can now see the importance of balance in the church. *When you and I stand before God and give account for this church – I pray we will be able to say that we sought to fulfill all Christ’s purposes for His church.*

How do we do this? Carefully and intentionally. It will not happen by accident. Our fallen nature pushes us to extremes and unbalance. For the church leadership – it means carefully reviewing our ministries and seeking balance in how we allocate limited resources and manpower. We are developing a new budget that is broken out by the four purposes – so we can see, just like your home budget, whether we are spending dollars in a balanced, intentional way to fulfill the purposes of the church. Each purpose is important and the leadership will seek to pursue each one in a balanced way.

I would also ask you to be intentional about your involvement in the church. You have limited time, which also must be budgeted carefully. It is OK if you do not spend equal time in each of the four purposes, but my challenge for all of us to be intentionally involved in all of our purposes this year. On the handout you can see the circle that encompasses each of the four

areas. You will help our church achieve its vision by being mindful of how God might want you to help move us forward in an area. Your main involvement may be in teaching Sunday School, but make it a priority to be involved in at least one outreach, in a meaningful way. Others might have a passion for evangelism, or lead a small group – but also try to help in some way with our worship service. All of the purposes are interrelated and all are important. As the church leadership seeks to hold them in balance, I want you also to hold them in balance, and ask God one specific thing he might have you to do in each of the four areas.

Conclusion:

We are here to worship God – to exalt Him and glorify Him. That is the primary purpose of the church – that we remember, submit and obey Him. We seek to do that each and every week here and then continue our worship throughout the week. But we are stubborn, and prone to wander. We know that there is much spiritual growth left - to change and become more like Christ. Changing is hard work and sometimes painful - but we can support one another and show Christ's love as we challenge and care for one another. That love leads us also to share the good news that we have with the world; personally, corporately and globally. And that does what? It creates more worshipers, who need to grow, and be loved, and who will then share – all in perfect balance. The head of the church is Jesus Christ, he has given us a vision of what He wants His church to be and do. May we be found faithful.