



Autumn 2016 – **Vision 2016**  
2 October, Paul Langham

## Reading – Revelation 21

### INTRODUCTION – VISION 2016

It's almost a year since we began seeking the Lord for his fresh vision. We asked for 3 things

- That we would hear his vision
- That it would be big enough to scare us
- That we would pursue it with everything we've got

This is a story of

- Bristol
- Jesus
- The Kingdom of God
- And You

Before we look (next week) at exactly what we will do as a church, we need to acknowledge that it is the presence of Jesus we need to pursue above everything. No programme, however brilliant conceived or delivered, can take the place of the presence of Jesus – which is brought to us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

### TERMINOLOGY

IDENTITY – WHO?

MISSION – WHY

VISION – WHAT

VALUES – HOW

VEHICLES – HOW & WHEN

### IDENTITY – WHO ARE WE?

Last week, I ended my sermon with an amusing quote by an au pair who, finding the children in her charge misbehaving, meant to cry out, 'What on earth are you doing?' but instead found herself crying out

*What are you doing on earth ...?*

It's a good question. What are we here for?

We're designed to be culture shapers, kingdom bringers, good news sharers.

We're designed as salt and light, to make the world taste better for others, to make the world a brighter place.

*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*  
*Jim Elliott*

*There is nothing worth living for, unless it is worth dying for.*      *Elisabeth Elliott*

*A clam glorifies God better than we do, because the clam is being everything it was created to be, whereas we are not.*      *Elisabeth Elliott*

## **IDENTITY – WHO WE ARE**

The following words will shortly be appearing on our website. Study them, ask yourselves what they mean and how they will come across to those not yet our members, those not yet believers.

We're a ['Word & Spirit' Church of England](#) parish church based in Clifton, North West Bristol, part of the [Diocese of Bristol](#) and the ['New Wine'](#) Network of churches.

Christ Church is a great place to be – we're a very diverse group of people who have one thing in common: we've met an extravagantly generous God who loves us unconditionally.

In Jesus, he's welcomed and accepted us, made us part of his world-wide family, is healing our brokenness and restoring in us what it means to be truly human. Jesus changes everything.

He calls us to be as generous to one another and to our world as he has been to us. The bible calls this culture of generous welcome and unconditional love 'The Kingdom of God.'

This Kingdom is a place where earth begins to look like heaven, and we want to play our part in seeing it grow in our own lives, in Clifton, Bristol and beyond.

We know it's impossible to achieve this ourselves and so we seek partnership with others who also look for the coming of God's Kingdom.

Above all, we continually pursue a deeper love for, intimacy with, and understanding of Jesus – believing that this is the key to unlocking what is impossible for us.

With so many different people making up our church family, and so many things going on, we're confident there's a place for everyone. Please come along and see for yourself. We look forward to welcoming you whenever you visit.

## **MISSION – WHY WE'RE HERE**

Our Mission is to play our part in growing the Kingdom of God in Clifton, Bristol and beyond.

We want to see Bristol thrive as never before. We believe that God wants Christians and churches who are shapers of culture, bringers of the Kingdom, sharers of good news in such a way that the City actually changes

## **VISION – WHAT WE LONG TO SEE**

We want to see individuals and culture transformed, which happens when people are

- **welcomed** into a family of believers where people are allowed to be real, and encouraged to honour & care for one another;
- **restored** in their identity as children of our loving Father God in encounter with Jesus through his Holy Spirit;
- **empowered** to reproduce the character, life and works of Jesus and so bring Kingdom culture, influence and transformation into every sphere of life, and especially our 'frontlines' where God has placed us day by day.

## A SUMMARY OF KINGDOM THEOLOGY

Here, I drew a diagram on the flipchart, which is going to be tricky to reproduce in words alone!

I started by reminding people that Jesus said a couple of things about the church and the Kingdom

1. He said he would build the church (Matthew 16:18)
2. He said we were to seek first the kingdom (Matthew 6:33)

We have often focused on building the church, hoping the Kingdom will follow. I got into hot water in my early months as vicar of Christ Church by suggesting that the church is a by-product of the Kingdom, not the other way round. You only have to consider the Crusades or Northern Ireland's Troubles to see that pursuing the church does not always produce the Kingdom. However, when we pursue the Kingdom, the church will always result.

I told the story of my own conversion, which presented a completely true but limited narrative: my sin required the saving power of Jesus and his cross. Absolutely true! And I praise God for those faithful men who led me to faith round that camp fire at the age of 14. It was years before I realised I'd only been given a part-narrative.

The bible does not begin negatively with my sin and my need. It begins with a perfect creation, and God's declaration of 'good' (the Hebrew would be better rendered 'perfect.')

And again, for years, I thought the cross was a terminus, a place to stop rather than to begin. I did not realise the narrative had another ending – re-creation!

The Kingdom of God is the primary and driving motif of Scripture from beginning to end. God is King! We only see the Kingdom of God perfectly expressed in 3 places in Scripture

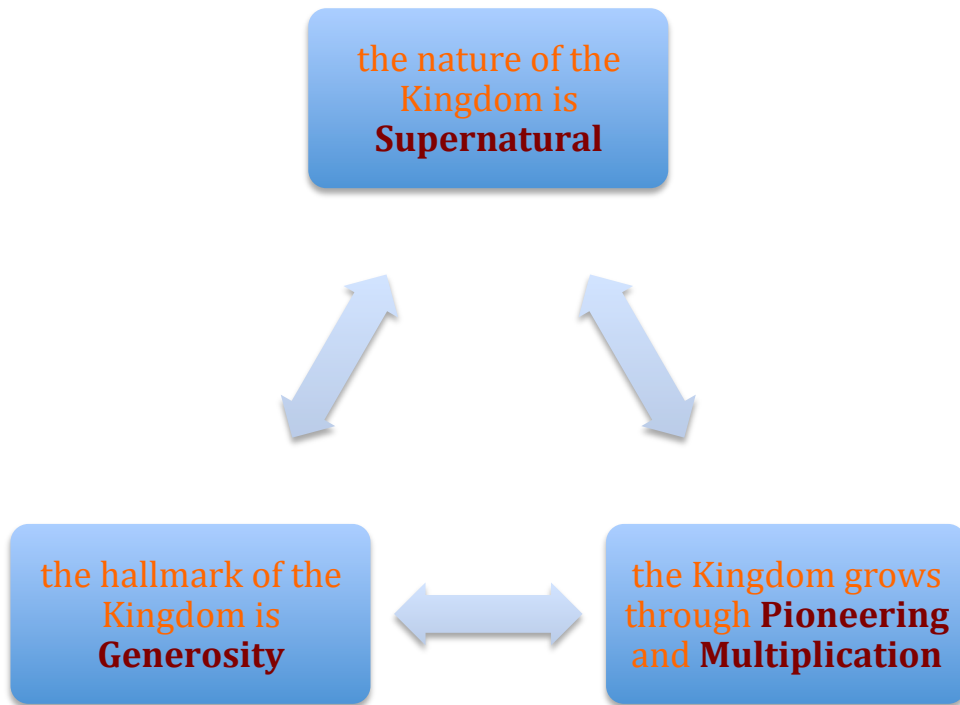
1. Eden – to which we can no longer return
2. The new Jerusalem, which we cannot yet see
3. The person of Jesus

The person of Jesus is now in heaven, but is made real to us by the Holy Spirit. This is why we pursue the presence of Jesus above all things – it's the only place we can touch the Kingdom.

The cross is a beginning – we are not only save from something (our sin) but to something (the work of growing the Kingdom, shaping culture, sharing good news)

**VALUES – HOW WE AIM TO LIVE**

We group our core values under the following 'Kingdom' convictions



We are also called to be  
**a house for the nations**  
**a house of prayer**

**Tune in next week to hear more!**

*Paul Langham, October 2016*