



Autumn 2017 – **Vision – What is the Church For?**
(1 & 8 October 2017, Paul Langham)

Reading: Mark 1:14-20

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!' ¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the proclamation of 'The Kingdom of God' a global statement affecting every aspect of what it means to be human?
2. Why is the call of Jesus to 'Follow me' a universal invitation which leaves no part of our lives unclaimed?
3. Do you accept that the answer to the question, 'What is the Church For?' is 'To change the world'?

Reading: Luke 19: 8-10

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' ⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'

QUESTIONS

1. Given the scope of the word 'sozo' (the root for salvation and save), and the severity of the word for 'lost' (utterly destroyed), what is the scope of God's vision for humankind and all of creation?
2. Should the church's vision be as big as God's?
3. Given the extent of the loss described by the use of the word above, what is the significance of Jesus claiming this impossible mission?

Reading: John 10: 7-10

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, 'Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

QUESTIONS

1. How credible is belief in 'the thief' (The Devil, the Enemy of our souls ...) today? What do we lose without this belief?

2. Do you see the link between the work of this Enemy and the stated mission of Jesus? In other words, can you see that Jesus came to overturn what the Enemy has done, to restore what he has stolen?
3. If not, read the next scripture ...

Reading: 1 John 3: 8

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Reading: Luke 4: 5-7

⁵*The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷If you worship me, it will all be yours.'*

QUESTIONS

1. Who gave the 'authority and splendour' of 'all the kingdoms of the world' (past, present, future) to the Devil?
2. When did this happen?
3. What did we lose when our original ancestors gave our Enemy 'the keys of the Kingdom'?
 - Image (identity)
 - Stewardship (purpose)
 - Rest (destiny)
4. Is it true that we lost our fundamental understanding of what it is to be human – at least to the extent that God designed for us?

Reading: Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸*Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it significant that the Cross achieved not just individual soul-salvation but the restoration of all that we lost through our original ancestors' rebellion?
2. What would the City look like if its leaders had the prophetic insight of Christians, willingly offered? Apply that to every other sphere of life ...

SO WHAT'S OUR RESPONSE? HOW CAN WE WATER THE SEED PLANTED ...?

Paul invited us to be still and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us about the 'soil' of our hearts and minds – is it a good place for the seed of God's Word to grow?

He also informed us that the Main Monthly Prayer Meeting will not be happening this term, but encouraged every member of the church family to attempt to attend the weekly Saturday morning prayer meeting in Jacob's Well (9.00 – 10.00 am) once between now and Christmas.

He also announced that there will be a one-off Gift Day in response to Vision next Sunday, 15 October. This is specifically intended to allow new members to begin their giving to the work of Christ Church; and also to allow anyone who is going to be here for a limited time (e.g. doctors on training rotations) to make a one-off gift rather than sign up to our ongoing 'ProVision' Stewardship scheme.

Finally, he invited us all to consider the places to which God calls us day by day, and to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us what has been lost / stolen in those places, and what little steps He wants us to take to partner with him in seeking and saving what has been lost ...

Paul Langham, October 2017