

Envisioning – Through the Eyes of Grace

Envisioning - *I believe God desires us to be a church which gives believers a vision of who they are called to be & unbelievers a vision of who they can be in Christ.*

In 1 Samuel 3:1 it says; **“And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.”** The word of the Lord & vision are directly connected in this verse. Because the word of the Lord was rare there was no frequent vision. It is the word of the Lord which gives people vision – vision of who God is & vision of who we are. The Bible as the written word of the Lord is a book of vision. The idea of God’s written revelation & vision being tied together is also in Proverbs 29:18; **“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast of restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.”** We not only have the law today but the completed Scriptures. All true godly vision is rooted, grounded & regulated by Scripture & that in no way undermines how God can envision through spiritual gifts like prophecy or dreams etc. It just puts those things in a garden where they can truly flourish.

Vision for All of Life

The Bible gives us vision of who God is – Father, Son & Holy Spirit! It gives us vision of the world – as it was, as it is, & as it will one day be. It gives about vision regarding humanity – why we were created, the fall, redemption & future hope. It gives individuals vision of what redemption might look like in their life. It gives us vision of who humanity can be again in Christ. It gives us vision of what lives of faith, hope & love look like every day. It gives us vision of God’s kingdom – his kingdom that has come, it still coming & which will one day will full come & cover every square inch of this earth with peace, righteousness, love justice & the glory of God. It gives us vision of church & what she can be in the power of the Holy Spirit... There is no reason at all to lack vision as the people of God.

The Holy Spirit is with us unfolding vision through the eternal word of God & helping us connect it with living life for God today. Oh how we need the Holy Spirit here to hear the voice of God afresh today! The purpose of preaching & leadership is to frequently & prophetically connect the vision of God’s word to everyday life. Every time the word of God is faithfully proclaimed part of its purpose is always to envision! We should view our personal Bible reading & study like this as well. How does God want to envision me today? What does he want me to see? The Psalmist prayed in Psalm 119:18-19; **“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me!”** How does he want me to live differently in light of what he reveals? 2 Cor. 3:18; **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”** If we are beholding the right vision Christ-likeness is inevitable!

Vision is less to do with plans, programmes & events & more to do with the perspective we live everyday with – what we spend our lives beholding! What are you beholding today – what is the contemplation of your heart. It is God & what he reveals? Is it a past hurt? What is your mind beholding? What have you been contemplation of your heart? Now think about how that has coloured your week, your year, your decade even. Is it something you want to colour the next week, year decade or even your whole life? If not then let it go & get a vision of God. Turn away from it & behold God & the glory of the gospel. Don't let the enemy or your past or even your present circumstances or pain or sins veil you from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4). Let your whole world & perspective on everything be illuminated with the glory of Christ. For that is the vision God wants to live your life with!

Paul says we walk by faith & not by sight. Walk here is an analogy for everyday Christian living. Faith is the Christian's perspective; it's what colours our thinking & action. And where does faith come from? Faith comes from hearing & hearing through the word of Christ (Rom 10:17). It is by our frequent everyday walk by faith that the plans & other things come. But being envisioned like this not only affects our big things & big choices it affects every small detail of our lives. Vision from God is not only revelation regarding your future, it's revelation about why & how you go to work or school. It's about how you view yourself & everyday life & it's about who & what you live all of life in light of.

True godly vision colours our conversations & careers...

We are called to envision people for everyday life – to show them that because of Jesus everything about their everyday can be different. We are called to give them a vision of how the gospel can change them & their world, of what they can look like fully alive in Christ. One primary way we can do this is by making sure we are living in view of Christ & the gospel of grace. Are we are living in view of the right vision?

Through the Eyes of Grace

Last month I read a book called *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. The author says regarding St. Patrick; *"Helping the Irish to imagine what they could become may have been Patrick's most profound rhetorical achievement, all the more notable when we contrast Patrick with his near contemporary, Augustine."* Then he quotes Thomas Cahill who writes; *"Patrick's emotional grasp of Christian truth may have been greater than Augustine's. Augustine looked into his own heart & found there the inexpressible anguish of each individual, which enabled him to articulate a theory of sin that has no equal—the dark side of Christianity. Patrick prayed, made peace with God, & then looked not only into his own heart but into the hearts of others. What he saw convinced him of the bright side—that even slave traders can be turned into liberators, even murderers can act as peacemakers, even barbarians can take their place among the nobility of heaven."*

In Patrick's time the majority had more or less written the Irish off as unreachable, but through a vision of the person & work of Christ Patrick saw who the Irish could become & he gave his life to the vision & therefore he left this legacy for us. Yes we need to confront people with who they are in sin. I read this quote by Spurgeon during the week; *"If any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him, for you are worse than he thinks you to be."* It made me smile because it's true. However more than this the gospel holds up a vision of who people can become in & through the person & work of Christ. So the Bible not only highlights we are sinners it goes on & gives us a glorious vision of who we can be in Christ. There is more vision about who we are in Christ in the NT than who we are in our sinful nature. That is significant! This is the vision we are to hold up for all – the vision of Christ, what he has done & who we can be because of what he has done. This is also how we are called to view every person not as they are now, but as who they can be through the person & work of Christ!

Think of it another way: Are we looking at one another & others through the eyes of law or through the eyes of grace. The person you are angry at, are you looking at them through the eyes of law or grace? Now ask this question? Where would we be if God were looking at us through the lens of his law? The Psalmist wrote; Psalm 130:3 **"If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"** Isn't the gospel that he isn't! The gospel is this in the words of 2 Cor. 5:19; **"In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, & entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."** Isn't the good news that because of Christ God is looking at us through the eyes of grace – he sees not what we are apart from Christ but who we are or can be in him. He is imagining us fully alive in his Son. This is the message we have been sent to envision lives with.

This is how we are to envision one another & everyone, not through the eyes of law but through the eyes of grace – amazing grace for us. If you look at people through the eyes of law you are in essence looking for offense & you will always find it & you will never be happy. All you will see is the dark side & you will depress yourself & everyone around you. How could a church or the gospel thrive in if we all walked about accessing one another with our law lenses on? However if you look at everyone through the eyes of grace you are FREE, happy & hopeful, free to love one another & everyone, hopefully with endless possibilities of who whosoever can become in Christ.

Let's put on our GD glasses (Grace Dimension) this morning & spend our lives looking at everything & everyone (self included) through the lens of grace. For this is the dimension Christ has placed us in & this is to colour our outlook on everything & everyone. We need vision not just for ourselves but so that we can envision others. A person on the verge of suicide needs this vision of who they can become in Christ. They need to see suicide is not their only option but that the hope giving life changing Saviour has done & will do all that is needed to turn their lives around. The person burdened with fear, depression, pain or sin

needs to see that in Christ all the heaviness, shame & guilt can be lifted & a new start is waiting for them at the cross of Christ...

Imagining one another & all fully alive in Christ – fully forgiven, fully free...