

2020 Vision (1): Who Are We Anyway?

(Hebrews 12:18-29)

I. Introduction

- A. The great thing about a franchise restaurant is you know what to expect
 - 1. McDonalds is McDonalds in Topeka, Toledo, Toronto, or Timbuktu
 - a. **Good News:** You know the food is going to be exactly the same
 - b. **Bad news:** You know the food is going to be exactly the same
 - 2. Church of Christ I grew up in was pretty much a franchise church
 - a. Pretty much any church you visited would be exactly the same
 - 1) The worship was pretty much the same; sermons were same
 - 2) The buildings pretty much were the same (*used same plans*)
 - 3) If song leader said “728b,” everyone knew what that was
 - b. It was a point of pride among some that all C-of-C were the same
 - c. We were the right church, so we pretty much were same church
- B. That is no longer the case today; there is no Church of Christ franchise
 - 1. We’re more like a box of chocolates; never know what you’ll get
 - a. Men may have visible roles in service or women may share those
 - b. They may sing hymns out of a hymnal or praise songs off the wall
 - c. May sing *a cappella* but have guitars up on stage for 2nd service
 - d. “*Church of Christ*” sign may be one “*The Vine*” or “*Crosswalk*”
 - 2. We’ve always said our churches are autonomous and independent
 - a. We don’t have a head office or denominational HQ to set policy
 - b. Each church must follow Christ as they understand Him leading
 - c. No surprise churches make different choice... but we are surprised
 - 3. Years back, we had a Sunday service led by our middle schoolkids
 - a. We let the kids choose their worship roles regardless of gender (*we had boys and girls passing communion, praying, reading scripture*)
 - b. Surprising? Not as surprising as a conversation after church
 - 1) An elder from TN was surprised and gave us a check \$1000
 - 2) He said he was so glad that churches had the freedom in Christ
 - 3) He wondered that given our freedom, why do same old things

C. What kind of church is Denbigh going to be? What is our vision?

1. Why do churches find it hard to change? *We don't dream enough.*
 - a. Here's a great line from Robert Kennedy (*George Bernard Shaw*)
Some see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not.
 - b. If we don't dream dreams, the status quo always becomes default
 - c. If we don't dream dreams, we're never capture by what could be
2. I want us to dream dreams, and the calendar is giving us a gift—
 - a. Our sermon series for the rest of the year will be “*A 2020 Vision*”
 - 1) Friend, “*Every church will have 2020 Vision*” I beat the rush!
 - 2) What is our vision? What church does God want us to be
 - b. The classic text we use when talking of vision (**Prov 29:18**, KJV)
 - 1) We'll perish as people if we don't have a vision of who we are
 - 2) There is a good illustration of what gets in the way of vision
 - a) This isn't talking about our vision but God's revelation (**Prov 29:18**)
 - b) Without a word from God, we run around in circles chasing our tails
 - c. We must listen to God, not twist Bible into what we want to hear

D. What vision is God casting for us at Denbigh in year 2020 and beyond?

1. Will we be the same church we have always been? *Boy, I hope not!*
 - a. I remember a couple of long meetings when we got a refrigerator
 - b. It took 18 months and bunch of meetings to serve coffee in class
 - c. It took 18 months and full-blown fight to offer Children's Church
2. Why? We didn't give ourselves enough room to dream dreams
 - a. We let ourselves think that how we did church was the only way
 - b. We failed dream dreams and imagine what God can do in us
 - c. We just sang, “*Open the eyes of my heart Lord, I want to see you*”
 - 1) Open our eyes to pursue a faithfulness beyond our tradition
 - 2) Open our eyes to get a glimpse of the people You want us to be
 - 3) Open our eyes to see things that never were and ask why not
 - d. I'll share a little later what we're going to do in this series
3. Right now, I want to take a look at the church in Book of Hebrews

II. Who Are We Anyway: Message of Hebrews 12

- A. Book was written to a church that was worn down and work out (**12:12**)
1. *“Feeble arms and weak knees.”* A vivid picture of a tired church
 - a. The specific temptation was to leave the church for the synagogue
 - b. The writer spends a lot of time in the OT to show Jesus as better
 - 1) He is better than Moses, the prophets, the Law & sacrifices
 - 2) Why return to the shadow of sacrifice when have the cross?
 2. These were Christians in Jewish community surrounded by pagans
 - a. Little church community felt out-numbered and out-gunned
 - b. Both Jews and pagans had ornate temples and impressive ritual
 - 1) What did they have? Small group in someone’s living room
 - 2) They were a supper club, gathered around the Lord’s table
 - 3) It was very easy for them to feel overwhelmed by their world
- B. As the writer ends his book, he draws them a picture of two mountains
1. The first was their past, the reality of Mt. Sinai (**Heb 12:18-21**)
 - a. He points them first to the giving of the Old Law on Mt. Sinai
 - 1) Sinai was untouchable; anyone or anything that did would die
 - 2) There was fire and smoke; the mountain shook. So did people
 - b. Mt. Sinai was holy because the presence of God was there
 - c. That was then; we have more impressive presence of God now
 2. The second mountain is much more impressive (**Heb 12:22-24**)
 - a. Look around today; we don’t look like all that much, do we?
 - b. But there is much more to us today than meets the eye
 - 1) We are surrounded by thousands of angels in joyful assembly
 - 2) We come together with all the saint around the throne of God
 - 3) He said earlier we’re surrounded by cloud of witness (**12:1-3**)
 - c. Remember the glimpse of the throne of God in **Revelation 4-5**
 - 1) One on throne. Lamb. Spirit. Beasts. Elders. 1000’s of angels
 - 2) That is not end of time stuff; John was caught up to see it now
 3. That is the reality we step into when we worship and serve today
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III. Conclusion

- A. Who do we think we are? What is our vision for Denbigh in 2020?
1. Are we a small group of believers without power or resources?
 - a. Are we just a little group that does well just to pay the bills?
 - b. Are we small church locked into doing what we've always done?
 - c. Are we satisfied doing little because we think little is required?
 2. Or are we an outpost of ever-growing, ever-moving kingdom of God?
 - a. Do we see ourselves surrounded by the angels in God's presence?
 - b. Can we be more than what we have been because of His power?
 - c. Is there more to us than meets the eye? Can we see it. Can you?
- B. In this series, we'll ask, "*What is God's vision for us in the year ahead?*"
1. Companies spend time/money crafting mission and vision statements
 - a. Vision statement is groups overarching objective or goal (dream)
 - b. Mission statement is a formal summary of the values (doing)
 2. Those can overlap quite a bit depending on the organization
 - a. Here are mission and vision statements of one company (*Amazon*)
 - 1) **Mission:** To offer our customers the lowest possible prices, the best available selection, and the utmost convenience.
 - 2) **Vision:** To be Earth's most customer-centric company, where customers find and discover anything they might want to buy
 - b. Here are mission and vision statements of another (*Samsung*)
 - 1) **Mission:** Inspire the world with innovative technologies, products that enrich lives and contribute to prosperity
 - 2) **Vision:** Inspire the world. Create the future. (Rip off Apple?)
 3. Our mission statement should be familiar (*the wall in family room*)
Living as God's family under the cross— loving, serving, praising and proclaiming
 - a. Is that really a mission or a vision? I think it is probably both
 - b. It's also the outline for this series— what does that vision mean?
- C. We'll end today by singing a vision/mission statement— Let Us Be You