



Sunday, October 30, 2016

## “Vision Begets Venture 2.0”

Proverbs 29:18

**Idea:** Jesus has called us to be a church that takes the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations.

**Intro:** Read Proverbs 29:18.

Last fall on my first Sunday as your pastor, I preached from Philippians 4:10-13. From those verses I shared with you that God has called Red Lane to be a church that passionately takes the gospel to our neighbors and the nations. I shared with you that God has promised to provide everything needed to fulfill His vision of reaching lost people here and there with the gospel. We saw how Paul was able to be content in any context in which he found himself so long as he was living out the mission of Christ. Paul understood that the gospel and the mission were more important than his comfort, his safety, and his preferences. Paul had heard from God; therefore, he would not be swayed from working to fulfill the vision and mission of Christ.

**Inquiry:** Solomon tells us that *where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint*. The Hebrew term translated “prophetic vision” in the ESV is used some 31 times in the OT and denotes that which is communicated by God to man through prophetic preaching.

As the salt of the earth, God’s people are expected to arrest corruption, and as the light of the world they are commanded to dispel darkness. In the absence of prophetic vision, the reverse happens. *People become spiritually defenseless*. When they turn their eyes from God they become vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. When left defenseless, *people become naturally*

*defiant*. They cease to acknowledge God (Rom 1:28ff), which leads to God giving them over to a debased mind. Then *people become personally destructive*. As they lose faith in divine revelation, they are filled with all kinds of wickedness (Rom 1:29).

Where and when God's people are prepared to see and heed divine revelation, there is a reversal of the sequence of moral deterioration. The proverb continues, "*but blessed is he who keeps the law.*" Prophetic vision always produces two things: redemptive passion and responsive action. God's Word is all about redemption. When we grasp and heed the divine Word, it creates within each of us a passion over our own redemption and a passion to see others redeemed. The passion leads to our action. Just as we discovered last April, Vision begets venture.

Unfortunately, even when the vision has been clearly articulated and received, there are some who choose to dispel it for something they think to be easier or better. We see this happen often throughout the history of Israel. The most outrageous depictions of this are found in the exodus and the wonderings in the wilderness. After leaving Egypt devastated by the ten plagues, Israel found itself on the banks of the Red Sea. God had hardened Pharaoh's heart again, and he and his army came marching on the people of God. Israel's immediate response to Moses was fear (Ex 14:10).

*11 They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."*  
– Ex 14:11-12

This is an amazing conversation that the people are having with Moses. You see they failed to remember that for the 400 years they were in bondage in Egypt, they cried out to God for deliverance. Moses was the answer to their prayers. Yet in a

moment of crisis, they failed to remember the vision. They failed to remember what God had said to them. They failed to remember what God had done before their eyes in Egypt.

There disbelief continued. Three days after watching Pharaoh and his army drown in the Red Sea, Israel again disbelieved God because there was no water to drink (Ex 15:24). Not long after that they complained about having no food to eat.

*2 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 3 and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."*

– Ex 16:2-3

Then after the men, which Moses had sent to spy out the Promised Land, came back and reported that the land was indeed all that God said it was, they also told the people there was no way they could defeat the peoples who inhabited the land. Israel again grumbled against Moses.

*2 And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" 4 And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." – Num 14:2-4*

Why would a free people ever want to go back into bondage? How can a group of people who had seen God do such extraordinary and miraculous things not believe that He could and would sustain them in the wilderness? What would cause this people who had seen the mightiest army on the face of the earth defeated in the Red Sea to not believe that God could and would defeat the peoples living in the Promised Land?

The answer is fear.

Let me share with you three things that we find working in these accounts.

1) Fear of the unknown

The people had forgotten the vision God had given them. Moses had told them numerous times what God said concerning their future.

*4 Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. 5 And when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month. – Ex 13:4-5*

Rather than staking their lives on what God had said would happen, they feared what could happen. Fear of the unknown is always a danger to us. Some of you in this church have given into fear. It freaks you out that our church is in a transition. You wish that we would go back to the golden days. Let me help all of us out this morning. A healthy and vibrant church is always in a state of transition because people, culture, and life itself are always in transition.

Some of you want the worship style to be the style you grew up under. Some of you want the service times to be what they used to be. Some of you want us to sing out of the hymnbooks. Some of you want us to transition faster than we are. All of this boils down to control, and control is fueled by fear. You fear what you don't know. You rail at a certain style of worship without ever considering the fact that the theology might be just as good if not better. You fuss over service times without considering that the times might serve a purpose and help the church better

accommodate people. You get frustrated because the church isn't transitioning faster without every considering the fact that the transition is not just about you. We have to bring everyone along together.

Fear of the unknown causes us to forget and neglect the vision God has given us. Fear leads to...

2) Disbelief in God's provision

Israel's fear of the unknown led to their doubt in God's provision.

God had said, *"I am bringing you into a land flowing with milk and honey."* He had promised to bring them into a place of life and abundance. Israel interpreted God's words as being *"I am bringing you into a land whereby you shall fall by the sword and become prey"* (Num 14:3).

Their fear created a disbelief in God's provision. We do the same thing today in the church. Jesus said, *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt 16:18). Do you believe that God is building His church today? Do you believe that hell itself has no power over this church? We have everything at our disposal to fulfill the Great Commission...the vision. Do you not think that God will fully supply our efforts to bring glory to His name as we fulfill the mission?

Fear of the unknown causes us to forget and neglect the vision God has given us. Fear leads to disbelief in God's provision, which leads to...

3) Rebellion against God and the vision

*4 And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."* – Num 14:4

Rebellion is the fruit of fear and disbelief. We see rebellion all throughout the exodus account. It comes from the crowd. It comes from the leaders (Korah & 250 chiefs [Num 16]). It comes from those who are close and trusted (Aaron & Miriam [Num 12]). In each and every case, the rebellion was grounded in fear and a neglect of the vision. The rebels spouted their vitriol and convinced a mob. They railed against Moses, but ultimately they railed against God and His vision for Israel.

What is the vision for Red Lane?

Things We Know:

- God has called us declare His glory. (Ps 96:1-8)
- God has called us to make disciples of our neighbors and the nations. (Matt 28:18-20)
- God has called us to proclaim the Word of God. (2 Tim 4:1-2)
- God has called us to reflect His love and unity through biblical community. (Eph 2:19-22)

What does this look like at Red Lane?

- Worship is going to be blended.  
Our desire is to progressively learn new ways to worship Christ. We want to sing a new song (Ps 96:1). We want to engage the hearts of men in our worship settings. This is why the vast majority of what we sing is congregational singing rather than “specials.” We want to engage the heart of God in our worship settings. We’re going to celebrate God and proclaim His glory. We’re going to sing songs that are rich in theology because it enriches our faith rather than our feelings. To some of you our “blended” style of worship will feel like it leans toward a contemporary style. The reason for that is because any new song that we sing is most likely arranged in a contemporary style. And most likely the worship pastor God is preparing for us is a

young man. Regardless, our desire is to create a worship environment that prepares us for the preaching of the Word and whereby the hearts from every generation can declare God's greatness.

- Preaching is going to be primary.  
The focus of the service is always going to be on the proclamation of the Word (Rom 10:17). We want our members and regular attenders to be built up in the Word of God. Again the focus is on your faith rather than your feelings.
- Missions is going to be our passion.  
Missions is built into our DNA. God has called out two families from this church in the last few years to serve on the mission field. Our desire is for every covenant member to go on a short-term mission trip in the next five years. We want to expand our missions footprint by adopting a UUPG. We want to reach the internationals that God has brought to our doorstep in Richmond and Raleigh. We want to create ways to go to the people in Powhatan rather than expecting them to come to us (backyard Bible clubs, off-campus small groups).

God is opening a door for us to engage UUPG's in Barcelona, Spain. I just returned from there two weeks ago. The Catalonia region of Spain has a population of 7.5 million people. The vast majority of the people live in greater Barcelona. Of those 7.5 million people only 25,000 are evangelicals. That means that .33% are genuine followers of Christ. Among the 7.5 million people there are an estimated 500,000 North Africans, who are largely from the Islamic nations of Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya. It is very difficult for us to go to these nations and engage them, but we can easily go to Barcelona and engage them with the gospel. In the face of such enormous lostness, there is no doubt in mind about us going there. We must go there! We

must engage these people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We will be partnering with a handful of other SBCV churches and with IMB personnel to engage North African Muslims as well as to encourage and equip the Catalanian Baptist churches. In July we will be sending a team to Barcelona that will use basketball camps as a bridge to engage these peoples with the gospel.

- Discipleship is going to be our identity. The command of the Great Commission is to make disciples. As we discovered this past summer, discipleship is the goal of biblical community. God has called us to make disciples, and this means evangelizing unbelievers, welcoming them into His kingdom, and then discipling them to grow closer to the perfect example set forth by the Son.

Discipleship fosters both spiritual and evangelistic growth. Therefore, every believer should be able to answer two questions:

“Who am I discipling?” and “Who is discipling me?”

Every one of you should be an active member of a small group. You should also be actively involved in a smaller group of 3-5 believers. For it is in these discipleship groups that you will develop deeper relationships and thus grow deeper in your faith.

- Growth is going to be expected. As we intentionally engage people with the gospel in our community, and as we intentionally seek to develop disciples of Christ, we will not continue to be that little country church in Powhatan. We’re going to grow spiritually and numerically. Professions of faith and baptisms will be something we expect to happen rather than something we hope will happen. Our numbers will

increase. Therefore, we need to begin to evaluate the changes that need to be made to our facilities.

This worship center needs a facelift. It has been 30 years since anything major has happened to this room. In order to accommodate a 21<sup>st</sup> century congregation, we need a facility that is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Stepping into a church building should not feel like you are stepping back in time.

I also foresee a day when Red Lane Baptist Church is meeting on multiple campuses around the greater Richmond area as we accommodate for the growth that God is bringing to outlying counties.

**Conclusion:** Vision begets venture. As I have poured over these stories of Israel's rebellion, my heart has been saddened. It grieves me to read about God's people rejecting His leadership and blessing. It grieves me also when I observe God's people reject His leadership and blessing. Unfortunately, I see it sometimes among God's people.

How is your heart today? Is it fearful? Is it rebellious? In your fear, do you want to go back? Do you understand the vision God has for our church? Do you understand the vision God has for your life? Do you believe that Red Lane's greatest days are ahead?

Share the gospel and give an invitation.