

Being Part of Something Bigger Than Yourself

“God’s Dream for You” Series

One of the results of my sabbatical was a re-awakening to the dreams God has for His Church – and specifically Immanuel Church. God is so incredible yet he chooses to let others speak on his behalf. One of His dreams is that we glorify Him. Our lives are to be a sign pointing to Him as the source of finding a life that’s worth living, not empty and shallow but full and rich and satisfying. Today we explore how that happens.

Focus Scripture: Ephesians 3:20, 21

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Learning from Jesus:

Speak with _____

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take up your mat and go home.” ... Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God.” Luke 5:24, 26

Live with _____

“The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God.” Luke 7:15, 16

Confront with _____

“Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.” Luke 9:42, 43

40 Days of _____ (10/2-11/20)

➤ _____ and _____

➤ _____ and _____

Desired Outcome:

To _____ of community as a church and to _____ to the community God has placed around us.

Being Part of Something Bigger Than Yourself

“God’s Dream for You” Series – August 28, 2005

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Good morning! It is so good to be back – Vicki and I have missed being here and it definitely feels good to be back with you. Since I spoke with you last Vicki has been in Florida, we’ve been to Colorado together and just this week we celebrated our 34th anniversary in Alexandria. I’m not sure just how much R & R we got on this sabbatical but...it was a good time away.

Speaking of Alexandria, we were driving between Lake L’Homme Dieu and Lake Carlos when I spotted a sign that read:

2) What if the Hokey Pokey is what it’s all about?

I had to read it twice. (repeat)

Well, I’m here to put that question to rest. Thankfully, that is not the case. There is more to life than the Hokey Pokey – or whatever you want to put in that question – (Work, School, Vikings, State Fair, Money, Toys) - life does have a much bigger purpose.

3) In the Bible we read that everything we do is to have an overarching purpose, specifically, the glory of God. We just read from Ephesians 3...

“...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

4) Notice that it says “in the church.” One of the blessings of time off for a pastor is that you get to worship at other churches. I enjoyed several experiences. I’d have my pen and I’d be taking notes during the songs or the offering (“that was good I want to remember how they did that”) The people next to me were probably wondering if I was a reporter from the Tribune :o) The thing that stood out to me from these

churches was that we serve the same God! And He is awesome! We are in this together! And we do not have inferior music or teaching or quality of people! Everybody else was running behind on their budget, they had people coming in after the service started and they were appealing to their people to volunteer for ministry. I was reminded, too, that we are not in competition – it's not about who's the biggest, or has the latest technology – just to be part of the "church" is an incredible privilege, the body of Christ, and whatever the square footage of our building, we have a high purpose to fulfill and through God's power we can do it! Amen?

5) For the next few weeks I'll be speaking on "**God's Dream for You.**" God does have a dream for your life...one that he is anxious to help you achieve...one that may just be bigger than anything you can ask or imagine. But what I want you to be sure and hear this morning – listen closely – is that he wants you to realize his dream, not alone, but as part of something bigger than yourself – as part of his church!

5a) The church is precious to God, it was bought with the blood of his Son. (Acts 20:28)

We need each other to achieve the dream God has for us! And when we try to do things all alone – on our own – "I don't need your help, thank you!" – we miss out on some of the greatest stuff that's out there, the fun stuff that God has for us.

When the brilliant ethicist John Kavanaugh went to work for 3 months at the 'house of the dying' in Calcutta he was seeking a clear answer as to how best spend the rest of his life. On the first morning there he met Mother Teresa. Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him. "What would you like me to pray for you?" she asked. He voiced his deepest request, "Pray that I would have clarity." Firmly she said, "No, I will not do that." When Kavanaugh asked why she said, "Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and you must let go of." When he commented that she always seemed to have the clarity

he longed for, she laughed and said, "I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God." (from the book *Ruthless Trust* by Brennan Manning, page 5)

I think that story is a powerful illustration of how we need each other. What we assume on our own is often adjusted or even corrected when we pray for and encourage one another. The church is not just a marginal part of God's plan for the world – it is right in the center! And it's here that we learn about purpose – together. It goes without saying but I'll say it anyway, "The church is made up of people. Immanuel Church is not the building. Crossroads is not the building. Neither is Grace or Maranatha or even Eaglebrook! The campus does not make the ministry. Buildings definitely have their place and we are pressing on to pay off our current mortgage so we can get on to our new addition. But buildings are not the church! People are the church! And together we can be so much more than we are individually.

6) How do we glorify God together?

Back to Ephesians 3:21...

"to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations..."

How did Jesus bring glory to the Father when he was here? Let's notice three ways from Luke's gospel.

We start in chapter 5 where Jesus heals the man who comes via 4 friends who tear out the roof to lower him in to see Jesus. Take up the story at 5:20-26. Notice how the crowd "went home praising God." And "everyone was amazed and gave praise to God." Just as Jesus spoke truth with authority we too must be a church that...

7 and 7a) Speaks with Humble Authority

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take up

your mat and go home.” ... Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God.” Luke 5:24, 26

When we speak it must be the truth. It may not be popular or the accepted view of our culture but we must always stand firmly on the truth of God’s revealed word. And when we speak to one another; it must be God’s truth. We must speak it with authority, because it is His Truth. We must speak it with humility because it was never given to us to use on each other like a club but to build up and encourage! It is a rock that will never let us down and it will always bring glory to the Author!

The second story comes from Luke 7. We’ll read from verse 11... Again, notice what happened as a result of his actions. “They were all filled with awe and praised God.” Jesus had a way about him that deflected any praise off of himself onto his Father!

We will glorify our God when we, too, like Jesus...

8 and 8a) Live with Conscious Compassion

“The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God.” Luke 7:15, 16

Noelle’s husband (33) and his battle with cancer. Three children, 10, 6 and 2. Barb telling about the support that has come from their church and from the community. What they cannot handle on their own they are able to handle with the help of their friends! That brings glory to God – his body doing what it’s supposed to do!

The third story comes from Luke 9. The story of a boy and his Dad. We pick up this story at verse 37... (read through verse 43)

Jesus brought glory to God as he...

9 and 9a) Confront with Spiritual Power

“Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.” Luke 9:42, 43

We, too, can never hope to achieve the dreams God has for us in our own strength. We must draw upon his power. We access that power through prayer. We make use of that power through obedience. We put that power to work as we trust and move forward in faith.

Sometimes we have to confront difficult things... but when we can do it together it is so much more effective!

The church is a mighty force to bring glory to God if we follow the example of Jesus!

10) Before I left on sabbatical I announced that we would be doing something pretty exciting this fall. **40 Days of Community** is the second part of a three-part trilogy that started with **40 Days of Purpose**. The actual dates are October 2 through November 20. In fact, we are going to be using some of this material for Church Retreat at Camp Lebanon! Kind of a Pre-Campaign Taste Test! Sign up if you haven’t already!! If you participated in 40 Days of Purpose back in the spring of 2004 you might want to dig out your book and brush up. If you haven’t read the book, “The Purpose Driven Life”, you’ve heard about it! It’s worth reading – and it will prepare you for what we have coming this fall.

10 a, b) It will have four primary elements:

- 1) Individual Element – Daily devotional, journal and memory verse
- 2) Group Element – Small groups will be forming, 6 weeks of meeting together with a group no bigger than 10. In fact this morning I am announcing for the first time that we are looking for HOST homes:
 - a. H – Heart for your church
 - b. O – Open your home for 6 weeks
 - c. S – Serve some coffee
 - d. T – Tell a few friends
- 3) **11 a,b)** Sunday Service – The messages will be a crucial part of this whole experience. Asking you to block off those Sundays so you can be here!

- 4) Special Events – Community Missions Project; Ministry Fair and Celebration Sunday. Tomorrow evening at 7:00 we are meeting for planning and if you would like to be part of this 40 Day event just show up. We'll plug you into the planning process!

What's this for and how does it tie in with today's message? I'm glad you asked!

12) The primary purpose of this event is to deepen our sense of community as a church and to increase our service to the community God has placed around us.

And we need that. Why? Because the church is where we work best to bring glory to God – and because we are Minnesotans. I've often been bewildered why we struggle with small groups here at Immanuel. Talking to other pastors, this is not the only church that has that same problem. No real answers! Then, I came across an article, in all places, the Mpls/St Paul magazine (Newcomers Guide)

Reading from article...

So, we've got some work to do! It will be stretching, but it will be fun – and best of all – it will position us exactly where we need to be in order to bring glory to God – which is his dream for us!

13)

- 1) Talk about being a HOST Home
- 2) Brush up on your 5 PURPOSES
- 3) Pray with me that we would TRUST

Closing Prayer...