

A Christ centred Church / People

There was a time not so long ago when all you needed to know about any given church was contained on a one sided leaflet and that was it. Nowadays, your church is so last year if it does not have a well designed website with all the necessary links on it. When you go on CJ's website, you will notice two key phrases on the *Home* page to do with our Vision: intentionally multicultural and Christ centred; this morning I'd like to draw your attention to the latter i.e. Christ centred and submit to you that as a Church, the people of God, we ought to display and manifest certain traits and characteristics. There are many of them but today I am only going to examine three which I believe will naturally flow from a Christ centred approach: **Pre-eminence of Christ** is manifested, **Proclamation** of the Glory of God and **Productivity** of the body.

Let us open our Bible to **Colossians 1:15-20** and see what Paul says about the **Pre-eminence of Christ**. The apostle affirms so clearly and with power that Christ is the Creator of all things and holds all things together. Just imagine in what state our universe would be if Christ was not sustaining and holding all this together. I suppose in some ways that we would not be there to witness the chaos and anarchy around. Paul declares that in all things Christ has the pre-eminence and should therefore be crowned Lord and King over our lives and be worshipped accordingly. He is also the Head of the Church which according to the Greek means that He is the *source*, the *origin* as well as the *ruler* and *leader*. Many have founded churches around the world but only Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Church which is His body. The danger I presume is to deny or sometimes forget about Christ because we are so focused on pastor so or so who founded such or such church that we dethrone Christ and put someone else in His place. Some people who call themselves Christians would tell you that "we worship the Father and that is all that counts" when in actual fact Paul urges us to crown Him Lord of all because He is worthy.

I came across a verse from **Isaiah 45:7** that says so much about the Creator of the universe; "I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster: I the LORD, do all these things". What that verse tells me is that as a Church, we should adopt the same attitude as the angels and give praise, honour and glory to Christ. Chapters 4 to 7 of Revelation are full of examples where the heavenly beings are bowing down before the Lamb that was slain because He is worthy, the Lord our God to receive glory and honour and power for he created all things and by his will they were created and have their being.

Are you as a follower of Christ giving him the praise he deserves; are we as a church worshipping him like the angels do because He is worthy? Are the doors of our hearts and the gates of our church open so that the King of Glory may come in and take the highest place or is that place reserved to the pastor and the elders if they are not too late?

Secondly, a church where Christ is pre-eminent and has the supremacy will naturally **proclaim His glory**. In **Ephesians 1:12**, Paul told the church that those who put their trust in Christ as Lord might be for the praise of His glory; in other words, we are to display Christ's Glory and His presence where He places us. The world by looking at us should say "wow, look at these people, what a gracious and amazing God they have". Are my colleagues or neighbours saying that about me; are the people around or any visitor saying that about CJ's? We have been redeemed for Christ's glory and in many ways we are its primary manifestation which means that the way we do things matter more than we might think. The glory of Christ should serve as the most important checkpoint in our lives and the life of the church. If such or such decision is not going to bring glory to God in that case drop it and ask Him to reveal to us what to do instead.

Illustration: new venue/ Jesus on earth

In **Matthew 5:16**, Jesus said "let your light shine before men, that they may **see** your good deeds and **praise** your Father in heaven". What Jesus meant was that as the body of Christ on earth, we have such a privilege to show the world how great is the God we serve. When people see Christ living and manifested in His church, they cannot help but be attracted by that divine light which brings salvation and restoration. But the opposite is also true; how many people have you heard say "if that's how church people are, I prefer to spend my Sunday morning in front of the TV or in bed". When the church is salt and light, they attract people because they see Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Finally, I believe that a church which is Christ centred will most definitely be a **Productive and Prevailing** church. In **Psalms 127**, King Solomon said that "unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain." As a church it is vital that we recognise our dependence on Christ otherwise all our super human effort will amount to nothing. So we start with humility and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith because to look to Him means that we trust in Him. As we heard earlier, we have good grounds to trust in Him because He is the creator of all things and hold all things together by his awesome power. Remember the story of Peter who as soon as he got his eyes off Jesus started to sink; the same applies to the church as we try to do things in our own strength or sometimes try to speed up God's process and end up worse off. As we trust in Christ, he releases His power in our lives and enables us to do greater things for His glory. On the day of Pentecost, the Church was empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to fulfil the Great Commission and make disciples of all nations. When was the last time I told someone about Christ and His gift of salvation? Am I glorifying God by keeping silent about my faith just because I don't want people to think that I am weird?

In **Eph. 4:12** and **Rom. 12:6-8**, we see that the Spirit equips the church for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up. Are you using the gifts you have been given or are you robbing the church of God's blessing?

When I look at **Acts 2:42-7**, I am always amazed at the impact the early church had on the community around her and how quickly she grew. As a church we are called to penetrate and transform the community around us, starting with every individual wherever you live, but are we faithful in doing that, am I playing my part where God called me to be or am I letting someone else do it because you know, I can't be bothered?

Illustration: Helen's friend

The Creator and sustainer of all things shed His precious blood for His church and has a clear vision for her. However, if we are to grow we need not only fix our eyes on Him but also learn from and depend on Him as the true vine in order to bear fruit for His glory. We know what the Father's will is for His Church so let us pray and see how to do the work in the best way possible so that many will come to a saving knowledge of His grace. Amen.