

THE LOST AND US - 5
GOD HAS A DREAM --- OR,
THE GREATNESS OF THE PLAN OF GOD!

INTRODUCTION

- I. There comes a time when you must step up and build upon what has been accomplished.
 - A. We have plateaus as individuals (school, work, Christian life).
 - B. There were times in the O.T. when God's people were rallied together to move forward.
 1. Zerubbabel, Haggai & Zechariah rallied the people to complete the temple.
 2. Ezra inspired the people to adhere to the principles of the law.
 3. Nehemiah encouraged the people to rebuild the walls that had been broken down.
- II. There have been many times when God rallied His people to **build on previous successes** & to move forward to greater accomplishments.
 - A. Here in MANTECA you have reached a point like that in your outreach.
 - B. Over the past years you have done an excellent job of building a strong fellowship.
 1. Your attendance continues to be impressive, so that even with some losses over the years you're still showing signs of growth in the Lord, both spiritually and numerically!
 2. The contributions of your **time** & **energy** & **money** that have been pleasing to the Lord are certainly to be commended.
 3. Your enthusiasm is still as phenomenal as you will allow it to be in yourselves, and as ambitiously as you stimulate each other!
 - C. The good things that the LORD has allowed to happen to this congregation have put you in a position to reach out like never before.
- III. **GOD HAS A DREAM**, for **US -- for this congregation right here in Manteca!**
 - A. We all have been the objects of someone's dreams, in addition to our own!
 1. We have dreamed of **what we can BE**, & of **what we can DO**, & of **how we can SHOW OUR LOVE --- to others and to GOD!**
 2. When we realize and focus on our dreams, *we do things to help them come true.*
 - B. **GOD HAS A DREAM** for those who would honor and glorify Him, & He has a tremendous investment in that dream.
 1. He sent His only Begotten Son, Jesus, to die in order that this dream might be realized.
 2. The cross stands as a testimonial proclamation of how much God wants His dream to become the focus of our hopes and aspirations!
 3. He has entrusted this dream from His eternal planning TO MEN, through the proclamation of the gospel [*good news*] that JESUS is the Son of God and came into the world to save sinners!
 - C. **GOD'S DREAM** is that everyone in all the world will hear the saving message of Jesus and will receive it to their own salvation!
 1. It's **GOD'S DREAM** to use men [earthen vessels] to tell the story of the love of Jesus so that those who would be MOVED by it could be saved! **2 Cor.4:7; 1:21; Acts 2:36-41.**
 2. Those of us who have heard & obeyed this message understand that we are **DEBTORS**, who are to continue spreading that message which made us free. **Rom.1:14; Jno.8:32; Matt.28:19.**
 - a) *We have received salvation - It is a gift without the cost of any human merit.*
 - b) And any love for Christ that has been brought into our lives will force us not only to honor Him with our own lives, but to share the gospel's saving power with others. **Rom.1:16.**
 3. We are asked to share this gift with others. **Matt.10:8-** "...Freely you have received, freely give!" **Eph.3:8-** "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,"

IV. God STILL wants to see His dream be a reality in our lives today, **as we share that saving message with our Manteca neighbors!**

- A. He wants us to be involved in a **PERSONAL** outreach.
- B. He wants us to reach out to our **FRIENDS & RELATIVES & NEIGHBORS!**
- C. He wants us to grow & to be **busy in the kingdom business** of His Dear Son! His word contains everything we need to make **HIS DREAM** come true **2 Tim.3:16; 2 Pet.1:3.**

I. THE FIRST THING THAT MAKES THE PLAN IN GOD'S DREAM SO GREAT IS THAT WE HAVE THE GREATEST MOTIVATION - THE LOVE OF CHRIST -

2 Cor. 5:14-15- *“For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”*

A. The **LOVE** of Christ **constrains us;** it **girds us;** it **controls us;** it **compels us;** it **holds us to task!**

1. It keeps us from living in sin because we've become DEAD to that old way of life in the world! **Gal 6:14-** *“But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*
2. When we became DEAD to that old life, we became ALIVE to God in Jesus Christ! **Eph.2:4-5-** *“God, Who is rich in mercy, MADE US ALIVE WITH CHRIST even when we were dead in transgressions -- it is by grace you have been saved!”*
3. At times, when we may **fail to feel these constraints** -- is it because the **LOVE** of Christ has **bankrupted, or grown weak, or failed?**

B. The **LOVE** of Christ **controls us.**

1. It keeps us living and walking in the light. **Phil.2:1-2-** *“If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose!”* **1 Jno.1:7-** *“For if we walk in the light...”*
2. We can KNOW we're on God's team and that we have the LOVE OF CHRIST, so why wouldn't we be moved to action in showing and telling others about the Savior of mankind?
3. In those times when we just **seem to be spiritually out of control** -- is it because the **LOVE** of Christ isn't as STRONG as it used to be?

C. The **LOVE** of Christ **compels us!** **John 3:16; Luke 19:10**

1. It keeps us alive and motivated in God's dream **Matt.28:18-20**
 - a. We realize that Jesus died for all, and that **ALL have a right to know about that** -- **vs. 15**
 - 1) Jesus left the glory of heaven to become a man to die for us.
 - 2) What will **WE leave, sacrifice, or do** to help save those who are lost?
 - b. We also realize that we too have died: to the world, to an old way of living, & to ourselves -- in order to let Jesus Christ live IN and THRU us! **Gal 2:20.**
 - 1) So, we no longer live to do our own will but our purpose is to accomplish God's will.
 - 2) What is it that really motivates [*moves to action*] us: **OUR will or GOD'S will?**
2. Our motivation must be the love of God shown in the death of Christ on the Cross; and the cross focuses our attention on our own responsibilities & privileges to share the good news with others.
3. We do not want to resort to pure emotionalism, where irrationality dictates actions or subordination, and allegiance wanes as soon as the emotion is gone!
 - a. But we DO want to appeal to our reason, and to our commitment, & to our love.
 - b. We want our allegiance and commitment to be constant -- always in the service of God!
4. But when we're **content to be spiritually lethargic, or indolent, or just plain lazy** -- are we to blame the **LOVE** of Christ for being LESS THAN EFFECTIVE?

II. SECONDLY, THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM IMPRESSES UPON US THE GREATEST OF GOALS - TO SAVE OTHERS -- 1 Cor. 9:20-23-

“And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”

- A. God expected Paul to always **do what he could do.**
1. He NEVER expected Paul to do what he couldn't do!
 2. **The same thing is true regarding our responsibility in reaching out to others!**
 - a) God expects US to do WHAT WE CAN DO, and never holds us accountable for anything we CAN'T do in bringing people to Christ!
 - b) But we CAN all **WALK THE WALK** and **TALK THE TALK** to others about Jesus, if we truly feel blessed by Him! *Are you a Christian? Why? How? How long?*
- B. Paul became a slave to other people. **Gal.5:13-** *“..do not let your freedom (in Christ) become an excuse for letting your physical desires rule you. Instead, **let love make you serve one another.**”*
1. His **personal desires** came second to others' spiritual needs: **1 Cor.9:19-** *“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.”*
 2. His **personal opinions** were kept to himself as he exalted the doctrine of Christ.
 3. His **personal comfort zone** was broadened so he could reach out to others—even on their own ground and in ways that he could convert them! **1 Cor.9:22-** *“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”*
- C. Paul was committed to winning souls.
1. Paul was willing to be used by God. **Acts 9:15** NIV- [In convincing Ananias to go to Saul]- *“the Lord said to Ananias, GO! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name!”*
 2. God used Paul's time, and his talents, & his treasures.
- D. Paul always remembered what he **used to be: a persecutor, a reviler, a sinner!**
1. He used to be like a lot of the people in the world. **1 Tim 1:15-** *“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”* **1 Tim 2:4-** *“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*
 2. He DIDN'T remember **with a desire to return to that way of life**, but it was an incentive to keep him in the strait and narrow way of Jesus Christ in telling others about **GOD'S SALVATION!**

III. THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S PLAN CAN BE SEEN BECAUSE WE HAVE THE GREATEST CHARGE - TO WISELY USE OUR TIME & SPEECH - Col.4:5-

6- *“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.”*

- A. We need to **WALK IN WISDOM.**
1. We need to be wise in the way we act toward those not Christians (natural & nice).
 2. If we act unnatural, we will make them uncomfortable.
 3. Personal outreach must be an everyday affair.
 - a. We must talk to people about Jesus in a non-threatening way.

b. We need to think!

B. We need to **REDEEM THE TIME.**

1. We need to make the most of our opportunities.
2. The most trivial meeting may be the meeting that will change someone's life.

C. We need to **LET OUR SPEECH BE GRACIOUS & SEASONED WITH SALT.**

1. Our speech must be kind & well thought out (substance).
2. But it must also manifest that Christ-like spirit of meekness. **1 Pet.3:15-** “..w/meek.& fear”

D. We need to **KNOW HOW WE SHOULD ANSWER EVERYONE.**

V. AND GOD’S PLAN ALLOWS US TO HAVE THE GREATEST SUPPORT BECAUSE WE’RE JOINED TOGETHER WITH ONE OF THE GREATEST TEAMS: A CONGREGATION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST - 1 Cor.12:12 (NIV)-
“the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.”

A. Outreaching to the lost with the gospel is a team effort, AS MUCH SO as is a baseball team who’s trying to win a game!

1. **We have individual responsibilities**, and each one must do his best in his position with what he has to work with!
2. **We have collective responsibilities**, and as a cohesive unit we must function together to effect the greatest results in what is to be accomplished!

B. Our collective and individual outreaches fulfill God’s dream, and the purpose He has in using us to save those who are lost! **Eph 4:16-** *“from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

1. We, right here in this building in Manteca, stand in a position of making this verse come alive.
2. We stand at the threshold of a door to a dream come true, and the only way through that door is by **REACHING THROUGH TO THOSE WHO ARE LOST**, with the gospel of Jesus!

CONCLUSION:

I. There are some things we need to make God's dream for us a reality in our lives.

A. **We need just enough organization** to keep personal evangelism going.

1. "Submit a Name & Save a Soul."
2. Or, “One night a week for reaching the Lost!”

B. **We need ideas to be submitted** and then deeds to be performed!

C. **We need people to take responsibility** for their own lives, for their responsibilities, for reaching the lost!

D. **We need to have VIRTUE**, moral courage to stand for Christ, notwithstanding what anyone else may do, or not do!

E. **We need increased involvement** in strengthening brethren & seeking the lost, and this must come from all the leaders and all the followers in this congregation!

F. **We need an evangelistic team made up of the whole congregation!**

II. **God has a dream=>EVERYONE TO HEAR THE GOSPEL!**

A. Can we know His dream of wanting to save the lost and tell Him “**NO!?**”

B. Can we know His sacrifice of Jesus just for OUR forgiveness and tell Him “**NO!?**”

C. Can we know His continued manifestations of love to us in our lives, and tell Him “**NO!?**”

D. **Or will we know His dream and make it our dream!?** **YES!** **Let us challenge ourselves; let us go on and RISE to the next level.**