

WHY DOES THE CHURCH EXIST

Series: ReFocus
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Discipleship, Vision,
Matthew 28:19-20

So we are 2 weeks into our vision series. And as I said, Trinity Vineyard is about bringing life to the city of Nakuru. And for us, life is found in the Kingdom of God. This is what is true blessing, true living, finding true purpose and completion.

Why Nakuru? Well, the church does not exist for itself. It does not exist to fill up the seats and its bank account and have a fancy building. The church is about joining God in His mission where they are. And we are in Nakuru. I mean, we get to be part of what God does in the rest of the world but primarily here. It is about God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, in Nakuru as it is in heaven. This is as Jeremy said, our cosmic yes, played out in ordinary ways.

And what that means for us we often break down into 4 key things. It means we are called to be

1. **God centered community** - what this means is that we want to be focused on God. Make him the centre of all we do. Not the pastor, not a style of worship or doing anything else. Nothing but God. That way we can join Him in what He is doing in the world as opposed to doing our own thing than asking Him to bless it.

2. **Rich in diversity** - We want this to be a place where people of all races, tribes and ethnicities, political persuasion and even theological persuasions can call home as they follow Jesus. Diversity is not a new idea, in fact, it is God's original idea, we just wanna be faithful to it.

3. **Community** - not just a gathering point but a genuinely loving community, where people feel they are seen and they belong and they are safe. While at the same time being challenged, encouraged and even called out.

4. **Bringing life to Nakuru** - we are called for this city. And this means being a more than-just-a-Sunday-morning and Wednesday night church. We want to be part of this city's business life, art life, social life and all. Why? Because God is about all of that too and we are joining Him.

But for us to live this out, for any church to live out it's calling it is important to go back to where it all started. Why the church even exists, to begin with.

And my friend Jeremy pointed out that the church exists to demonstrate to all of the universes the mystery of God. And what is that mystery?

That God created in love and the purpose was that all of the creation enters into His Kingdom: true blessing. And through Jesus, everyone can be part of this great story. Through Jesus, everyone gets to enter this true blessing and also going God in this great mission.

So what I wanna do today is talk about what will shape our journey as a church for the next season.

Here is what Jesus said to his disciples and pretty much to the early church and therefore to TVCN

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:19

These are our marching orders. And when the apostles heard this, they do not walk away wondering what he meant neither do they ask him what he meant. It seemed clear to them.

You see, the word disciple can be lost in translation for us or even seem to be so churchy. But this word was not even unique to Jesus. It was so common in the first century. It is better translated as an apprentice. Someone who learns under a master who to do a craft.

So Jesus is essentially saying to those who are learning to do life under him, go invite others to do life as you do it as you yourselves have learned from me. Or as Paul would later put it, teaching others to imitate us as we imitate Christ.

See, if Jesus is the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, he seems to imply that you enter the life of the Kingdom by living like him. Not just believing the right things but actually living like him. We are stuck in a generation that seems to think you can believe the right things and not have it impact how you live.

It seems to Jesus that to enter and live the life of the Kingdom we have to apprentice under Him. He called himself the way the truth and the life. Or as Paul puts it, later on, Christ being formed in us.

Make no mistake, you are being formed into something. The only question is what? If you wake up and do nothing for the next 20 years you still will be formed into something. So Jesus makes the invitation to rearrange our lives around him so that we are formed into His likeness, just like we were created.

These are the things that inform what we are formed into

1. The stories we believe
2. The habits we have formed
3. The relationships around us

If you do nothing for the next 20 years these 3 will certainly form you into something.

For example?

The news station you listen to is peddling a certain story and that is forming you into a certain kind of person. For example in the last election cycle in Kenya, more people who watched Royal Media Group seemed to be more positively predisposed towards Raila. Even though it was not so obvious, the owner was a supporter.

While in the USA, more people who would not take vaccines of any kind seem to listen to a particular TV station. Stories we pay attention to and believe, shape us. And you find the exact opposite stories with the opposing media houses.

The habits we have, shape us. What you do, does something to you in return. For example, our generation is more anxious and less satisfied and more lonely. Part of this is we spend more time habitually on our gadgets, scrolling and double-tapping and seeking likes. Our habits are shaping us and even shaping us into more self-absorbed people.

Our relationships shape us. That goes without saying. In our small community group we noted that out of spending so much time around each other, even the words we use are quite similar. We all say thumb drive instead of flash disk and power strip and so on.

Yet these are just surface things. How much deeper does it go? We do not become like Jesus on accident. But a lot in our culture will not form you into what God called you for. A lot in our culture will, as it always has, leave people broken and breaking others, sin riddled and tired.

We have to intentionally replace the stories we believe with his teaching, replace habits that are forming us by intentional practices around Jesus and the relationships with a true community.

So the question becomes how do you this? By apprenticeship under Jesus.

How does an apprenticeship work? You hang out with your master or sensei, you become like your master or sensei and then you go and do exactly what he or she did.

So the point of discipleship, the point of church is to

1. Be with Jesus
2. Become Like Jesus
3. Do what Jesus did

This is what it means to follow Jesus.

1. **To be with him** means to intentionally cut out space and time to be spent on Jesus. Not just knowing stuff about him but physically, emotionally and spiritually being with him.

You cannot follow Jesus if it does not take your time. In fact, if you want to know what you are following look at your schedule and your budget. What you spend your money and your time on, show you what you are following and even worshipping.

Love is spelt TIME as I have been learning a lot lately. I am not a huge fan of the saying, “I am with you in Spirit”. You are either with someone or not. Maybe that is just my personality type. But try that one with someone you love. Just tell them, “Hey Baby, I am with you in Spirit.” See how that goes.

To follow Jesus and be like him and love Jesus means literally spending time with Him.

2. Become like Jesus - As we spend our time with Jesus, as we obey Him and not ourselves and our cultures through the power of the Holy Spirit we become like Jesus. Our demeanour and desires begin to even be replaced.

Everything we see in Jesus. The life we see in Jesus that we so desire we soon become that. Jesus had no anxiety, completely at peace. Jesus was full of joy. He was full of faith even in trying times. Jesus was completely one with the father. He was patient, gentle, good.

Everything that we desire in Jesus as we spend time with him in obedience we become through the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet here is the catch, we cannot desire the life but not the lifestyle of Jesus.

The life we see in Jesus is a result of his lifestyle. That is why he invites us to apprentice under him. He literally is inviting us to take his lifestyle upon us. We often want the life of Jesus, the life of the Kingdom, we want true blessing but we just do not want to take the lifestyle of the Kingdom. This is what apprenticeship is about.

3. Then we do what Jesus did. The whole idea is that we experience this Kingdom life and then join God in what He is doing. Some of us grow disillusioned because we stop at just trying to live this out for ourselves. There is aspects of true life we cannot get into until we make decisions to actively do what Jesus did.

What did Jesus do? Proclaimed the Kingdom and demonstrated the Kingdom. It does not work if it is a private thing. It gets warped. The world is seeing the results of a gospel that has become just about the church. It easily turns racial, ethnocentric, nationalistic and destructive.

So what I wanna share today is a simple truth often overlooked in our culture. The following Jesus is not accidental. Being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus and doing what Jesus did does not just happen?

Take a moment today and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a glimpse of who He is forming you into 20 years from now. You see being like Jesus does not mean to start moving on Donkeys or wearing the overalls they wore in the first century or keeping a beard if He did.

It is a question of how would Jesus live life if he were you. He lived life as a 30-year-old single rabbi in the first century of the Middle East. But how would he live life if He were you?

You could be a single mom? You could be a doctor, a teacher, a business person. How would Jesus live life if He were you? This is the goal of our discipleship. This is how the Kingdom of God comes in Nakuru as it is heaven.

Look at the invitation Jesus made one day

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

This captures the greatest invitation and the invitation to this day. We all are broken and tired. The world has dealt us a bad hand. Broken families, broken dreams, sin. Nature, broken economies and the worst of all the burden of religion. And we look around and we see a world in a similar place.

So we all need rest. And Jesus is offering that rest. We look at Jesus and see the life we want. Yet Jesus in the same breath continues to talk about a yoke and a burden.

Wait, Jesus, you have recognised rightly that we are tired and in need of rest, how then do you put yokes and burdens on us?

Let me explain that bit. Jesus was a first-century Rabbi or teacher or in our language today, sensei. His way of interpreting scripture and doing life would be called his yoke or his burden.

So essentially Jesus is saying to his listeners and to us, “You are tired because of the yoke you are carrying. You are tired because of your way of interpreting scripture and doing life. You are tired because of what you think about God and how you do life.”

“Why don’t you instead learn from me? Why don’t you repent and think about God as I do and then live life as I do? Only then will you find true rest.”

So often we want the rest, without the yoke. Do you know why there is little transformation in our cities yet the churches are full? Because people want the rest but not the yoke. People do not realise that they are tired because of how they have lived their lives.

An example is praying for peace. We make it look like its some sort of magic where you are just given peace to replace the anxiety caused by how you live life. You want peace but you will constantly get into fights on the internet and not forgive people and not ask for forgiveness. You are asking for a life whose lifestyle you don’t want to commit to.

Kenya prays for good leaders then votes into office the same corrupt ones from last year. It just does not add up. The life we want and the lifestyle are not commensurate.

Sunday morning different from Sunday night and Monday morning

This is why people get impacted by the Holy Spirit on Sunday morning but still mistreat their spouses and give bribes and live in bitterness. What's happening? We mistakenly think transformation is passive and it just happens.

Following Jesus has to be something we do not just with our hearts, but with our minds and our lifestyle too. That is how we will enter true rest.

Early church people would call themselves followers of 'The way'. Because following Jesus meant living a life certain way. It was not a passive thing that just happens to us because we have gone to enough worship celebrations or listened to enough passionate preachers.

Instead, Jesus says, not at all. True rest involve us take his yoke and burned on us. Learning from him and living our lives like he lived his. What would Jesus do if He were me?

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30

If you feel exhausted by religion or life as you have lived it, you are invited to real rest by a God who loves much to dearly.

Why don't you spend some time now asking the Holy Spirit what God wants to shape you into?

Will you learn from me? Will you let me shape you? Will you rearrange your life around me? Will you obey me around the stories you believe, the habits you give yourselves to and the relationships you let form you?