

Introduction: Moving

Without a doubt the Church of Jesus Christ is called to be the most visionary of all organizations, businesses, and institutions on earth. Listen to what God says to the prophet Joel (2:28-29):

28 “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

As Bad as It Gets

The “and afterward” of v28 refers to the time when the tiny nation of Judah was undergoing three severe and intertwined crises. (1) Attacked and routed by their mortal enemies, the Assyrians. (2) Entrenched in a severe drought which halted crop production and dried up water supplies. (3) Economic and spiritual desolation brought on by the foreign occupation and longstanding famine.

Perhaps the worst part of this “Trinity of Despair” however, was that God had permitted it. After years of repeatedly calling his people to repent and return to covenantal fidelity, God took his hand of blessing and protection off his stubborn, hardhearted, and unfaithful, people. If you believe our country is going through tough times right now, what we are experiencing is, comparatively speaking, a Sunday School picnic compared to what Judah and Jerusalem were going through. This was as bad as it gets. This is hitting rock bottom, lying on your back, and looking straight up.

Revival – Restoration

In the midst of such discouragement and despair, failure and futility, God promised to restore his people both nationally and spiritually. How many do you know that spiritual revival always precedes national renewal? In his recent address at the Ronald Regan Presidential Library, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a committed Christian, spoke about reviving America. He asserted:

This comes from faith in God. If we get that right, then we will fulfill our constitutional responsibilities and continue to be the most exceptional nation in the history of civilization.

As much as I want our nation to be restored, I want God to renew his church even more. Historically speaking, God does renewal in two specific ways: He gives us his Spirit and his Spirit gives us visions.

The Last Days Spirit Phenomenon

“In the last days,” God declares, “I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.” Biblically speaking the “last days” started immediately after Jesus’ resurrection and with the “pouring out” of God’s Spirit upon his followers on the Day of Pentecost. When Peter explained to surprised bystanders about this history changing phenomenon, he was quick to say that it was a direct fulfillment of Joel 2:28-9 (Acts 2:17-18). In the OT the Spirit was “poured out” only upon certain people at certain times for certain things. Namely, prophets, priests, and kings. However, in the last days, ALL the followers of Jesus are candidates for receiving God’s Spirit. The moment we surrender to Jesus as Lord/Savior, Leader/Forgiver, we are said to be “baptized in the Spirit,” an event in which the Spirit begins to regenerate our hearts and restore in us the image of God. The Spirit also lavishes on us four gifts:

energy, creativity, love, and vision. The last days are identified as the age of the Spirit, i.e., a designated time whereas God's people see vivid visions about what God wants to do on earth through his church.

God: The Lead Visionary

Vision is a seeing thing and what we see is God's desired future for us. Everything that is, is because someone saw it before it came into being. Everything that is not, is not, because no one has yet to see it. That's the necessity and power of vision. God is the originator and bestower of vision. One of my favorite Scriptures about our visionary God is Romans 4:17:

*Abraham is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—
the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.*

Here Paul talks about the event that cemented Abraham's legacy as the Father of Faith. He earned this title when he obeyed God and took his beloved promise child, "Isaac" to the top of Mt. Moriah to sacrifice him there. Although conflicted, Abraham was willing to carry out this shocking command because he believed that God :

Gives life to the dead.

In other words, even if he had to carry through with the grisly task, Abraham was fully confident God would resurrect Isaac either immediately or sometime in the future. That's a whole lotta of faith! Any volunteers to try this after the service? We know that at the last second, however, that God prevented Abraham from sacrificing his son. We now know that it was a real test of Abraham's faith in God. However, it also revealed something else about God. Listen to the last phrase:

[God] calls things that are not as though they were.

God envisions "things that are not," i.e., something yet not in existence and brings it into reality. He envisioned the physical universe and brought it into reality. Same with the spiritual universe, the sending of his Son to earth, and the birth of his church. Because God loves to work in partnership with humanity, whenever he sees something that is not yet, he emblazons that vision onto his church. This shared vision is the principal reason he "poured out" his Spirit on all Christ followers.

In Matthew 6:10 Jesus prayed, "Your kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's vision is to get his Kingdom down to earth so that everything going in heaven happens on earth. Obviously, this vision is not fully realized so God enables us to "see" where it is not yet so that we act on it and establish it. For instance, when God envisions taking care of the physical and health needs of humanity, he gives someone the vision to build a hospital. When the poor need fed, God gives someone the vision to open a soup kitchen. Someone is naked, a clothing shelter. Same with education. The formerly great Ivy League schools started out as seminaries to train ministers. Samaritan's Purse was started by Bob Pierce in 1970 because God gave him the vision to relieve

suffering of the hopelessly impoverished. When Bob died of leukemia in 1978 his young protégé, Franklin Graham, took over and now Samaritan's Purse delivers food, water, and other essentials whenever and wherever a catastrophe strikes. I could go on, but it all starts with God envisioning, "Those things that are not as though they were." When we cooperate with God's vision of getting his Kingdom from heaven to earth amazing things happen which is one reason why Jesus constantly encouraged to "Seek first the KOG" (Matthew 6:33).

Bay Point Church Vision

Our vision for Bay Point is to "Create irresistible churches everyone enjoys." Many things that have come to pass in fulfillment of this vision but many others that are still yet to come, primarily the aspect of becoming a fully intergenerational church. We have yet to see, tons of babies, tons of teenagers, and tons of younger mothers and fathers joyfully belonging to the Bay Point Family. But God has shared this vision with me and now I share it with you. So, as the old Christmas Carol asks, "Do you see what I see?" Next week we will look at some strategies that will help us call those things not yet into reality, into real lived experience.