

June 13 2015 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
Matthew 20:28 What Better Future Does God Want Us to Pursue, by
Andy McDonald

For those of you who weren't with us last week I need to catch you up a bit before we plunge into the message for today. And for those of you who were here last week this will be a quick review.

Basically here's the essence of the message. Much more is possible than we ordinarily think. Much of our lives, in fact really all of our lives are strongly influenced by how we frame them. Too many of us are plagued with scarcity thinking. The frame we have created seems to shrink us because we are never enough, we don't have enough, we aren't enough, there isn't enough. And this is a fearful place to live.

As Christian we come to worship the God who is enough. He has enough, he never has a shortage and he wants to help us reframe our world. He knows that our ability to be engaged and helpful in the world is only possible when we have an abundance frame. When we believe there is enough for everyone.

We talked about our Vision Frame as a church. About how important the frame is to how we relate to the picture the words of the Vision proper that will hang in the center of the frame. Because how you frame things makes a difference. We believe our frame brings strength and context and guides us as we pursue our vision.

The four sides of the frame are made up of our Mission, Values, Strategy and Measures.

Maybe you are new here today, but we talk a lot here about our mission. For us it is just a rewording of the Great Commission given by Jesus. Our mission is "Loving people into a lifelong friendship with God." We believe that this is something God enables his followers to do.

It is clearly God enabled but it is within our range of possibility.

We are clear that we don't convict or convert—those are God's work not ours.

And we are clear that a decision to be a follower of Jesus is the other person's decision and something we can't make for them.

But we can love and we can introduce friends to our friend God and we are on a mission to love people so well that we love them right into a lifelong friendship with God. Just like when you have two friends you know but who don't know each other but you love your friends and you want them to love and be loved by each other. So that's our mission loving people into a lifelong friendship with our friend God.

To one side of our frame are our values they sort of deal with our motives or motivation. What are we about? What do we value? What's sort of behind pushing us forward in mission? Well it is our values and as you can see we have four: Love-Acceptance-Forgiveness-Grace, the Bible, Worship, and Participation. These critical values will direct us as we pursue Vision 2018 and they will act as guard rails to make sure we are on track with our motives, consistent with what we value.

Across the bottom of our frame is our strategy it answers the question of "How" we go about our mission. And here we are about following Jesus' strategy. We believe it is the only one that will bring true success.

Go connect with people – Demonstrate compassion – Meet their needs – Win their confidence—then invite them to join with us in following Jesus.

As we pursue our Vision 2018 it has to match this strategy, and this strategy will strengthen Vision accomplishment.

Finally the fourth side of our Vision Frame is measures. We believe when a person has been loved into a lifelong friendship with God there

will be evidence in a whole host of ways but our measures are a set of four sort of minimum evidences. That person will be involved in mission—they were loved by us and by God and so they will engage in loving people. They will attend worship regularly, volunteer in some capacity giving themselves away expecting nothing in return, and they will support the frame and the vision of the Hospital church through their tithe and offerings.

Let me make one more pass at this to maybe lodge it more clearly in our minds. Let's use our family as a model instead of church for a moment.

The mission is like our compass. It is the thing we keep orienting everything else to. It is directional.

So a family could say our mission is to have fun family trips.

The measures we talked about are like mile markers to show us progress on our journey.

Strategy is about how we will take these trips our mode of transport

And why are we wanting to do this because we value our family. And there might be other values that would influence our trips, Mountains, hiking.

Maybe this year we decide that our vision is to visit the Great Smokey Mountain National Park.

The mission is like our compass and the Vision Proper that hangs in the middle of the frame is like a developing picture of segments of our journey.

We have to get in the car or go to the airport or catch a bus.
If we choose to go in the spring we might bike Cades Cove, or hike the Noah Bud Ogle trail, or visit White Oak Sink and see the flox

blooming, or hike Alum Cave Bluffs. Our Vision to visit the Smokey Mountains is ever developing right before our eyes.

In the same way our vision frame contains and supports our vision proper.

Why do we need a vision? Because we believe God wants the best and the best seems to come with greater intentionality. We never are complimentary when we describe someone as just wandering through life! That same wanderer becomes urban legend with intentionality.

Why do we need a vision? Because as a church we are involved in the most important work in the universe, of connecting people with the God of the universe and it demands the greatest thought and planning and rigor because the stakes are matters of eternal consequence.

Let me tell you a little about our journey to what the Church Board is recommending to the congregation as our Vision 2018.

For a month Jeff and Greg and I met for several hours each Wednesday to pray and present to each other material around the concept of vision. We didn't have all the right words but a concept did begin to emerge.

We were candid about the strengths and weaknesses of Vision 752. We reviewed how just saying that 'because of our influence 752 people in our community will become followers of Jesus by June 30, 2014 was big and noble and it changed our church in positive ways. But of course the primary weakness was that it was impossible to measure.

We were clear in the early discussions that whatever else it might be it must not be focused internally. Our vision had to be "out there"

After all that discussion we set a morning for a retreat with the Church Board and Staff and we met at the Florida Conference Board Room.

That day I brought a draft and by meeting's end it had been tinkered with enough to have slide off track a little to the side of being lofty but not very measurable and from concrete to a little more vague.

Over the next month I pondered and prayed and then wrote a long letter to staff and board about wanting to return to the core idea in the draft I'd brought before. We got some great feed back from Steve Reed, one of our board members, and then with some further editing took a newly edited draft to Church Board last Monday night.

After a lengthy discussion we voted to recommend to the church in business session the adoption of this as Vision 2018: We will be a church without walls, fully engaged in serving the people of our community.

For centuries maybe more than a millennium, the church has been famous for building walls and by walls I mean any physical, mental, social, intellectual, ethnic, nationalistic, gender bias wall that is about separating "Us" and "Them"!

For Paul there were Jews and Gentiles and he wrote to the saints at Ephesus that Jesus himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility—we all have access to the Father by the one Spirit.

I believe being a church without walls is symbolic of a body of believers who are not isolated or separated from the community being served. Even when the church may have official statements about the absence of walls we build them in our groups, our cliques, our clusters. We practice prejudice and assumptions of superiority and inferiority as individuals. Who was alive and heard can ever forget President Regan standing at the Brandenburg Gate the challenge to President Gorbachev, "Tear down this wall," and the wall came down and our world changed. If we adopt this Vision 2018 it will demand that walls be torn down. That those artificial "us" and "them" barriers that arise

will be torn down, and humility will replace any sense of arrogance or superiority.

This vision says we will be fully engaged. I take fully to mean all of us. This isn't a vision for some small percentage of us, this is meant for all of us. Sure everyone will work in a Biblical way within the realm of their own personality and spiritual gifts but no one gets a skip bo. Adopted by our congregation this becomes our collective vision.

This Vision is about the people of our community. What do we mean? Our Community is equal to the people around each of you wherever you are. It is your neighborhood when you are home.

It is your school when you are in class.

It is your work place.

It is the people who work out in the same gym you do.

While it includes the blocks of community around this church building, it is more the circles of influence of each of you, that is your community and collectively your community is our church's community. If you watch our services from a distance you don't get a skip bo, your circle of influence is part of our community too.

Great, Andy a church without walls fully engaged, with the people of our community. But what do we do?

At the heart of this vision is the work of serving.

Some questioned in our discussion. I thought we were supposed to tell the world about Jesus. Or what about influencing people to become followers of Jesus?

This picture, this Vision, isn't a raw piece of paper thumb tacked to the wall. This Vision hangs in an incredible frame, a frame that says clearly that serving the people of our community must be done so that it is loving people into lifelong friendship with God.

That frame says that as we serve meeting people's needs, it will win their confidence and we will have earned the privilege to invite them to join us in following Jesus.

Serving is the work Jesus has given us to do and we'd pretty much rather do anything else!

But I don't know anyway around it and I believe that when we surrender to God and serve him in the people of our world, when we experience the joy of service it will change our hearts and fill our lives with true happiness.

The religious people of Christ's day rejected the cross--

They looked for a conqueror, a commander who would make them conquerors and commanders...

But what they got was a cross.

Jesus came to shift the paradigm. To change the way we see the world.

In Matthew 20 we have the story of James and John asking for commander status. They want the two top seats in the new coming kingdom. They want to have servants. They want to say jump and people respond with "how high."

It is near the end of Jesus time on earth and it must have been a bit discouraging that they haven't caught the vision. Everyday Jesus has lived it. Every day he demonstrated it. The fact that he hung out with those 12 guys was a living picture.

Greatness is love that evidences itself through sacrificial service.

He says to James and John and the other 10 disciples, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.

And then the kicker: "the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The night before the crucifixion he washed their feet and said I am among you as one who serves, as I have done for you do for one another.

And in his prayer recorded in John 17:18 he says to his Father, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

Jesus was sent to serve not to be served, Jesus was sent to lay down his life as a ransom for many, and he says that’s exactly the purpose and the commission with which he sends us into the world.

To everyone who becomes a partaker of his grace the Lord appoints a work for others. MH148

Listen, Vision 2018 invites us to greatness because greatness is found in serving others. It is when we are serving others that we are most like Jesus.

If we will adopt and live this vision it will change us.

In Steps to Christ we read, “those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. P.78

You see we don’t serve because we are so good or kind hearted or generous we serve because Jesus has loved us and saved us and served us.

This year we’ve looked at the Spiritual Disciplines because they are a means to make ourselves accessible to God that he might transform us. And there is a whole discipline just on Service maybe, just maybe it needs more attention because of this quote again from Steps to Christ

The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has enjoined upon us--to engage, to the extent of our

ability, in helping and blessing those who need the help we can give them.”

We can do this. We will be a church without walls, fully engaged in serving the people of our community.

There will need to be goals and strategies to move us along on this journey but because God loves us, because he saves us not because of the good things we’ve done but because of his mercy. Because he has forgiven our sins and declared us not guilty we are freed up to serve.

We aren’t panicked about our inadequacy. We are plagued no longer by a scarcity frame. No, we know that our God is enough and he gives enough grace and salvation is sufficient and in the freedom of grace we can tear down walls that separate and we can fully engage in serving the people of our community, and our bonus will be that we will grow in grace.

As you leave today please take one of the little Vision Frames that now has the center filled in with the proposed Vision 2018 and plan to attend and have your say at our Church Business Meeting the weekend of June 26-27. Next week for Father’s Day Pastor Jeff will be preaching about God’s Power Tools.

I believe God’s vision for each of us is the same as the vision for his Son. He sent him not to be served but serve and now we are sent in the very same way and it matches Vision 2018 We will be a church without walls, fully engaged in serving the people of our community.

TAKE *away* →

How does scarcity thinking “that there’s not enough,” affect your life?

What would change were you to adopt abundant thinking, “that there is enough” because we worship the God who is enough?

When you think about Christmas, and Christmas gifts, are your best memories about something you “got” or about something you “gave”? Why?

How onboard are you with our church’s “Vision Frame”?

1. Loving people into a lifelong friendship with God
2. Love-Acceptance-Forgiveness-Grace, TheBible, Worship, and Participation
3. Connect with people, demonstrate compassion, meet their needs, win their confidence, invite them to follow Jesus
4. Involved in mission, attends worship regularly, volunteers, supports with Tithe and Offerings

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What does “without walls” mean to you?

Jesus was sent, not to be served but to serve, and in John 17 he says just as he was sent he sends us into our world. What does that mean for you with regards to serving?

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