

The Risk Taking Church

The Risk Taking Church-An Endangered Species

Hebrews 11:6-10



Top
and



three



rare

endangered species.

Siberian Tiger

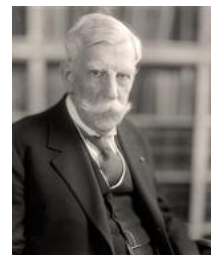
Black Rhino

Christian Church

The sad truth is that most churches are fading into obscurity.

There is little vision, there is no real Hope, there is no lively sense that Jesus Christ lives and is the head of the church. It is a widespread problem.

However here is the good news: Hope is meant to be a risk taking church. We are not an endangered species.



Story:

When he was 88, the Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes found himself on a train.

The conductor called for tickets, but Justice Holmes couldn't find his ticket and seemed terribly upset.

He searched his pockets and fumbled through his wallet without success.

The conductor was sympathetic. “Don’t worry, Mr. Holmes,” he said. “The Pennsylvania Railroad will be happy to trust you. When you reach your destination you’ll probably find the tickets and you can mail it to us.”

The conductor’s kindness did not put Holmes at ease.

He said, “My dear man, my problem is not ‘Where is my ticket?’ but rather ‘Where am I going?’

Unfortunately we are too often just like that.

We move forward through life unsure of how to respond to the changing situations in world around us.

The problem often is that we have no clear direction or picture of where we are going.

We lack a defined destination. We lack vision.

We don’t know what to look for.

I have come to realize that much of the Christian fascination with The end of the world and the second coming of Jesus Christ is a desire to get control of life and make sense of a chaotic world rather than a confident joyful faith in Jesus Christ in the midst of The trials and chaos of life.

Most often we are like the Airline Pilot: *“Ladies and Gentlemen. I have good news and bad news. The bad news is, we’re lost! The good news is, we’re making real good time!”*

Too often we cannot see where we are going and we don’t even know what is going on around us!

Sherlock Holmes and Watson were camping one night.

In the middle of the night Sherlock Holmes awoke and looked up at the stars.

He asked, "Watson, what do you see".

Woken from his sleep Watson looked up and said "stars".

Yes, but what do these stars tell you.

Watson said "Cosmologically they tell me that we are part of a large universe – that we are one of billions and billions of planets.

Theologically they tell me that we have a great God who made all of it.

Meteorologically they tell me that the sky is clear and we will have good weather tomorrow.

Temporally they tell me that it is the middle of the night and we should be sleeping!

Sherlock, what do they tell you." "Well," he replied, "they tell me that someone has stolen our tent".

Heb 11:6 ...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Define Faith: Faith is confidence in Jesus who we cannot see to do things we cannot envision.

Faith is not merely trusting Jesus. Faith is proceeding on the knowledge that Jesus truly has the answer and that he will act in our best interests.

Note the two conditions of faith in Hebrews 6:

1. Believe that he exists. (Putting your eggs in one basket.)

To "put all your eggs in one basket" is to risk losing everything all at one time.

Example: "My father was a very careful investor; he never puts all of his eggs in one basket."

If you had a certain number of "eggs", it would be safest to put those eggs in different "baskets" and not "put them all in one basket".

To "put all your eggs in one basket" would be to risk losing all of your "eggs" in case you drop that one "basket".

2. He Rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Reward: Doesn't mean we get what we want! It does mean that the Lord gives us what we need!

Earnestly seek him: We are Persistent, singularly focused, determined in our seeking of Him.

Let me ask you this morning "what do you believe for Hope Lutheran Church?"

- Do you believe the best days are in the past?
- Do you believe this moment is as good as it gets?

- Do you believe Jesus is going to lead us into a new future that is beyond anything we can imagine?

Where are we as a church going? In terms of vision there are 3 different types of churches (and people):

1. The Under-taking Church – looking back!



The undertaking church is one that is always looking backwards.

All that people ever talk about are the “good old days”.

They miss what is happening today because they are always looking back to yesterday.

Decisions in this kind of church are based on what has worked in the past – if it was good enough for them it is good enough for us.

Psalm 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. 2 There on the poplars we hung our harps, 3 for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" 4 How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

The children of Israel missed what God was doing now!

God was doing a new thing but they did not understand it.

They saw their captivity as an end and not a new beginning.

They did not see that through the captivity God was setting the stage for Jesus. HOW?

The Babylonians would be defeated by the Persians who would allow the Jews to spread all across the Mediterranean.

The Persians would be defeated by the Greeks who would unify all the peoples through it's language and customs.

The Greeks would be defeated by the Romans who would build road and make transportation possible to every remote corner of the then known world.

When Jesus was born, in the fullness of time, the stage was set for the message of the Gospel to spread like wild fire and in one generation reach every corner of the known world.

Years ago when **Mao Zedong was the leader of China** there was great persecution of the Christians.



Mao wanted to eliminate Christianity.

First he arrested the Christians and then spread them all over the country thinking that when they could not meet together the church would die.

Second he wanted to punish them so he gave them the worst jobs possible – garbage collectors and gravediggers.

On the surface you would have thought this would work.

However, in spreading out the Christians he planted Christianity through the entire nation.

In making Christians garbage collectors he gave them access to every home in the country and in making them grave diggers he placed them in situations where they could share their hope with people who were grieving.

Poor eyes limit your sight; poor vision limits your deeds. -- Franklin Field

While you can learn from the past, you can't live there.

You have to live and adapt to where you are or you will perish.

One of the problems missionaries face is the fact that some of them want the comforts and security of where they grew up in America.

As a result they are miserable. That just does not work.

You have to adapt to the environment in order to survive and live a there.

Too many churches today are spending their time and resources lamenting the past when they should be adapting to the future.

What has worked in the past may not work in the present because the audience has changed.

The gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. The gospel must constantly be forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence. -- Helmut Thielicke



While it is possible for a church to be always looking back it is also true for a person.

How do you look at your walk with Jesus?

Are you only remembering the GLORY DAYS of your life or do you feel the best years of your life are yet to come?

When **the Jews rebuilt the temple after the Babylonian captivity** many people were upset because it was not as beautiful as before.

Haggai 2:3 Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?

Yahweh reminded the people that he was with them and that His Spirit was still there.

It is impossible to serve Jesus yesterday.

We cannot live off yesterday's bread.

It does not matter how God has used us in the past – how will He use us in the future?

A person or church that tries to walk looking backward is bound to fall into a deep dark hole.

2. Second Kind of Church: The Care-taking Church – looking at the present.

The care-taking church is always concerned with present pressing issues.

It is so busy now/ and there are so many needs now/ that its focus is on the **now**.

It seems to always be in maintenance crisis mode; just trying to keep it's head above the water.

Decisions in this kind of church are based on immediate assets.

The number one questions is always **“do we have the money now to support this”?**

That is the Wrong Question:

The Right Question: “Does Jesus want us to do this?”

Matt 15:32 Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way." 33 His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"

They disciples made the same mistake of the Care taking church.

They assumed they didn't have any food so they were Helpless.

In fact, they had Jesus and the resources were unlimited.

A care-taking church thinks it is realistic and therefore comfortable with the Status Quo.

As long as the services are good and the needs are met and the people are happy then all is well.

Their motto: “If it isn’t broken then don’t fix it.”

The problem is that they walk by sight and not faith.

Likewise it is easy for each of us to slip into the care-taking mode in our Christian walk.

We all have experienced this mindset at work.

When the work for the day is so great that you cannot see tomorrow coming then you are in trouble.

Tomorrow looks like a large blank wall that we cannot see beyond nor do we care too.

As the ambassadors of Jesus Christ we must have a greater vision as individuals of the Lord’s plan and purpose in our lives.

Do our prayers reflect Jesus’ greater glory?

Are our thoughts on today or can we still see Jesus’ bigger picture?

Vision encompasses vast vistas outside the realm of the predictable, the safe, the expected. – Charles R. Swindoll

No man is worth his salt who is not ready at all times to risk his well-being, to risk his body, to risk his life, in a great cause. -- Theodore Roosevelt

The Third Kind of Church: The Risk-taking church – Looking to the Future.

The risk taking church is always looking forward regardless of what is happening in the present. **REPEAT.**

The risk taking church is always looking forward regardless of what is happening in the present.

They believe that the best is yet to come.

They invest all they have today so that they can be all that Jesus wants them to be tomorrow.

Risk taking churches seek to be cutting edge.

They want to see how the Lord is moving and to use all available technology and music to make Jesus Christ known.

One of the reasons many don't take risks is fear of failure.

However failure is just a part of life and is often a prerequisite to success.

If you aren't failing then you aren't trying!

As one author says 'Failure is the Backdoor to Success'.

If we want to be a church that moves forward with vision then we must accept the fact that there will be times in the future that we will fail along the way.

Dr. Jonas Salk attempted 200 unsuccessful vaccines for polio

before he came up with one that worked. Somebody asked him one time,

"How did it feel to fail 200 times trying to invent a vaccine for polio?"

This was his response: "I never failed 200 times at anything in my life. My family taught me never to use that word. I simply discovered 200 ways how not to make a vaccine for polio."



An Ancient Proverbs says:

A blind man's world is bounded by the limits of his touch; an ignorant man's world by the limits of his knowledge; a great man's world by the limits of his vision.

By faith Noah went and build and ark.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Think about this. He invested everything he had in something that seemed completely impossible.

Can you imagine building a boat in your back yard in a day when there were no cranes that could move it!

Not only that but he built it in a day land with no water nearby.

Though he could not see or understand it, he based his life on God's command and was willing to wait 120 years for the promise to be fulfilled.

Noah's vision was based on what he had been told by God.

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith Abraham left his home and went to the promised land.

Though he was living in a tent he saw the future city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

He believed God and based his life on that vision.

What destroys perspective is our tendency to measure Jesus' will and power on too small a scale.

We lose the wide-angle view because we're riveted on the close-up.

Using a microscopic lens, even a harmless spider looks like a hairy, horrible monster.



Most of us would never clean cobwebs from the house if we focused on the close-up view of spiders.

Jesus was a risk taker.

He entrusted the salvation of the world to 11 weak and frightened men.

Through the Lord's power and vision they changed the world.

Instead of looking at the past or trusting in the present they saw Jesus' future church and boldly went forward to make it

happen.

Often, when I am shaking hands, someone will say, “Pastor, Did you write that sermon for me?”

SAY IT WITH ME:

“PASTOR, DID YOU WRITE THAT SERMON FOR ME?”

“YES I DID!!!!”

JESUS TODAY IS ASKING YOUR AND ME:

•Where is your vision? The past, the present needs, or my future?

•How big is your faith?

•In which direction are you looking?

•Are you willing to lay everything on the line for me?

Today the Lord is shaking the kingdoms of the earth and he invites you and me to be earth shakers as well.

Take the hand of Jesus and boldly become a risk taker for him and for the future of his church, this church, this time in history.

Yellow Card

___I will ask Jesus today and tomorrow to open my eyes to see Hope and His Mission through His eyes.

___I will pledge to combine faith and action as one word from this moment forward.

I will ask Jesus to move this church off the endangered species list and turn us into a risk taking church under His guidance.