

Introduction: Pg. ____

2020 Vision - Here's what we're going to do... May not be all of your commitments... PRAYER...

Two weeks ago my wife and I, along with a few family members and friends, started a 30 Day diet called Whole 30! It's actually a really relaxed diet, not very strict. Obviously you can't eat any processed foods. You can eat anything you want except grains (bread, rice, oats, even quinoa, no grains of any kind). They also disallow dairy (no buttah, cheese). See, piece of cake. A few other things: no legumes (beans of any kind, chickpeas, lentils, and peanuts). And finally, no alcohol AND no SUGAR.

Who wants to sign up?! You guys need to pray for a playa! Thank God for vegetables, fruit, AND MEAT!

Now, why would anyone want to put themselves through this kind of self-torture? It is supposed to reset your metabolism and inflammation levels, essentially serving as a way to detox your body. I appreciate the energy boost from eating healthy food as well as the way it forces you to evaluate what you put in your body [*Read a box of ingredients*] & try new food, some of which tastes pretty good (who ever heard of Spaghetti Squash or Almond Buttah; or tried a lettuce wrapped bison burger topped with guacamole, jalepenos, and a fried egg; that junk was good!).

God made our bodies to run on food. It is wise for us to evaluate what we consume and how it affects for us for better or worse!

What's your diet look like? Here's another question for you: What does your spiritual diet look like? What are you putting into your soul?

One thing I love about Jesus is that the spiritual diet he invites us to is less about what we can't eat and more about what we should eat. In reality, Jesus invites us to a Feast.

"The Feast" **John 6:22-71**

Context:

Vv. 22-24

- The first part of chapter 6 told us about Jesus miraculously feeding thousands of hungry people from 5 pieces of bread and 2 pieces of fish. Then, to top it off, he walked on top of the sea in order to catch up with his disciples who were fighting through a storm to get to the other side.
- Naturally, the crowds who experienced the miracle of the feast, when they could not find Jesus on their side of the lake, went over to the small town of Capernaum to find him.
- There at the synagogue, as verse 59 tells us, Jesus entered into a discourse and dialogue with the people about the greater realities that his sign was pointing to.
- Verse 25 is almost amusing: "Rabbi, how did you get over here?"
- And Jesus, the smooth operator, doesn't answer their question but goes right after their motives in seeking him.

The rest of this story can be summed up in two invitations we should be caught up when we rightly understand who Jesus is and how we should respond...

I. Come & Feast! (6:22-59)

Have you ever considered that people often come to Jesus for the wrong reasons? We see it in this story. Jesus begins to expose their twisted motives, one by one. *Read 25-34*

- Strike 1: Self-Centered Gain
 - Verse 26: “Because you ate your fill.”
 - There is a major difference between wanting Jesus for how he can benefit me vs. Wanting Jesus for Jesus.
- Strike 2: Working for God’s approval
 - They misinterpret Jesus and think they can be awarded eternal life through the achievement of their good works.
 - BUT Jesus says, the only work (by which he means requirement) is to believe, to trust in who he is and what he’s done.
- Strike 3: I’ll believe if _____.
 - You show me a sign. “Write it in the sky!” Give us more proof. Like the manna in the wilderness with Moses in Exodus 15.

T: As you approach Christ, are you coming with the same motives? OR, are you coming to him because you see HE is the giver of everything you could ever want? That’s what verse 35 is all about: “I am the bread of life.”

Jesus, the Bread of Life (35ff)

- Here we have the first of seven “I am” statements that tell us who Christ is and how we can relate to God through him.
- Let’s consider why Jesus would use this metaphor and say: “Bread, that’s me. For you.”
- Jesus draws this metaphor because everything bread accomplishes for us physically, Jesus accomplishes for us spiritually/holistically.

Jesus Satisfies our Hunger.

- Anyone planning on eating today? Tomorrow? Why?
- Bread is essential because we NEED it to live. {P}
- We try to satisfy our hunger through a thousand other means...
 - “If I find within myself a desire that nothing in the world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” - C.S. Lewis
 - Bread - of Sports/Leisure/Entertainment
 - Bread of Work...
 - Bread of Sex...
 - They will not ultimately satisfy.
- His claim is as bold as it gets: “Never hunger again or thirst again.”
- *Gospel*: HAVE YOU COME to Christ and taken him in for the eternal satisfaction of your soul? Ecclesiastes??

Bread satisfies, then sustains...

Jesus Energizes our Lives.

- Food nourishes us. It gives us daily fuel. It keeps us going. That’s what Jesus does for those who come to him.
- Do you remember in John 4, when the disciples were concerned and telling Jesus he should eat?
- How did he reply: “I have food that you know nothing about!” LOVE THAT!
- Jesus is not simply what we need; he is everything that we want. Good food also . . .

Jesus Delights our Souls.

- No one sits down at Regina's or Legal's or Tenoch or Istanbulu or Greek Corner or Mystic Coffee and says, "That food has added nutrients to my body. My caloric intake is on point! My friends should come here because they can get some great calories!"
- No, we go places and return to restaurants, because it makes our taste buds throw a party. We choose certain food over others because we enjoy them. We delight in food.

Do you see the revolution in that statement? We come to Christ, not only because he is everything we will ever need, but he is also everything we could ever want. If coming to worship, and picking up your Bible, and serving your neighbor feel like chores to you, it may be that you are sitting down at the wrong table. Jesus not only satisfies. He delights!

But here's a question for you: How can we come to him?

We can only come to Christ by his cross. [There's no feast without the cross.]

- Look down at vv. 51-59.
- These are some bizarre instructions from Jesus: Eat my flesh. Drink my blood
 - The earliest Christians were charged with being Canibalistic...
- Verse 53: "I tell you the truth" (4th time he said that in this discourse) Listen up! Don't miss this!
 - Jesus is speaking metaphorically and not literally. Just as he says: I am the LIGHT of the World. I am the DOOR of the sheep.
 - This is why we view the Lord's Supper as representing the body and blood of Christ, not actually being or becoming the body and blood of Christ. If you come from a Catholic background, we could talk more about those different understandings.
- When Jesus talks in these bizarre terms, he is referring to our full participation in his death.
- To take in Christ in this way is to...
 - Identify completely with Jesus in his death.
 - And be united with him as one.
 - We are in him and he is in us.
 - This is the closest conceivable relationship.
 - We dwell in him/abide (56)
- The paradox of Christianity: Jesus brings life through death.
 - We will be raised on the last day! Resurrection! 39, 40, 44,
 - Verse 57: We live because Christ has been raised.

T: We all make time to eat, how much time do you make for Jesus? We do what we need to do. We do what we love to do.

We can only come to Christ by his grace.

- Look at *verse 44*. No one comes to feast on Christ unless God shows us our need and draws us in to believe.
- God is the one who PULLS US IN to see Christ, believe in Christ and have life in Christ:
- Look down at *verse 63*...The Spirit Gives life; the words of Christ give life.

T: Beholding the glory of Christ and enjoying him every day is the secret to living our lives for God and it is the secret for every church to thrive. Last Sunday, I unveiled our Vision as a church. What was it?

PIC of UPSIDE-DOWN CITY - Boston Skyline

You remember this fancy **PIC of Timeline** I crafted for you, right? 2050 - 2020 - 2016 -

PIC of 2016 Calendar Today 1/31st and 2/1st

We alter decades by how we grind today!

I want to review some of that vision with you, in terms of some of the goals we want to see God accomplish through us, but before we talk about the WHAT, I want us to reconsider the HOW.

How will we get there? What kind of culture will it take? **BUILD & CELEBRATE**

**BEHOLDING the glory of JESUS as a
UNIFIED family, we will
INTENTIONALLY
LOVE all people completely
DEPENDENT on his Grace with audacious faith**

CELEBRATE - HEAR HEAR....

This is going to be a lot of fun, but it has to flow from our feasting on Christ, doing it together, with a plan as we love others and depend on God.

As we feast on Christ, we want to...

1. Build our weekly Worship attendance to 230.

- When we worship on Sundays, our goal is to sing of Christ and speak of Christ, so that we all can FEAST on Christ.
- And naturally, we want to invite others into that!
- Push the ribbon back! Some of you should be motivated to bring friends so you can sit further back! :) Ha!!
- There are 57,000 people in this city and 318,000 people when you include the cities that border Medford. That is why we want to see *at least* 4-fitty here, and we want to build our congregation to a healthy position where we can send out 30-40 people every year to help a new church get started and not skip a beat.

What's your Step? These are great possibilities, OR come up with your own.

Goal Possibilities for Action

- I will prioritize weekly worship and increase my attendance.
- I will invite one friend to join me at RHC monthly.
- I will bring ___ [mine is 12] friends with me to worship in 2016.
- I will bring one friend with me to NEXT in 2016.

Then we want to...

2. Launch 15 Groups with 150 people Connected.

Why do we have GROUPS? Not only to build relationships with one another, but also to deepen our relationship with God.

Goal Possibilities for Action

- I will visit a Group at least 3 times.

- I will grab a meal with friends in my Group monthly.
- I will pursue a discipling relationship with someone in my Group.
- I will bring someone new to RHC with me to Group this year.

3. Commission 150 people to Serve with a Team.

To live like Christ is to FEAST! Jesus: “You want to know me? You want to become like me? Then live like me!”

- Certainly there are hundreds of ways to serve others like Jesus every week.
- We are just saying, when it comes to our church, this is the best and most practical way.

Goal Possibilities for Action

- I will schedule a SHAPE assessment to explore how I can serve others.
- I will join the _____ (Redemption Kids, First Impressions, Music, A/V, Venue) Team and faithfully Serve once a month when I’m scheduled.

T: All of this, please remember, all of this flows from feasting on Christ. In fact, if we are a group of people that love Jesus more everything else (families, friendships, work, pleasures, hobbies), I would be very surprised if we don’t blow past these goals. Intimacy leads to ministry. So, it’s come and feast AND THEN...

II. Go and Tell! (6:60-71)

Story:

- Verse 60 - This is a hard saying: not simply difficult to understand but more difficult to accept.
 - Oh, no. Jesus about to lesser to greater on them...
 - What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?
- Verse 66 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible:
- But I wish I could have been there for verses 67 & 68.
 - “Do you want to go away as well?” (verse 67)
 - Peter, speaking on behalf of the 12, “Lord, to whom shall we go...
- Going and telling was the result of coming and feasting.
 - Peter could say that because he knew who Jesus was. He knew who Jesus was because he spent time with him.
 - Peter wanted to go and tell others, because he knew Jesus held the highest possible place. He is the Messiah. He is the Savior of the World. He is the Holy One of God.
 - Following Christ always begins with knowing him, and then as we know him we grow to love him more and as we grow to love him more we simply cannot contain that love to ourselves, but we want others to experience him.
 - PIC: When we know something is that good, we naturally want to YELP about it. That feast... Son! Bomb!
 - That’s what sharing Christ with the people around us is like. Evangelism is YELPing about the God who has changed our life.
 - It’s nice to pin some recipes on Pinterest. It’s even better to tell a friend about the true Feast.
 - We do so because we been loved so much.
 - **Growth is the natural consequence of love.**

You say, Tanner, help me out because it freaks me out. I understand it takes a measure of courage in our culture to talk about Jesus. Here are a few encouragements:

- **Pray:** Pray for yourself (love, brokenness, sight). Pray for them (receptive). Pray to grow closer to Christ. That's what prayer is about anyway.
- **Prioritize:** We have already agreed: We do what we need to do. We do what we love to do. We make time for what we love. Just live your life with gospel intentionality. **"Do what you do, do it with others; do what others do, do it with them"** Do you eat? Do it with others. Do you workout? Do it with others. Do they enjoy art? Enjoy it with them. Do they hang out in the Square after hours? Do it with them.
- **Listen & Share:** The order is important. We need to enter people's stories because we care about them. If love does not drive our concern, we are misrepresenting Christ. It's that simple. So I want to hear someone's story, understand their story, feel their story, and then with humility and courage: tell them the greater story of the gospel and help them see how God made their story to get caught up and become completed by his story.
 - *Steve Timmis says, "Evangelism is singing a better story of recreation. So we enter their story and tell the better story of the gospel."*

Goals 4 & 5 of our 2016 focus address this desire: Because we have come and feasted, we are going to go and tell. We want to...

4. Give \$360,000 to God's Mission through Redemption Hill.

Our Financial Ministry Plan is all about sharing the life Jesus offers to all people throughout Greater Boston, all the way to the other side of the globe.

Goal Possibilities for Action

- I will plan my personal budget and set a goal of \$_____ for 2016 giving.
- I will begin systematic recurring gifts (weekly/monthly) through PushPay.
 - I have already accomplished this goal! That's why my metric of one is already maxed out!
 - Weekly recurring gifts. No one will give faster than me on Sunday! Ha!

AND, we want to...

5. Celebrate 35 people becoming new followers of Jesus.

- Some of you may think this number is crazy. Others may think it's weak.
- What if I told you that we have over 300 first time guests every year at Redemption Hill? Because a large portion of them are not-yet believers in Jesus, we want to many of them become new followers of Christ.
- That does not include the 1000s of friendships we all have with great people who have yet to understand and embrace the life Christ offers.
- How will you go and tell this year?
 - Listen, we are all about being relational. We don't hand out awards to the people who make it the most awkward when talking about Jesus.
 - But we also realize our relationships are superficial and inauthentic if people don't know the most important thing about us.
 - That's all sharing the gospel is anyway. Here's the most important reality in my life, I'm desperate to let you in on this treasure.

Goal Possibilities for Action

- I will give a Bible or other resource to a ___ friend(s) to discuss.
- I will grab lunch with a co-worker once a month.
- I will create opportunities to tell ___ friend(s) (each week/month; this year) about Jesus.
- I will engage in (#___) kingdom imprints this year to display and declare the gospel.

T: This passage invites us to...

The Point: Come and Feast and Bring others with you to the table.

Conclusion:

That is our vision as a church. That is how we glorify God by living out his mission as a community transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What steps are you going to take this year? **There is no such thing as a small step in the mission of God!**

I'm going to lead us in prayer and then we are going to sing some songs, but as we move forward, if you have not already wrote down 1-3 commitments for 2016, I want to encourage you to do this know. Worst case, write: "still praying about it."

As we begin singing in a minute, I want each of you to come down and place these commitments on the cross.

Let's remember: these goals are not about numbers. They are about people. I grew up staring at Scoreboards... I love Stats, but there is one thing I love more than stats. That is STORIES. There is NOTHING better than watching God alter the stories of our lives and those around us.

PRAYER:

If we're screaming: "Jesus change this city!" He's looking right back at us and saying: "what you gonna do about it?"