

## Our Vision

VBC

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Mark 2:21-22

Series: Mark #4

January 24-25, 2004

### “The Shaping of Things to Come”

#### INTRO

Yesterday, I was at a memorial service for a man I truly loved

- Everything was in its proper place -- the organ background helped to create the correct atmosphere
- People were dressed in appropriate attire -- conversations were quiet, reverent

And then it happened -- right in the middle of the service, someone's cell went off

- One of those selections set to music at a volume even Helen Keller could have heard
- While the rest of us sat there thinking—doesn't this person understand protocol?
  - No one leaves their cell phone on when you are paying respects to the dead

It was sort of like that here in Mark 2:18 (read)

- Why aren't Your guys following proper procedure?
- How is it most have their cell phones off -- but Yours are on?

It was all part of a rising tension

- With every movement — Jesus was creating mystery, confusion, perplexity, anger
- As a religious teacher, He was expected to be an advocate of the status quo
- His orthodoxy was measured by His willingness to conform to the established traditions

But with each act—it was just the opposite

- creating questions in everyone's mind
  - Why are You here in the desert?—everyone is waiting for You back in Capernaum!
  - Who is He to extend forgiveness to this paralytic?
  - Why is He eating with the riffraff of culture?
  - Why aren't Your followers following the code of proper religious behavior?
  - WHY AREN'T YOU CONFORMING?

In the midst of all of this, Jesus gave a parable - (read vss.21-22)

- which on the surface seemed innocent enough — irrelevant, mundane, domestic, SAFE
- but then -- this was the nature of parables
- they were used to slip past any defenses — where they could enter into the citadel of self
- and like a time bomb—explode in unprotected hearts

Suddenly people realized — He is talking about us

- He is this fermenting wine — breaking down molecules and releasing energy that cannot be encased in pre-existing structures
- and we are these structures
- expectations that He is not conforming to
- codes that His grace explodes

The unspoken question cannot be missed --

**WILL WE BECOME NEW SKINS FOR THIS FERMENTING SAVIOR — OR  
WILL WE KEEP TRYING TO CONFORM HIM TO OUR RIGIDITY?**

- The question was asked then — it is still on the table today

Will we expand with Him, adapt to His Spirit, to His ways — that are ever active, changing?

- Mercies that are new every morning—songs that are ever new
- Will we GET IN STEP WITH WHERE THE SPIRIT IS MOVING?

Will we hold to the status quo — or will we dream new dreams?

- Will we seek to find where this new wine is at work?
- Or will we cling to the way we have always done it?

That's always been the question facing the church — facing us as individuals

- and that's what I want to focus on for a few more minutes

Over Christmas break, I drafted a letter to you — talking about this desire to make sure we avoid rigidity — that we be a church that is like new wineskins

- ever flexing — conforming to the fermenting Spirit's energy
- that we be a church with a VISION

and then my staff looked at it and said—don't send it—SAY IT

So here it is—

We have been talking about our vision for the future for the past two years — and even though we voted together to go ahead

- it has been a bit muddled in most of our minds
  - but that's okay — vision is our attempt to look out into the future — where no one can see
  - it will always be a bit fuzzy, hazy

But the reality is -- we haven't presented it in a way all of us can own — and we must — because it has to be **ours** — not mine -- not the leadership's

### *ILLUSTRATIONS*

- Luis Palau -- reading John 14:12 -- “I tell you the truth—anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing—he will do even greater things”
  - decided to take God at His word and caught a vision to reach his home town of Cordoba — then Argentina, Latin America — and now to this day — Dave Jones will tell you he is determined to reach the world
- Bill McCartney -- successful Colorado coach — came to the point where he knew there had to be more to life than packing in a stadium and winning championships
  - So one day, he caught a vision of a stadium packed with worshippers — not football fans — and started Promise Keepers
- Men who chose to keep growing, flexing — men of new wine — but they could have never done it alone
  - It had to be owned by others

So what are we dreaming? Here's a picture — it's fuzzy — but it seems to get clearer as time goes

- a church with a solid history transitioning itself for a 21<sup>st</sup> century ministry — avoiding the pitfalls of so many churches that become old wineskins
- taking on a new form rather unique --a regional center where ministries within the community can possibly come together
  - seminaries and campus ministries and mission agencies possibly sharing the same site — maintaining their own identity while sharing, cross pollinating with one another
  - a community center of sorts — that might include everything from an athletic facility to a medical clinic

It's a big dream — I don't know anyone else doing it

- just lots of silos doing their thing

This dream sees a congregation — known primarily for its desire for

**CONNECTION**

- **WHERE THE WORLD IS CONNECTING WITH WORD**
- **WHERE VARIOUS CULTURES ARE CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER**
  - Asian, Hispanic, Indian, African
- **WHERE GIFTS ARE CONNECTING WITH OPPORTUNITY**
  - that is -- a place where people are connecting with the purpose for which Jesus died for them
- **WHERE FAILURE CONNECTS WITH GRACE**
  - where the lonely find acceptance
- **WHERE LONGING CONNECTS WITH GOD IN INCREDIBLE WORSHIP**

Some of the pieces are in place

- We are connecting in India
  - I saw Village doing something I have never seen — a church connecting ministries — connecting resources, bringing people to work together

Such a dream raises questions — many of you have raised them — and they are fair

**1 - WHY NOT MULTIPLY RATHER THAN ADD?**

- Sometimes people ask — is it our intention to become a mega-church? — and it is usually not asked as a positive question
  - for mega churches are often seen as large, impersonal, corporate — and many are
  
- Why not spin off other churches?
  - after all — we have done that before
  
- We're not against doing this — just not now
  
- Let me try to answer with a story - Nigeria  
In one of my trips, I began to ask myself - how can a nation with so many churches experience such minimal impact? Here is a nation utterly corrupt, yet there are countless churches. Speaking at a seminary in Jos, I encouraged the students to consider banding together. Rather than have 8,000 churches of 15-20 people, why not combine efforts and make an impact on culture? My fear, is that few have taken my suggestion. We're more interested in creating silos than joining efforts to make an impact

## *POINT*

- There's something that emerges through critical mass
- There are things we can do now that we could only have dreamed of a few years ago
- We are mobilizing at least 5 teams to go overseas this year
  
- Who would have ever thought Village could be doing the kind of things it does in India — or planning for the things we hope to do in Lebanon?
  - missionary training, short term; missionary care; consulting; conferences; partnering with groups; community health care
  - All these would have never happened with a church of smaller resources
  
- The human and financial resources to share the gospel on Christmas Eve to nearly 2000 people could not have happened if we were much smaller
- So we're believing God would like to take our growth and grow us to a level where we can do ministries we have not yet dreamed of
  - take some pretty bold initiatives in Lebanon -- steps against injustice both here in the community and abroad -- use our wealth to side with the poor

It's true -- mass usually leads to a mess -- *but it can also create momentum*

## **2 - DOES THIS MEAN WE WILL MOVE?**

- Maybe — and that creates a lot of discomfort
  - I understand — buildings, places create emotional attachment
  
- We don't really know — and it is up to God — for it looks pretty impossible at present
- We just know this -- when the vision increases, the structures become inadequate — and they are — we cannot grow at our main entry point

Here's what we must keep in mind —

- A building and a site are simply about facilitating ministry — this is not the church — *we are*

What if Village had remained content with North Village? Where would we be today?

But let me add one more piece here — this must never be about a building — or land

- for our most important ministry is not what is done within anyway — but what is done through us out there -- being incarnational

### **3 - CAN WE DO THIS?**

- Some (a good number today outside of Village) would say we can't
- There is a general assumption that an existing, institutional church is too conformed to its old skins — that the wine has turned old
  - that the best hope in the future is in new, emerging churches
  - that it is better to invest in digital TV rather than analog

But what if we challenge the prevailing assumptions?

- that existing churches don't necessarily have an existing shelf life
- that over time they atrophy — become OLD WINESKINS

What if we become the church many say we can't become?

- What if we take our existing strengths — size, organization, trained leaders, resources (what others assume as weaknesses) and use them to incredible advantage?

Nothing says we have to devolve into irrelevancy and impotency

- Nothing says the wineskins have to become rigid