

I. A Tale of Two Churches

A.I got this email that contained pictures from the *1977 JC Penney* catalog. Let's look back 30 years.

1. *Run Pictures*

B.What is really scary is I started Seminary in September 1977.

C.I never wore a jump suit!!!!

D.Last week, Alison did a great job in looking at and celebrating 2007 at CrossRoad Church.

E.It is good for a congregation to be able to look back and celebrate the wins and to remember the mountains and valleys of the journey.

F.It is not good to keep looking back.

G.Modern culture has a new set of problems that didn't exist 10, 20, 30.... years ago, but it is the job of the Church of Jesus Christ, to keep looking towards the future.

H.I think we sometimes romanticize the past and fail to appreciate progress.

I.So here we are, the first Sunday of 2008.

J.A New Year always offers new beginnings, new hope, new resolutions.

K.As the lead pastor of CrossRoad Church, it is also a chance to offer a challenge to you about the Vision of our Church.

L.We will be 12 years old in April. After 12 years, it is easy to lose the vision, the passion and, ultimately, the mission to which we are called.

M.Why Vision is so important.

1. Dad and Martin Marietta

a. He worked hard for the company and wanted to do his best.

b. If Martin Marietta didn't succeed in their mission to develop aeronautical engineering projects, my father never had a sense of failure.

c. I contrast that with my life and the call of Jesus Christ to ministry.

d. As a follower of Jesus Christ, our mission is to fulfill the vision of the Kingdom of God coming on earth as it is in heaven.

e. We aren't capable of fulfilling that mission.

f. For over 2,000 years, people have given their lives, some literally, to see this happen.

g. Sometimes I get discouraged. Sometimes I want to measure success by the buildings we build, the technology we employ, how large the crowd.

h. We can't even find metrics that measure the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven.

N.Today, I want us to look at two out of the seven churches that the Book of Revelation addresses.

O.Jesus speaks to John the disciple who wrote the Gospel and the three letters contained in the New Testament.

P.In Revelation, John records the words of Jesus that are spoken to him about the state of the church and the kind of church that he desires to see in order for His Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

II. Revelation 3:1-13 (NRSV) "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. {2} Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. {3} Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. {4} Yet you have still a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for

they are worthy. {5} If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels. {6} Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

III. The Church of Sardis

A. It had once been a great church, but it now was just resting on its past.

B. Jesus says to the church some painful words, “*you are dead*”

C. *Revelation 3:1 (NRSV) "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. {2} Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.*

D. Living in the past. Catalogs and styles of 1977 still guide the church. Traditions and buildings are shrines.

E. Dr. Vance Havener, a great pastor and teacher during the 20th century: Churches often go through four stages

1. A Man
2. A Movement
3. A Machine
4. A Monument

F. The Holy Spirit no longer empowers

G. *Revelation 3: {3} Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. {4} Yet you have still a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. {5} If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels. {6} Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.*

H. Jesus loves the church, even when it is struggling and limping along. There are always faithful people in dying churches, but they are usually interspersed with people who are holding on to the past and who really no longer are motivated by a vision to reach the world in the name of Jesus.

I. They exist just to minister their own needs.

J. They minister in their own power.

K. They lacked generosity.

L. An artist was asked to put on canvas what he considered to be the picture best symbolizing a decaying and dying church. After several months, he returned and reported that he had finished the task. The hour finally arrived when the painting was to be unveiled.

Several people standing around the easel had already given their description of what they thought the church would look like. Some had said it would be a rundown building in great need of repair and paint. Weeds would be growing in the church yard, and there would be some broken window panes. Everyone in the group seemed to have the same picture in mind.

However, when the cloth was removed, a hush fell over the group. Everyone was stunned. Before their eyes was an absolutely beautiful church building. The grounds were well kept and the exterior of the building was in excellent condition. After a few minutes, one person stepped forward and said to the artist, "I thought we asked you to paint a dying church?"

The artist smiled and invited everyone to step closer to the painting. He pointed through the windows to the empty pews and to the collection plate on the table. There was nothing in the plate but "cobwebs."

The church that has cobwebs in its collection plate is a church that is decaying and dying. Without the giver, there is no giving. Without the giving, ministries cannot be conducted by the church. Without ministries being conducted, the mission of the church cannot be carried out. If the mission of the church is not carried out, the church is purposeless and dead.

IV. The Church of Philadelphia

A. It is tough when your name has great meaning.

B. I have a few friends who are named Joy, but they don't act like it. Fortunately Joye McCrea and her name do match.

C. The Church of Philadelphia and their name did form a match.

D. Philadelphia: The Brotherly Love City.

1. Jesus knows the works of this Church.
2. Jesus praises them because they are an open door.
3. I think you can interpret that in a few ways.
 - a. Their door was open to the world. They still embraced and welcomed people outside their door.

E. It was also a church that knew there was power in the name of Jesus, and not in the name of the church, or its leaders

1. They depended on the Holy Spirit to guide and for God to provide.

F. It was a church that knew how to endure tough times, to be able to persevere.

1. Max Lucado, in *The Brazilians*, describe a person who sticks with something with the word "garra." If you look up "garra" in a Portuguese dictionary, you see that it means fingernails. If someone has "garra," he has nails, he hangs in there. That to me is one definition of success because Jesus said, "He who endures to the end will be saved." He who has "garra" will be saved. *Leadership*, Vol. 13, no. 3.

G. {7} *"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens: {8} "I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. {9} I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying--I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. {10} Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. {11} I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. {12} If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. {13} Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.*

H. Generosity

1. Courageous Giving Pledges – 218 Total Pledged - \$192,949
2. Received 178,392
3. Would say about \$50,000 of CG was large donations that might not be considered in a continual basis. Without CG, the calendar year would have been \$158,747 behind in revenues. With CG, we came out \$19,646 ahead. WOOHOO! Adding CG to the year brings us to an average for the year of \$41,513/week, which is right on budget.
4. What this has shown is that you want to grow.
5. You want to commit to the vision.
6. The power of what you did was many of you just made a commitment and stuck to it.
7. You decided to give consistently.
8. You have begun to give first fruits.

9. You took steps towards giving a percentage.
10. Some stepped up and began tithing.
11. Take the bulletin home this week and pray about what you are giving.
12. We are not going to base our budget around your commitments. This is for you.
13. I would love to hear from you how God has blessed you as you honored your commitment.

V. Ears to Hear.

A.13} *Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.*

B.Introduction and Prayer for Staff and Leaders

1. Staff
2. Former Staff
3. 2007 Council thanks to Ed Corrigan and Ann Lyon
4. 2008 Church Council
5. Former Council

VI. Conclusion

A.Nancy Hess. Who has shared the CrossRoad journey from the start as our first secretary, office manager, my assistant, you name it.

B.One of the great roles she fills is encourager.

C.Her Christmas letter to me reminded me of a Word that was spoken about CrossRoad not long after we started and has been confirmed many times, that CrossRoad is like the church of Philadelphia.

D.On the back of the letter she had copied Revelation 3:7-13

E.She closed the letter this way, : Still in one Peace, *PEACE*

F.I wondered if she meant Piece.

G.Several years ago I led the church where I was on staff in a Lord's Supper Celebration around the first of the year by giving everyone a slice of bread.

H.I instructed them to take the slice and break off a piece and dip it into the cup, one of the ways to administer the Lord's Supper at CRC.

I.One young man, who had grown up in the church and was home on Christmas break, was there.

J.He sent me a letter a few weeks later telling me that the service really meant a lot to him and that he put his piece of bread in a Ziploc and had taken it back to his dorm room and it was pinned to his bulletin board above his desk so he could see it and be reminded about how much Jesus loved him.

K.As he closed the letter, he said "I now have the piece of Jesus." *PIECE*.

L.As we start the New Year, my pray for the church is to be the church of Philadelphia and for our members to have a Piece of Jesus so they can have Peace.

VII. Prayer and Celebration