

“Own the Mission: RHC 2013 Vision Sermon”
Luke 11:1-28

Greeting: Open your Bibles to Luke 11:1-28, Page 86???. I could hardly be more excited to stand before you this morning...

Intro: On August 23, 1963, America marched on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The great orator and civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stepped to the microphone at the Washington Mall in front of 250,000 people. In less than 18 minutes, King had delivered one of the most historic speeches in our nation's history.

Toward the end of his speech Dr. King was prompted by Mahalia Jackson shouting “Tell them about the dream, Martin,” Dr. King abandoned his script, stopped speaking, and started preaching about the vision he could see: *“I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal. . .’ I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.”*

Now, please understand, as we prepare to absorb our vision as a church for 2013, my purpose is not invoke Dr. King's speech in order to set myself up to match his rhetorical flair, or to presume that this sermon will catapult us into the greatest year of our existence, although that is certainly my prayer. I wanted us to remember his “I Have a Dream” speech because what made all the difference for Dr King was a compelling vision of the future that guided his faith and governed his daily action. Let me say that again. He possessed a compelling vision of the future that guided his faith and governed his daily action. This vision controlled his commitments. IT drove him to pursue the unexpected. It was the lens which enabled him to see what so few could see and many “dreamed” impossible.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a man of vision. Clear. Compelling. Vision. Is your life driven by a compelling vision? Do you have a vision for your life? Do you have a vision for this church? The leadership of Redemption Hill certainly has a vision for this church, and that is where we are going to focus today. However, every vision must drive us to collective action if we want to see it realized. So we are going to press on two encouragements this morning. One is to understand that our vision must be realized through a rigorous application of God's Word. We will not live well in God's world and fulfill a great vision for our lives unless we commit to living in step with God's will as revealed in his Word. That is why we are going to allow Luke 11:1-28 to inform how we can see this vision become a reality. Number two, we must understand that our vision must be realized through our collective efforts to make this church better than it's ever been. So here's the challenge this morning...

The Point: Own the mission of Redemption Hill through being owned by God's will.

How can we own the mission? Number 1.

I. Own the mission through prayerful dependence on the Spirit (11:1-13).

Read 1-4. Jesus Prays: The Content of Our Prayers

- Seeing his consistent practice of prayer, Luke tells us one of his disciples came with a request: “Teach us to pray.” Jesus follows with what has been called the Lord's Prayer. This prayer is a guide. We can repeat verbatim, but we should also each use phrase to catapult us to further prayer.
- Prayer begins with worship and a desire for God to be worshiped. “Father, hallowed be your name.” We are not asking God to become more holy, for that would be impossible. God is infinitely holy. We are praying that he would be treated as holy.
- Then there is a request: “your kingdom come.” Our prayers should seek after the rule and reign of God not only to come at the end of this age when Christ returns, but also to be active and present in us and those around us. Praying “your kingdom come” is so crucial as we consider our 2013 vision because each of our priorities and goals are ways we desire to see that happen.
- “Give us each day our daily bread,” This is a request for provision of daily necessities. Then Jesus teaches us to practice repentance and seek forgiveness when we sin against God, and to forgive when sinned against.
- “and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” Finally Jesus teaches them to pray. . .
- “And lead us not into temptation.” We should ask God to deliver us from evil and sin.
- Those are examples of what the content of our prayers should look like. Jesus then addresses..

Our Attitude in Prayer: Persistence (*Read 5-10*)

- Story. Because of his “impudence” or “persistence” he will rise... So...
- Ask. Seek. Knock. The three terms highlight the consistency with which we should pray.
- We do not pray over and over because God cannot hear us the first time, but because our desire is so great for his will be done.

The Motivation for Prayer: The Goodness of God (*Read 11-13*)

- Jesus moves from the lesser to the greater and says, if you who are evil would not give your hungry kids a brick if they asked for a banana. How much more will the infinitely good God care for you? And what does our Father give us? Good gifts? Yes, but Jesus, actually substitutes “good gifts” by saying, “how much more will the heavenly Father give [not simply “good gifts” but] *the Holy Spirit* to those who ask him.”
- There is nothing stopping our perfect Father from giving his Spirit to his children. The question is: “Have we asked? Are we asking God to pour out his Spirit on us.”

The Gift of the Spirit

- Spirit-dependence is so crucial to fulfilling God's mission because it will undercut self-sufficiency and pride. The Holy Spirit is the empowering presence of God at work in us. Everything that is good in my life and good about this church is a gift from God.

- Dependence on the Spirit also undercuts shallow expectations. So often, we are content to look ridiculous chilling out in the baby pool when God is calling us to depths we've never seen. Let's say goodbye to shallow prayers and shallow faith, and rest in the greatness of God available to us through the Spirit.
- David Platt has said: ***"The greatest hindrance to the advancement of the gospel to the nations today may be the attempt of church of God to do the work of God apart from the Spirit of God."***

So what is our vision for 2013? RHC – 2013 Vision

- You will notice on the handout we have provided for you that these goals fall primarily under one of our core values.
- As we work our way through this vision, I want to encourage us all to ask this question: "How can I own this vision?"

Gospel:

Become Increasingly Dependent on the Spirit through the Word and Prayer.

- Let's diligently seek the filling of God's Spirit through greater Bible intake and devoted prayer. If we get this goal, I really believe the rest will follow. Related to that, we want to . . .

Grow Deeper in our Pursuit of God & Holiness through Gospel-motivated Obedience.

- So we don't merely hear the Word, but we put it into practice motivated by what Christ has done for us. As we do so, I really believe we will...

Grow Wider in Corporate Worship with a High Attendance of 175 by April and 225 by the end of 2013.

- These numbers are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but they give us something to pray for and push toward as we seek to be missional. How will this happen? We want to . . .

See Multiple Friends Brought Each Sunday (Get them Here) with People Practicing the "Ministry of the Chair." (Keep them here).

- We talk a lot about reaching out to those around us. Most of the people who visit on a Sunday come with friends. [At the same time, we still have a ton of people who find out about RHC through the Internet, T-ads, and community events.]
- What would happen if the people already connected at RHC started bringing people each Sunday? This room would no longer hold all the people and 225 by the end of the year would look like a shallow goal. I'm not playing.
- But once we get them here, we want to keep them here. This where the "ministry of the chair" comes in.
- We don't want there to ever be a Sunday where people are not greeted and feel welcome. We want people to know we care about them and leave saying, "I have to come back to that church." So get here early. Stay a little late after service.
- This will also mean that our Sunday Serve Teams will need a boost! (First Impressions, Music (expand the band) & Media, Transformation Station will be blowing up!)

Launch Formal, Free Counseling Ministry for RHC & the Community.

- People are hurting, struggling in their marriages, struggling with addictions... Counseling is happening, but we want to establish something more formal as a way to bless our church and others in Great Boston.

What is one specific commitment you will make to own this GOSPEL vision in 2013?

- Some may say, "I am going to make a more concerted effort to *be here every Sunday.*"
- Someone may be willing to say, "I am going to reach out and *actively invite* my friends."
- Someone else may say, "I'll *arrive early to serve* on a serve team, and when I'm not on that, I'll get here early to *greet* visitors"
- "I'm going to *read through the Bible* this year and record one specific application each day to grow in my pursuit of God."
- I am *gifted musically*. I'm going to hook it up with Micah and our worship team...

Community

Live as Gospel Family.

- In 1 Timothy 3, Paul refers to the church as "the household of God." He constantly calls other Christ followers "brothers and sisters." In the truest sense, those who follow Christ are part of a new family.
- We want to live like family. What would that look like? Not only will we spend a lot of time together, but we will enjoy spending time together. Not only will we pray for one another, but we will sacrifice our own resources to help our family in need. We will love one another, serve one another, forgive one another, be kind to one another, and bear one another's burdens.

Move Attenders to Members (80 members by end of 2013).

- Here is one goal we failed to meet last year. We had hoped that we would see sixty members last year. We finished with 44. 44 is awesome, but we want to basically double that this year.
- This so vital because our members truly are the backbone of our church. They take the lead in serving, are the ones who have publically said, I'm on board with the mission and direction of RHC.
- If that is a lofty goal, our next one may be a little low...

Strengthen & Multiply Community Groups (10 by end of 2013).

- We say that "A Community Group is a **Family of Missionary Servants** who make **Disciples** who make Disciples."
- We have six great CGs, but if we grow like we plan to, and our leadership multiplication process continues in the right direction, we could easily have 12 groups by the end of the year.
- CGs are really the heartbeat of our church. What happens on Sunday is essential as we gather to worship, together and hear and respond to the Word, but consider the importance of CGs at RHC.
- CGs are the primary context where we 1) live in biblical community, 2) pursue growth in sanctification, 3) accomplish pastoral care, 4) cultivate a missional lifestyle, 5) invest in discipling relationship, 6) develop future leaders, 7) serve our community, and 8) care for our missionaries. If you are not already involved, check one out this month. We relaunch the week of 1/27.

Become More of a Thumbprint of the Diversity of Medford & Greater Boston.

- Considering we already are, we have so many reasons to give God praise. For example, if you or your parents were born outside of the U.S., raise your hand. We have had someone from every habitable continent on the planet.
- At the same time, we want our church to be an even greater reflection of our community... We want to see greater Generational Diversity. Starting to happen. More Youth and Families with youth and children, which leads us to our next goal.

Add Affinity Based Ministries for Fellowship & Connecting Pathways.

- We already have Children, College, and a couple of things going on for Women. This year, at minimum, we plan to add *Youth*, *Big One*, and *Men's Ministry*.
- These ministries will provide opportunities to connect with one another for fellowship. They will also serve as connecting pathways. We say a pathway is any opportunity where someone can connect with RHC.
- These affinity ministries will use any connecting events that will enable people outside of the church to hang out with those of us inside the church and discover we are not as strange as otherwise assumed. ☺

Establish Deacon Ministry and Add Elders as Needed.

- Scripture teaches us that healthy churches need both elders (we currently have two) and deacons, those who serve and meet a variety of needs in the church.

What is one specific commitment you will make to own this vision for COMMUNITY in 2013?

- I am going to *attend the next Connections Class* on February 24th.
- I am going to visit a *CG at least three times*, and if I find it spiritually profitable, I will commit to being a part.
- I am going to hang out in Medford Square once a week and *invite some older folks* to church.
- I'll help out with the *youth ministry*.
- I am going to spend *more time with my church family* by sharing meals together.

Mission

Make Disciples who Make Disciples. This is the mission of the church. This is what we want to see happen. People who were not following Christ becoming followers of Jesus. People who were not worshipping God becoming worshipers of God. The key way we are going to do this is through our . . .

Implement our Discipleship Strategy (25 New Baptized Followers of Christ).

- *Discipleship Strategy (*Card): Know. Identify. Pray. Display. Invite. Declare. Disciple.*
- *Baptism Service was Awesome! We want to have at least three this year. 25!*

Exercise Great Generosity with Our Time, Talents, and Treasure.

- Who owns your calendar?
- Who owns your gifts and skills? This is part of the beauty of the church.
- Who owns your bank account? We are moving toward self-sustainability as a church. \$125k last year and a new goal of \$180k this year. This is a lofty and realistic goal if we give more regularly, systematically, and sacrificially.
- What is going to motivate this? Greater love for God.
- You know that I've never given to my wife and regretted it. I never took her out to eat and thought, man, what a waste. I've never given her a gift, and said, "What a stupid decision. I should have spent that on myself." Why? Because that's how love operates! When we love God greatly, we will give back to him generously!

Equip and Multiply Leaders for Ministry Responsibility.

- By now, you can see the importance of multiplying not only followers of Christ, but also multiplying leaders. If we are seeing huge growth, multiplying CGs, and adding ministries, we are going to need more leaders!

Strengthen our Serve Efforts to Medford and Greater Boston.

- We are church that is in the city, for the city. At the same time, we are actually a city within the city, that's for the city.
- That displays the gospel to our neighbor. And who is our neighbor? Everyone... You were listening last week, right? ☺
- Local Partnership. CGs serving. Soccer Nights. Serve Medford.

Establish Benevolence Ministry.

- Through our benevolence mercy ministry we will seek to meet needs in a holistic way: Physical, spiritual, relational, and emotional.

Begin Supporting Specific North American & International Efforts.

- North American: Christ Community Church (Newton); Coram Deo (Charlestown); and Gallery Church (Toronto)
- International Missions: Two families (One in Tanzania; One in Austria) & a brother in China

What is one specific commitment you will make to own this MISSIONAL vision in 2013?

- I am going to be a *prayerful witness* in my workplace and in my neighborhood.
- I am going to depend on the Spirit and not allow *a month to go by without telling* someone about Christ.
- I want to be *mentored* by someone more mature than me in the faith and I will also *invest* in someone newer to Christianity.
- I am going to be more *systematic and sacrificial in my financial giving* this year.
- I am going to *volunteer* to help lead one of our *serve efforts* to the city.
- I'll assist with our *benevolence* needs.
- I'm going to jump in a *Community Group* and take the lead on *corresponding with one of our missionaries* overseas.

Trans: Those are the primary focus points of our 2013 vision. Remember, this vision will never happen apart from prayerful dependence on the power of the Spirit. But there are two other ways Luke 11 teaches us to own the mission.

II. Own the mission through great confidence in the victory of Christ (11:14-23).

- *Read 14-23.*

- Jesus has all power. He is the stronger man!
- If we go forth in our own strength, we are destined to flounder and this vision will never happen. If however, we operate with confidence, understanding that if God is for us, and he is!, then nothing can be against us, and that Jesus has the strength to accomplish everything he wills through us, [we will pilfer the kingdom of darkness.]
- Does this provide a little confidence to your approach to the Christian life? Whatever specific commitment God leads you to make, you can fulfill because the power of Christ is in you! "Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)
- Jesus brings the kingdom among us. Jesus divides the spoil..
- Can you see the celebration at the end of this year when we rejoice in the work of the finger of God among us?
 - 25 new brothers and sisters in the family. 10+ CGs thriving. 225+ maxing out the space in this room?
- "***Now to him*** who is **able** to do *far more abundantly than all that we ask or think*, ***according to the power at work within us, to him be glory*** in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21)

III. Own the mission through complete obedience to the Father (11:24-28).

- *Read 24-26.* This short parable serves as a warning against neutrality. Don't experience God's grace and then fail to fill your life with more of him. Jesus teaches us the proper response in...
- *Read 27-28.* Blessing follows obedience to our Father. This is not obedience to RHC. This is not obedience to the pastors or leadership. This is about obedience to God. We keep God's Word because we love God (1 John 5:3).

Conclusion:

So, ***how will we OWN THE MISSION?*** You're going to hear this a lot this year...

Love Deeply. Serve Intentionally. Give Sacrificially. Spread Rapidly. Love. Serve. Give. Spread. (2x)

Do you want to see this happen? Will you pray for it? Will you go forth confidently in the power of Christ? Will you walk in obedience to God? If so, let me say, "It must start this week! It must start right now." Let's ask, seek, & knock.

Lead into Corp Prayer... Micah & Crew are going to come back up, and I want us to pause, reflect, and pray.