

(Church Leadership) 3. Our Primary Calling

by Zac Poonen

The primary purpose of the church is to show the world what God is like and to demonstrate His character and love.

Duration: 58:03

Scripture: Exodus 33:15, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:7, John 1:18, Colossians 3:17, 2 Timothy 2:15

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes two important aspects that the church should demonstrate: that God is a loving Father and that Jesus is alive. The Holy Spirit is believed to have come to demonstrate these truths. The speaker criticizes the idea that church services should be long in order to be considered spiritual, stating that this is not biblical. He also highlights the importance of presenting God in an exciting and simple way, rather than making the Bible and the subject of God boring and complicated. The speaker challenges churches to evaluate whether they are truly showing people what God is like and if young people are finding excitement in knowing God.

Transcript

When people build a house, perhaps not in the villages, but here in the cities, if it's a big building, they always make a plan. In fact, in the cities, you got to get that plan sanctioned before you start your construction. How high do you want to build it, etc.

Then you, Jesus spoke about it in terms of somebody who just built a foundation and left it. That means he didn't have a proper understanding before he started what his goal was. So, when you are having a church in your locality, what's your purpose? If you're building a house and I ask you, why are you building a house? You'd say, well, I've got to stay with my family.

I don't want to keep paying rent. So, I decided, since I had the money, I decided to build a house. Or, if you decide to get a job in some other place, I say, why are you taking a job there? You have a reason.

Oh, I'd like to earn a little more money there. And I can take care of my children, give them a good education. There's nothing wrong with all this.

There's nothing wrong with earning more money or going to one place or another. If your aim in life is to glorify God, you buy a car or a scooter, you have a purpose. When you have a church, what is your

purpose? If it's a wrong purpose.

For example, if a man says, I'm going to build a house just to show all the neighborhood how rich I am. Yeah, there are people who build like that also. There are people who buy a car to show other people, you know what, I'm not such a poor man.

What is the purpose with which you are running a church or leading a church? Have you got a goal? Have you got a purpose? Is it the right purpose? Do you know whether that is the reason with which God wants a church there? And for that, you need to have a clear understanding of what your goal as a personal Christian is. And there's not much teaching on that in Christendom. In some places, the main thing is you got to go to heaven.

So make sure we get as many people as possible to go to heaven. So, because that is their goal, they just go everywhere, get people to minimum necessary to go to heaven. Okay, finish now, I have to go to the next place.

See, being born again is like being born in one sense. So to bring people to Christ is something like producing children. So supposing one man's goal in life is I must have as many children as possible in my life.

He goes here and marries some few women and has a lot of children there. And then he goes somewhere else. Then somewhere else, I'm having children, I'm going to have children, I'm going to have children.

We got to have children. And he produces maybe 100 children in his life. I hope you know that you can also produce 100 children if you want.

All men have that ability. But you may not be able to care for 100 children. Are children to be produced just, okay, produced and thrown on the street? Or are they to be brought up to adulthood? Church is a family.

It's not enough to have children. We have to bring them up. Any idiot can have children, but only a wise man can bring up children properly.

So to just go around evangelizing and bringing people to Christ here and there, get people to believe, pretty easy. It's easy in many parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It's a fact.

Most of the people in many of the Kerala churches are from Christian backgrounds. Fairly easy. Little more difficult when you go to North India.

Even there, it's easy if you work among poor, very poor people who need food, who need clothing, and you can help them with all that. They'll also accept Christ. And that's why you'll find the missionaries went among such people.

And that's why you'll find in North India, almost all the Christians are from that level of society. Now I'm not saying they shouldn't be saved. Always my question is, Lord, is it only such people who are supposed to be saved? What is the ultimate goal? Is it just somehow to get a person to say, I've accepted Christ and that's it? If that is the case, I'd say 90% of the New Testament, I don't need.

It's a waste of time, all these 27 books in the New Testament. Four or five pages would have been enough. A lot of Christians today are operating on about four or five pages of the New Testament.

They think God was a fool to write such a lot of things. I don't believe God is a fool. I believe Christians are some of the biggest fools on earth.

Because they don't study the Bible. They don't feel that every child of God must be taught to do everything that Jesus commanded. If it's only producing children, we can produce a hundred children.

But if it is to bring them up to adulthood and to maturity, even three or four is tough. Even to bring three or four children up. So that's the choice we face.

Shall we reach out and get more and more people and get delighted that our church is becoming bigger and bigger and bigger? I used to sometimes think, you know, CFC also now, more and more people are coming. Now we have some people sitting upstairs because there's not enough place to sit here in our Sunday meetings. But I'm not all that excited.

I say, Lord, we count the chairs and see how many people came on Sunday. But Lord, what do you think? I say, Lord, CFC, we have 250 people. But that's because we go by address lists, families, how many children count, all that.

But, Lord Jesus, tell me how many you feel are disciples. Who are disciples. That's the number I want to know.

So many people crowded around Jesus. But he had 11 disciples. I want to know that.

I'm sure it's a much smaller number than 250. Much smaller than that. And I say, how many, Lord, how many do we have in CFC? What are the quality of those disciples you made? Do you ever ask that question about your church? Or you're happy that everybody turns up Sunday morning and you're unhappy if somebody does not come to your church but decided to go to some other church? No.

I'm never disturbed if somebody wants to go to some other church. He's unhappy here, he should go somewhere else. If he can grow spiritually there, let him go.

We're here to make disciples. If we lose that vision, it's just a matter of time before, like I said, we'll be producing one more department in the hospital, of which there are already thousand departments. And we will not produce what God wants us to produce.

God says, in the hospital called the church in India, I want a department where, in every room of that department, they are teaching everybody to do every single thing I commanded. I have got enough maternity wards where children are just being born, born, born, born, born, born. I want a department now where these children are healed from all their diseases.

Where they are healed from their anger and their bitterness and their love of God. Where they are filled with money and all these things. Is the Lord finding such a department? Or are we also, like all these other people, excited that more children are being born? Third-rate, sick, who always have to be on incubators, they can't breathe themselves.

They have to be fed forever almost. And the mother stands up there to give the feeding bottles to everybody Sunday morning. And all the children are lying down there Sunday morning and every mother goes and gives the feeding bottles to everybody.

And a hundred of them lying there, kicking their legs and sucking the bottle. And after another few years, two hundred people sitting, sucking their bottles. Is this a home? Some of these children are big now, they are twenty years old, sucking their bottles.

Because the mother will never let them do anything themselves. They won't allow them to even cross the road when they are twenty years old. I have to hold your hand.

I have to tell you what you must do. We have in our churches, pastors without the title of pastors. Children are not growing.

My brothers, what is your vision? Are you getting brainwashed by all the others to start one more department like them? Have you heard the commission of Jesus, go into every place and make disciples? Teach them to do every single thing I have commanded you. How many people like that have you produced in your church? That is the strength of your church as far as God is concerned. You can count the number of people sitting in your church, but that is for your satisfaction.

And you can rejoice when some more people come, some more families will come. Have they become disciples? Have they overcome sin? Are they getting free from the love of the world? Have they learned to live together in peace at home? Have they learned to rejoice always? Have they learned to get things from the scriptures themselves instead of being fed by you all the time? Or are they oversized babies? Are they all retarded children for whom the mother has to do everything day and night? What was the main reason Jesus came to earth and lived for 33 years? Number one was to show this world what God was like. Please remember this my dear brothers.

The world into which Jesus came did not have any idea what God was like. They had all types of wrong ideas. God was some policeman, God was a judge.

Most things are impossible with God. You have to just help yourself, that's all. You have a little bit of religion, but God and all, he can't do many things for you.

And Jesus came and shattered all those wrong ideas. He said, God is a father. He never gives anything evil to his children.

He's a forgiving, loving father. And he said, if you've seen me, you've seen the father. Jesus, he used to keep on saying, I'm son of man, which means he was an ordinary man.

He was not one who was putting awe into other people, putting fear into other people. I've seen a lot of preachers in my life like that. Elder brothers, put fear into other people.

They are not ordinary people. Jesus didn't do that. He demonstrated what God was like.

He said, you've seen me, you've seen the father. God is not going around trying to frighten people. I mean, if he wanted to do that, he could have frightened everybody every morning by thundering from heaven.

He loves people. And Jesus demonstrated by his life what God was like. And he went up to heaven.

And he sent the Holy Spirit. And he said, now you people, do what I did. As the father sent me, so send I you.

Go into the world and show them what God is like. When they see your life, they must see what God is like. When they see your church, they must see what God is like.

That's our calling. See, two verses which are similar. Have you noticed, it's the only time, only twice in the Bible this expression comes.

John 1.18 No one has seen God at any time. That is when Jesus was on earth. No one has seen God at any time.

But the only begotten son of God, he has explained him. You know, I always felt that the mark of a good teacher, he can make the most complicated thing look simple. When I was in school, one of my favorite subjects was mathematics.

I really loved it. And, I mean, not everybody has that type of mind, but my mind used to try to understand the principle behind everything. So, as long as up to 10th standard, I could teach my children mathematics.

In simple ways, explain things. And I saw that it's very easy. If you understand something, you can explain it in a very simple way.

People who make something complicated are the people who don't understand the subject themselves. Whether it's mathematics or physics or the Bible, the less you know of the Bible, the more complicated you'll make it. But if you know it properly, it's very interesting and very simple.

Just like mathematics and physics is a bore for some people and exciting for some people. Same way, the Bible is boring and heavy for some people. And the whole subject of God is boring for some people, but to me, it's the most exciting subject in the world.

That's because they've got a wrong understanding of God. How to correct it? That's why God placed you in that town. Why do you think God placed you there? To correct all these wrong impressions about God that people have.

Particularly the younger generation. Supposing the younger generation, some parents say, come on, come to the church today. Okay, okay, mummy, they come, some 17-year-old, 18-year-old boy and girl come.

They come to your church. And they sit through the two hours of that. And they come home.

And they say, see, daddy, I told you, God is the most boring subject in the world. I saw it in the last two hours. You tell me honestly, daddy, didn't you also get bored? How to say the truth to my son or daughter? That's a tragedy today.

Ah, you say these young people are not interested in God. That's because you have presented a boring, unrealistic God to them. Don't blame them.

Blame yourself. Lord, we have failed. I tell you, God will do miracles for you when you say you have failed.

When you come to the day in your life, when you say, Lord, for 10 years I have bored my church with boring sermons, something will happen in your life. But if you say, no, no, these fellows are not interested, what to do, brother, these are the last days. It's exactly like the Bible says in the last days, it's happening in

my town and village.

You keep saying that, you'll be boring people for the next 20 years, unless hopefully you die sooner. Take the blame yourself. Lord, we are driving away our young people because we have presented a boring, uninteresting Christianity and a boring God to them.

Or a religious God who is only interested in fasting and prayer. Jesus fasted and prayed. But I tell you, children just love Jesus.

Sinful people flocked to him. Because he never made them feel small, even though he was the holiest man on earth. We have to admit that we have failed.

I say that. I say, Lord, I don't believe we have accomplished all that you want us to accomplish. Because I say, I don't see in CFC or in our churches all that God wants to accomplish.

Are we presenting God as he really is? Absolutely holy. But absolutely loving, merciful. Merciful.

And as interesting and exciting as he is holy. I want to know God as more interesting than the most interesting television program or movie I have seen in my life. He is.

Because it is my father who gave those fellows the intelligence to produce that television program. Don't you think the teacher would be more interesting than an interesting student? I don't know, but some of these fantastic programs that television produce, produce on nature and animals and science and all that, it is fantastically interesting. It is not evil programs.

This is all about wonders in nature and science. About electricity and so many things. And children watch it so interestingly, they don't even want to go and have their lunch.

But they sit in church for 15 minutes. I thought it was one hour only, 15 minutes. You mean we have to sit through another one hour, 45 minutes for this type of stuff? I mean we have already sung 15 songs, why do we want to sing one more? Because we have got to somehow make the service spiritual by making it three hours long.

We have got these Pentecostal ideas. It is not in the Bible. Long meeting equals spiritual meeting.

That's what Jesus said, the Gentiles think long prayer means God will definitely hear it. I can give you one bit of a suggestion, a bit of homework which will take you maybe one year to complete. During 2006, try and read the New Testament as if you are a non-Christian who has never read the Bible before.

Doesn't know what it is. And you will get excited. Lord, where did we get this thing in our church? It is not here.

This thing is not here in our church which is here. You will get a lot of surprises. Then we will get rid of traditions.

You think it is only the Roman Catholics and CSI who have traditions? We have got as many traditions as them, different type of traditions. Theirs is green color, ours is blue color, that's all the difference. But we don't see it.

Oh, these traditions, we got rid of all that. If you want to know, read the Bible as one who has never read it before. Get rid of all the ways of praying and all the ways of speaking and everything that you have learned from others.

I tell you, if you take it seriously, it will revolutionize your life. We say we are following the Bible, but we are not. We say we are following the New Testament, but we are not.

This will help you. I knew a man of God who is a great leader of churches who used to read the New Testament once every month. Ten chapters every day.

Because he said, oh, I don't want to miss out on anything. Anything the New Testament has. I want to be saturated in it, so that everything in it is in our churches.

So, the primary purpose with which the church exists is to show this world what God is like. So, we want to have focus on that. Say, let's take a company.

Like, say, Colgate. It's an American company which works in India. So, let's say their goal is to produce toothpaste.

We must produce first-class toothpaste that people love to buy. And, supposing at the end of the year, they evaluate what have we done. And at the end of the year, the evaluation is something like this.

Well, due to various reasons, we couldn't produce much toothpaste. And, I mean, some of the toothpaste was tasting bad. And a lot of people didn't buy the toothpaste.

But we had about 200 committee meetings in our company. And we had 9 or 10 enjoyable picnics in our company, company staff. And we had special meetings for our company staff on lectures on how to improve productions of toothpaste.

That company will close down in no time. It should close down. And many churches should close down.

Because they are not fulfilling the purpose for which they are there. They sing, they pray and they have some meetings. Are we showing even the people in our church what God is like? Are our young people seeing how exciting it is to know God? It's worth giving everything to follow Jesus.

It's worth sacrificing everything to live for Him. Like that. It's one of the primary purposes with which the church is existing.

It doesn't have to be big. Jesus had a very small following. At the end of three and a half years of labor, when He told people to wait for the Holy Spirit, only 120 people waited.

Even though it says more than 500 people saw Him after the resurrection. Yeah, they saw Him after the resurrection. Only 120 people decided to wait for the Holy Spirit.

Even though it says more than 500 people saw Him after the resurrection. Only 120 people decided to wait for the Holy Spirit. When you look at the world, you will see that Jesus has won.

But the people He produced were absolutely fantastic. They were wonderful people. I said, Lord, if I can produce 11 people like you produced, that's enough for me.

Wholehearted, radical. Think of Thomas, forsakes everything and comes all the way to India to preach the gospel. Lord, have I produced one man like that? I have to ask myself.

So gripped by the message of Jesus, they feel it's worth chucking everything in order to go and give the gospel. It was not just Thomas, 11 people like that. What shall we say, brothers? Lord, we have got satisfied with having meetings.

And more meetings. And more meetings. And special meetings.

And extra special meetings. And fasting. And prayer.

Good, all is good. But have we accomplished our purpose? Otherwise, this is like that company supposed to produce toothpaste and all they had is committee meetings on how to produce toothpaste. So, where is the failure? If you read the Old Testament, see what the prophets said.

Always the prophets spoke to the leaders first. Priests, prophets, princes, kings, you fellows have gone astray. Lastly, the people also went astray.

So we have to say, Lord, where have we come short? Everything has to begin with us. If you yourself are not excited about Jesus Christ, how can you get other people to be excited about him? Many of you are happy to come to a leadership seminar. How many of you can honestly say, you are really excited about Jesus Christ? Don't misunderstand me.

Not about being an elder. Not about ministry, going here, there, everywhere, seven days a week. That is like a Coca-Cola salesman excited about going all over, selling Coca-Cola for seven days.

But Jesus himself, excited about Jesus himself. If you can say, Lord Jesus, you excite me. I want you more than anything else.

The more excited you are with the person of Jesus Christ, the more excited you can bring other people to that position. Then you will know what God is like. And you will be able to demonstrate God to other people.

And our young people will realize that God is the most interesting person in the universe. And they will not feel it's boring, church is boring. Bible is boring.

World is, they say it's bad, but it's a lot more interesting out there. Yeah, I don't blame many of our young people. Because they say it's boring, I say, yeah, unfortunately that's true in your situation.

But I tell them, listen, your church may be boring, but God is not. Jesus Christ is not. Do you know what it is, my brothers, to walk with Jesus and talk with him? See, that's the whole basis of our ministry.

That you yourself are walking with Jesus. And knowing more and more the heart of God. You know, feeling the heartbeat of God.

And not influenced by all this modern type of Christianity. See, there is one more thing that we have to demonstrate in the church. I just want to mention two things.

First, I mentioned, to show this world what God is like. To show the world what God is like. And, okay, forget the world, at least to show the 15 people sitting in our church, what God is like.

To show the 5 young people sitting in our church, how exciting it is to know the Lord. That's number one. That God is not boring.

He is not a judge. He is not a policeman. Now, if you say all that, and then you behave like a policeman yourself, they won't believe you.

You have to demonstrate. God is not a policeman and I am not a policeman either. God is not a judge and I am not a judge either.

God is a father and so am I. The second thing, you know, God, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the earth for two things. And that was, first of all, is to show what God is like. In that connection, I forgot to show you the second verse.

I mentioned this. No one has seen God at any time. It's mentioned only twice in the Bible.

One is here, John 1.18, we saw that. The other is, the only other place in the Bible where it says, no one has seen God at any time, is 1 John 4. When no one had seen God at any time, when Jesus came to earth, He showed it. Now it is referring to our time.

This is 21st century, 1 John chapter 4, in the 21st century also, 1 John 4.12, no one has seen God at any time even now. So how will they see Him now? Jesus is not here. Now they will see Him in us.

If we love one another, God is there and His love is completed in us, it is filled. And the meaning is that people will see God once again. They will see from you, your conduct, your behavior, and the way you run your church, and the way you run your meetings, and the way you conduct yourself at home and in every other place, that God is now.

God is love. They will see that. And they will see how you love one another.

I mean, you may be only 15 people in your church. Nowhere in the Bible does it say about you have to have a great number of people. But we have to demonstrate God in our church because no one has seen God at any time.

Jesus demonstrated it in His time, John chapter 1, and we, in 1 John 4, have to demonstrate it in our time. Because I tell you, even Christians haven't seen what God is like. What is the impression you have given to your unconverted relatives about what God is like? See, we all have unconverted relatives.

And they have seen our life. Have they seen what God is like by looking at us? Does God fight for property? If they see you fight for property, what will they do? If they see you behaving just like everybody else? Running after money? They think that God runs after money. I heard the testimony of a Hindu man who was in the Indian army in the Second World War.

And he had some interest in knowing about Jesus. So he was in one of those during the war somewhere in Saudi Arabia area somewhere along with the British army soldiers. And Christmas time came.

And he knew this is the birthday of this Christian God. And he saw these so-called Christian soldiers getting drunk and behaving so badly. This Christian God is a terrible God.

Hindu Gods are not drunkards like this. I don't want this. That's one extreme example.

Now, we don't show our God as a drunkard God, do we? We don't do that. We can show God as a very legalistic strict person. You are unconverted.

I'll have nothing to do with you. I've become a holy man now. If I come anywhere near you I'll become unholy.

But that was the exact opposite of Jesus Christ. He was mixing with the most sinful people and he never got polluted. We have failed.

I'm not saying that we spend all our time with our unconverted relatives. I don't have much contact with my unconverted relatives. But whenever they see me I don't want to present a wrong image of God to them.

See, most of the time they don't want to spend time with me because I'm not interested in that type of conversation. You know how it is. I've also had this experience.

You go to some unconverted person's house they dominate the conversation and they talk about the most useless things which you have no interest in. I mean... I can't endure it for more than two minutes but out of courtesy I sit there for 15 minutes. But that's the reason why I don't have much contact with these people because I say we don't have any common interests.

But I don't want to... I don't want to show them a God who is not interested in sinners. God is a God of love. Okay, the second thing which the church is supposed to demonstrate is very important is that Jesus is alive.

These are the two things that God is a loving father and that Jesus is alive. I believe that the Holy Spirit has come to demonstrate these two great truths. God is a loving father and Jesus is alive.

So we need to ask ourselves as a church are people getting that idea from when they see us? God is a good loving father and Jesus is alive. Or do they just get the idea this is a bunch of noisy people that come together on Sunday morning and make a lot of noise? I have asked myself this about our neighbours. They say what is their impression about our church? A nuisance every Sunday morning.

Makes such a lot of noise. Just waiting for 11.30 to come the whole thing will be over. Or do they see something that there is something about our lives? Something about our faces? Something about our children? There is difference.

The way we have brought up our children and the way we relate to them. That they see a humility and a love and they see that in trials and testings we don't react like them. We don't react like them because Jesus is alive.

He is the same yesterday, today and forever. I believe that is one of the greatest truths that the church has to demonstrate. Hebrews 13.8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.

But if we say well he was different then, he is different today. No, he is the same yesterday, today and forever. He was very interested in people when he was on earth and he is very interested in us today.

He is not a dead person buried in the grave. You know this is the difference between Christianity and all the other religions in the world. If people were to ask me what is the difference between your religion and all the other religions what shall we say? We love our enemies.

Or we are supposed to love our enemies. I will say Mahatma Gandhi also did that. Or you say something else.

Our God is merciful and compassionate. They say oh everywhere we see it written Allah most merciful and compassionate. No that's not the thing.

The founder of every religion is dead. But Jesus is alive. He is living today.

I can talk to him. He talks to me. When I have a problem I can go to him.

He is living. He doesn't ignore me. He is a living person.

It's not that we don't have problems. We have problems just like everybody else in the world. Our children have sicknesses like other children in the world.

But we have a living person we can go to. The things that are happening in the world bring turmoil into our hearts, should bring turmoil like everybody else's. But it doesn't.

It doesn't bring turmoil. Because I take it to Jesus. I know that he is there.

He is living. And in our church services people must sense Jesus. I remember recently at my son's wedding.

You know, wedding is a very important day for parents and boy and girl getting married. I prayed like this. I said, Lord I don't care if it rains like anything.

It would be good if it's clear weather. It's easier for people to come. I don't care if it rains.

I don't care if the electricity fails. Amplifier doesn't work. So many things go wrong.

Lord Jesus, if you are there, it's all I want. The other things are extra. If you have it well and good, if you don't have it not so serious, if the Lord is there.

But what is it what even many Christians are looking for in their wedding? Just clear weather. The caterers didn't make any mistake. Everything was done properly.

And the preacher didn't preach too long. And everything went smoothly. Was the Lord there? I don't know, but all these other things went smoothly.

Why? Seek and you shall find. What you sought for, you got. You prayed, Oh God, keep the weather clear.

He did it. How earnestly did you pray, Lord you come there, be there. Let people sense your presence.

Our church services. We are so interested in singing. Songs, nowadays all these fantastic musical instruments where they know exactly like these worldly musicians play.

They know how to play it in our churches also now. We are not ordinary people anymore. We can compete with all these marriage performances and all our keyboard players are really top class.

They can get the right beat and everything going. Is the Lord there? I'm not against these things. Have it all.

Brother, if Jesus is not there, it's like having a wedding where everything went well, but the bride did not come or the bridegroom did not come rather. Everything else was wonderful. Oh, you should have tasted the food there.

And the message was fantastic. Only bridegroom for some reason or the other never turned up. This is a description of a lot of church services.

And some of the poor brother getting married in a hut, no keyboard, no electricity, but the bridegroom and bride are there. I'd rather have a church service like that where the bridegroom is there. Do you want that? Ask and you shall receive.

Seek and you shall find. One of the words that has become very precious to me of late is Exodus chapter 33 where Moses prayed verse 15 Lord, if your presence doesn't go with us, don't take us from here. To say Lord, if your presence is not there this Sunday morning, our meeting is a waste of time.

If your presence is not with us in our home, what's the use of all the marble floors and the verses on the wall and everything else? Is Jesus there? When people come to your house do they sense Jesus? Joy of the Lord, the peace of God and they come to your church. I remember in the early days in CFC people would come, visitors and nobody would even talk to them. It's all changed now.

We make them stand up, we greet them, we welcome them and some of them have testified. We've never had so many people come and talk to us after any church service anywhere. We must be warm and welcoming like Jesus was.

People must sense Jesus is here. Otherwise we have failed. So brothers, let's pray.

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