

Our Calling As A Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of remembering where God has brought us from, the need for righteousness and not fearing the opinions of others, the call to be great in the sight of the Lord by being a voice like John the Baptist, the significance of repentance and preparing for the second coming of Christ, the focus on becoming more like Jesus, the unity and care within the body of Christ, and the danger of losing focus and falling into a form of godliness without power.

Duration: 16:47

Scripture: Isaiah 51:1, Isaiah 51:7, Matthew 18:4, 1 Corinthians 12:22, Philippians 3:13, 2 Timothy 3:5

Topics: "Remembrance", "Righteousness", "Unity in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

I'd like to share something from Isaiah 51. I was praying about what I should share and here's something which I'm not going to go through this chapter. I'd ask you to read it yourself, certain sections in it.

First of all, the Lord says in verse two, no verse one, the middle, look to the quarry from which you were dug. The quarry is a place where they go and pull out stones to build the temple. And we must never forget all of us the quarry from which the Lord dug us out.

Never, never forget that. Today, our fellowship may be very blessed in the church, but we must not forget that's one of the things the Lord told Israel, they forgot what the Lord had done for them in the past. And then as they look to the future, he says in verse seven, listen to me, you who know righteousness.

I believe most of us in NCC have no righteousness. I believe, as it says here, a people in whose heart is my law. We may have our failings, but I believe we are a people in whose heart is God's law.

And the Lord says, don't fear the reproach of men, nor be dismayed at their revilings. Don't worry about what people say about you. It is in the small, as we heard, it is in the small commandments that the Lord tests us.

Who is going to be great in the kingdom of heaven? The two things Jesus said, one, those who keep the least commandments, we already heard that. And the second, the one who will be like a little child. Many people don't, you want to be great in God's kingdom? I believe I want to be great before the Lord's eyes.

I remember that statement the angel said about John the Baptist to Zachariah, he will be great in the sight of the Lord. And I remember long before CFC or anything started, John the Baptist was my great hero from my earliest conversion years, because that was a man who stood for the Lord and didn't care for anybody's opinion. I wanted to be like him.

And it was said about him, he was great in the sight of the Lord. And that's all that matters to us. I want to encourage all of you to seek to be great in the sight of the Lord.

And when they asked John the Baptist, are you the Messiah? He said, no. Are you Elijah? No. Are you that prophet that Moses spoke about? He says, no.

What are you? The one whom Jesus said is the greatest man born of women. And they asked him, what are you? And he said in John chapter one, read it sometime. I'm a voice.

I'm a voice. And that's what the Lord spoke to me. Don't think of yourself as anything but a voice.

People ask me, are you an apostle, are you a prophet? I said, no, no, no. I'm a voice. I only want to be a voice.

John the Baptist has been my example there, because he called people to repentance, to prepare people for the coming of the Lord. And I want to say NCCF is part of a body that the Lord is using. In the last days, he doesn't use one man.

John the Baptist was one man. He was the Elijah to prepare people for the first coming. But the Elijah to prepare people for the second coming is a body, the body of Christ.

And NCCF is a part of that. Our calling is to prepare people, whether they listen to us or not. You know that most people didn't listen to John the Baptist.

But to prepare people for the second coming of Christ, that's our calling. And the primary message is repent, turn from sin, turn from sin towards God. Not just turn from sin.

You can turn from sin and live a sort of a good life that brings a lot of honor to people. But there's a lot of difference in turning from sin towards God. As I shared the other day, I was reading in Mark's gospel where the John the Baptist, sorry, James and John, there, they came and asked Jesus, the Lord, they asked him, the Lord asked him, what do you want? That's in Mark chapter 10.

And they said, we want to sit on your left hand and right hand. And further down in that chapter, we read about same chapter, Mark 10. The Lord asked Bartimaeus, the blind man, what do you want? He didn't want to sit on the right hand or left hand.

He said, I want to just open my eyes. And he opened his eyes and he saw Jesus. What the Lord spoke to me from that passage was, he asked me, what do you want? You want to be buried in a church or in heaven? I say no.

The Lord opened my eyes that I can see you more clearly. That's all I want in my life, to see Jesus more clearly, to see those three steps of humility he took, how he was. And the Lord gives me more and more revelation.

I used to think it was only three steps. He came down and became man, he came down and became a slave, washing people's feet. And he went outside and he took the place of a criminal.

But the other day I saw in one of our meetings as we were in NCCF, I was seeing he was also put outside the camp as a leper. He took the place of the lepers. The lepers were the ones outside the camp.

He took the place of the despised and those who were rejected by society. I say, Lord, I want to see you more clearly. You didn't come here to become a famous man, respected and honored like so many preachers are today.

NCCF is not to seek for that. So that's the other thing I see here. And I also want to go to 1 Corinthians in chapter, there's a lot more in Isaiah 51.

I would encourage you to read that passage of how the Lord makes many promises in the latter part of that chapter, which I believe can be fulfilled in our church. But I also want to turn to 1 Corinthians in chapter 12, where it speaks about the different members of the body. The last day Elijah is a body, not an individual.

A body which speaks for the Lord, preparing people for the coming of Jesus Christ. It's the most important ministry we have to be a witness to the return of the Lord and to tell people to repent. The message of repentance is the message that is missing in gospel preaching.

All gospel preaching is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. But that word was spoken to a jailer who was already repentant. But today it is being preached to people who don't understand repentance.

Repentance isn't about turn. It's a turning of your mind completely away. And I believe that we need to have that mind constantly in our life.

The last day's message to the church is repent, repent, repent. When shall we stop repenting? As far as I'm concerned, it's very clear. When I become completely like Jesus Christ.

If you see that the goal of your life, this is what we have preached. What is new covenant? That the purpose of the new covenant is that we see our goal to become like Christ and the Holy Spirit makes us more and more like that. Don't ever forget that.

It's not just three points that the Lord writes his laws in our heart and he doesn't remember our sins and he has become our father. All that is true. But ultimately, our goal is, this is our goal.

We are children of God, but it's not yet clear, John says, what we're going to become. We're going to become like Jesus. And if ever we lose that focus of becoming like Christ more and more, Lord says, what do you want? I don't want to sit on your right hand or left hand.

I want to see. Open my eyes, Lord. I want to see Jesus more clearly to become like him.

I want to see when I see Jesus, I see like Isaiah saw himself in the light of God's glory. We see where we are not like him, where we are seeking some honor for ourselves or not seeking to be sensitive to the needs of others like him. 1 Corinthians 12, it speaks about this body where nobody should feel that I'm unimportant.

It says here in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 22, on the contrary, it is true that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. We have gifted brothers in NCCM. Praise God for that.

I praise God for every gifted brother. I mean, God has given them a gift without that. Very clear in Ephesians 4 that he's equipped people with certain gifts to build the body.

Otherwise, the body can't be built. But at the same time, we must remember that the weaker members are necessary. They're not sitting there just to listen to the messages.

They're necessary. Not only are they necessary, it says here the members which we deem in our human body, think of the members of your body, your physical body, which you consider less honorable. And on those which are less presentable, verse 23, some of our less presentable members are very important.

And we protect them and give them more honor in the same way God has so composed the body, verse 24, that he gives more abundant honor to a member who lacks honor. And I believe that is a mark of a true church. In the worldly churches, they give honor to the highly gifted preacher and make much of him and invite him home.

And many churches, they gift him with expensive cars and whatnot. But that's not the true church of Christ. It's not like that.

It's we give more abundant honor to the member which lacks. I pray NCCS will be like that, like it's written here. And because if you do that, there is the promise in verse 25, then there'll be no division in the body as the members have the same care for one another.

The gifted members, you don't need to make much of them. Already people are making much of them. But it's the members who lack gift.

I don't mean people are coming to the church just to get some handout. There are always, we found that in the early days in CSC, because we were a loving, compassionate, helpful church. We'd help each other financially and practically help people to shift homes and when they're shifting their houses and so many things.

People thought, you know, the principle of a club is a nice club to belong to. Whenever I have a need, there are so many brothers who land up to help me to do this, that and the other. And we had brothers like that in CFC.

And I believe such brothers will come into NCCS also. They'll never do anything for another person. Never.

They're always ready to receive help from others whenever they're in need. And I want to ask all of you who are sitting in NCCS today, does that define you? Are you one of those who have never done a single thing for another person in the church? But you're always ready to receive help from others when you're in need. Then you're in a club.

You have not understood the body. And I want to say to you, in Jesus name, you are a hindrance to the body of Christ. You're a cancer in the body of Christ.

Repent. You need to repent, which means you've got to change your way of thinking. Yeah, we value those who are weak and ungifted.

Then the third passage of scripture, which I want to mention, and this is the last point. What is the great danger we face? We rejoice that we have completed 10 years. The children of Israel came out of Egypt and could have a 10th year anniversary.

10 years since we left Egypt. Great. But where are you today in the wilderness? 20 years after we left Egypt, praise the Lord, 40th anniversary of leaving Egypt.

Where are you? Did they get into Canaan? So until we get into Canaan, everyone, we need to say, Lord, I'm not yet where you want me to be. Forgetting the things that are behind and pressing forward to the things that are before. Let us press toward the mark, make sure that giants are killed, giants of sin, selfishness, pride, and that we possess the land.

We must be making progress in our life, areas of us, of selfishness and pride. The giants are being killed and we are possessing the land for Christ. The only way, as I said, is if you see Jesus more clearly and ask for the help of his Holy Spirit, he'll help you to possess the land.

There's no other way. Joshua and Caleb, they didn't have more muscles in their body than the others, but they trusted in God and they're the ones who possess the land. So 2 Timothy 3, what is the greatest danger that NCCF faces? The danger of people, not everyone, but of people coming in who hold to a form of godliness, who talk about the new covenant, but who don't have the power, 2 Timothy 3, 5, who speak the right language, but inwardly are lovers of money, lovers of themselves, verse 2, and lovers of pleasure, verse 4, rather than lovers of God.

We want NCCF to be filled with lovers of God, even if they can't speak well, even if they're not able to prophesy or from expound great passages of scripture, but lovers of God who are more interested in the power of godliness rather than the form. Remember, brothers and sisters, that throughout history, every movement that started well, decline came in pretty quickly. So we have to stand against that.

We have to learn from history. The Lord told the nation of Judah, see what happened to Israel, how they backslid, and the Assyrians took over. Learn from them.

The church needs to learn from Israel, and the church needs to learn from the backslidden churches in Revelation 2 and 3. I believe NCCF has a great future, and I want to challenge all of you to rise up to that. Amen.

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