



Bethany Assembly of God
May 3, 2020

- Have you thought much about the mission of the Church (not just Bethany, but the whole Church, sometimes called the Universal Church)? What do you think that mission is?

Matthew 28:18–20

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Here’s the way we express our mission at Bethany:

“Bethany exists to glorify God by advancing the good news about Jesus so that lives are transformed as they are filled with the Spirit, marked by baptism, connected in community, and mature in worship.”

- Do you ever feel like Vision Statements have gotten a bit cliché? Give an example of a generic, cliché Vision Statement.
- At Bethany our Vision is:

“In the next three-five years, we will focus on renewing Bethany’s foundation for an overflow of God’s presence in the Pioneer Valley and around the world.”

- We are emphasizing the renewal of four areas: Hunger, Hope, Heart, Hospitality

- In this mini-series, we'll be taking a closer look at Bethany's Vision, what it means, and how we can partner to accomplish it. This week, we're looking at hunger.

Big Idea: We should be a hungry church.

I. Hunger expresses longing and desire.

- What is the first restaurant at which you'll eat when the restrictions from Covid-19 are eased?
- Tell about a time when you were "starving."
- What do you think it means to be a "hungry" church?
- By "hungry," we mean a longing, desire, or drive toward God, His ways, and His mission.

1 Corinthians 9:24–27

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. ²⁷But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

- In the Christian life, how do you run to win the prize? How can a church run to win?
- While we know that Jesus satisfies our hunger for significance and salvation (see John 6:35), God's Word also describes a continuing desire that His people have for Him. Check out this desire in Psalm 84:2, 2 Corinthians 5:2; 1 Peter 2:2; and Matthew 5:6.

- Let's make this practical; beyond just a feeling, how can we measure our hunger for God and His Kingdom? What will this hunger look like or include?
 - Desire to know God through reading, studying, and memorizing His Word.

Psalm 119:131

¹³¹I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments.

- Hunger for God is often expressed in prayer.
- We will also hunger for Jesus' return.

Revelation 22:20

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

- Based on these three measures, are we a hungry church? Are you a hungry Christian? Are you hungry for God's word? Is your hunger for God's presence expressed through prayer? Do you find yourself less and less attracted to the things of this world because you hunger for Jesus' return?
- How can you increase your hunger for God?

II. Hunger is both Vision and Value.

- What's the difference between a Vision and a Value?
- As a value, hunger is expressed in an ongoing attitude: we believe God has more for His people! Read the following passages and then think about/discuss what more God may want to do in our church.

1 Corinthians 14:1

¹Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

Ephesians 3:14–19

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so

that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

“Valuing hunger means that we stir one another up to seek more. It means we look at one another, even through screens and say, brother, sister, there is more! There is more that God has for you! There is more that God has for us!”

- How can you adopt the attitude and value that “There is more!”?
- How can you help spread the attitude that “There is more!” at Bethany?

III. Hunger expresses commitment to improvement.

- Among staff at the church, we express our value of hunger this way:
“Always improving for the sake of the Gospel.”
- How does Philippians 3:13-14 relate to this value?

Philippians 3:13–14

¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- What was the apostle Paul “forgetting” from the past? The bad? The good? All of the above?
- Why is it problematic to merely value excellence? Who gets to decide what is excellent? How does valuing improvement/moving forward/pressing on better serve the Kingdom of God?

“This commitment to improvement means that we won’t allow tradition or trend to stand in the way of the Gospel. We will use the best means of communicating the gospel without unnecessarily tying the Gospel to the means. We won’t keep banging our heads against the wall of how it’s always been done and neither will chase the fleeting fantasies of what’s hot. Instead,

we will look at where we are effective, where we are ineffective, and will prayerfully seek to improve how we share Christ with others and disciple people.”

- Are you willing to lay down the traditions of the past or the trends of the present in order to pursue the call of Christ? Are you willing to say, “We need to improve for the sake of the gospel? More than that, do you believe that we should be “always improving for the sake of the Gospel”?

Conclusion

- Pray that God will help us to be unified in our desire for more of Him and greater participation in His mission on earth.
- Take a moment to reevaluate your own hunger for God? How can you increase it and stir it up in your Christian brothers and sisters?
- How can you better partner with the church for a hungrier tomorrow?