

Him We Proclaim!

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[0:00] Well, today is Anniversary Sunday. We've been three years old as a church. Three years ago, we, amen. We had our first public service, and to commemorate that, we set aside every first Sunday of October to rejoice.

Well, it was the fall of 2012, and I was at the tail end of an assessment by the elders of Crossway Community Church.

Crossway is the church that planted Christ the King Church, and I went through a year-long assessment to see if I was fit to do this work, and as part of that, in that fall, I was asked to write a BHAG, B-H-A-G, a big, hairy, audacious goal.

A God-sized goal. And this is what I wrote. We read this at every membership class.

The vision of Christ the King Church is to see the gospel of Jesus Christ transform every area of our personal lives, our families, our church, our city, and our world.

[1:18] It's 1020 a.m. one Sunday in the year 2033. It's a red light.

As cars come to a stop at the intersection of Sheridan and 60th Street, they hear the one voice of Christ the King Church singing, Blessed Assurance, through the open stained glass windows of their building.

Inside the building, almost all of the 1,000 seats are filled. Remember, this is a vision. Dreaming big. They had to expand the capacity of their building in 2020.

The whole church is standing with hands raised. There are dark chocolate hands raised. There are also deeply tanned hands raised. There are fair and freckled hands raised.

There are some nicely groomed hands that are raised. There are a smattering of exotic fingernails. Tattoos on hands are common. Most of the hands are calloused, strong, and rough.

[2:21] And as the people sing, standing, tears gently stream down cheeks as with one voice. Christ the King Church lifts her praise to God. No one expected God to do what God has done.

The light turns green. For the last 20 years, there's been a pronounced and sustained outpouring of God's spirit throughout Kenosha's downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. God has spread the people of Christ the King like Levin throughout the neighborhoods of Uptown, Harbor Park, Sunnysdale, Lincoln Park, Frank, Allendale, Wilson, even out west of Green Bay Road.

The people of Christ the King Church reach out with the gospel often and intentionally. Evangelism usually involves a couple members of Christ the King inviting some of their friends to come over for a meal and eventually the topic turns to Jesus.

477 people have become Christians and have been integrated into the life of the church over the last two decades. It was in 2018 that God finally opened a door into the African American community.

Shawan Jackson was a co-worker of Mike Purgatelli. They were on the same work crew for the city's water department and Mike had been sharing the gospel with Shawan weekly as they made runs in their blue dump truck.

[3:38] Finally, God opened Shawan's eyes to see his need for Christ and after coming to faith in Christ, Mike brought Shawan to a small group. They were studying Ephesians together and that life group warmly welcomed Shawan.

They shared openly about their hardships, fears, joys, and struggles with sin. And after about 18 months, Shawan was able to let down his guard with people who were not black. He experienced Christian fellowship with Anglos and Latinos.

He came to realize that he had more in common with his Anglo and Latino, these Anglo and Latino sinners saved by grace than he did with his Frank neighborhood buddies. Shawan started bringing his longtime friends from Frank neighborhood to the Christ of King Church of Sunday service. Some were convicted of their sin. They repented and put their trust in Christ. But most did not. Shawan continued to grow in the face of being ridiculed for his devotion to Christ and the people of Christ the King.

He married Manuela in 2023 and soon they had three beautiful boys. Shawan never met his dad, but God provided what he needed. A handful of godly older men had been mentoring Shawan since his conversion.

[4:44] He's now a godly dad. His boys feared the Lord. And then from 2024 to 2027, Shawan participated in Christ the King Church's leadership development program. And by the fall of 2028, Shawan had been nominated to become an elder.

He's formally set in as an elder of Christ the King Church January of 2029. He's just started his second three-year term. God continues to use Shawan to evangelize the young men of Frank neighborhood.

In fact, he's mentoring three young men from his neighborhood now. 2018 was a significant year in the life of Christ the King Church. Early in that spring, Christ the King Church sent out her first church plant to Waukegan, El Rey de la Gracia.

Lou, give it to us. Today, God has grown that church to 215 people. They meet in Waukegan High School. They joined the Crossway Association of Churches in 2021.

Since 2016, Christ the King has been sending teams across the globe to play a small role in filling the Great Commission. Every year since 2016, Christ the King has sent out a multi-ethnic team to visit, strengthen, and assist the international mission partners of the church.

[5:58] There are strong ties to partners in Myanmar, Philippines, Brazil, Morocco, India, China, Georgia, as in the Republic of Georgia, though the state of Georgia needs missionaries too. Somalia, France, Ethiopia, and Vietnam.

God has done a mighty work in uniting the diverse people of Christ the King Church into a mature body whose head is Jesus Christ. No one spends a lot of time thinking about what it means to be ethnically diverse anymore.

Christ the King Church is ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. The church reflects the community it's in. Every dimension of Christ the King Church is experiencing the transforming and unifying effect of the gospel.

The children's ministry volunteers are ethnically diverse. Worship team, ethnically diverse. Greeting team, diverse. Life group leaders and life groups are ethnically diverse. Deacons are ethnically diverse.

And of course, the elders of Christ the King Church are ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. The diversity is a sign of a greater reality. The power of the gospel of Jesus Christ radically changes individuals as well as a people.

[7:03] A diverse people living in downtown Kenosha have been given new identities. United in Christ, resulting in a whole new people group. We are Christ the King Church. As we were, the elders of our church were seeing this day approaching, we thought it would be good to rally us around our mission as a church.

to call to mind why we're here. Why we do what we do. And it's our third anniversary this morning. So we want to refocus us as a church on our mission as a church.

And to do that, we're going to take a break from Matthew 6, and we're going to plop down right in the middle of Colossians. Colossians 1, verses 28 and 29.

And in these two verses, the Apostle Paul gives a brief but potent summary of his gospel ministry. It's all about Jesus.

It's all about Jesus. So if you would open up your Bibles to Colossians 1. Hear the Word of God.

[8:17] 1, verses 28 and 29. Him we proclaim. Him we proclaim.

Warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil. Struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.

So as we take our cues from the Apostle Paul and Jesus Himself, we exist as a church to make known the life-transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people. It's all about Jesus. We're all about Jesus. And so this morning, to help you see that, three points. Our goal, our method, and our strength. Our goal, our method, and our strength. So let's look at first our goal.

[9:22] And you can see our goal in the second half of verse 28. I'll just read verse 28 again. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

And so as we talk about our goal, I want you to notice three words. Mature, everyone, and present. So let's look at this word mature. The goal of Paul's ministry was to present everyone mature in Christ.

You see that little word that? That, we may present. That word, that, signifies purpose. Aim. Goal. And our goal is the same as the Apostle Paul's. To present everyone mature in Christ. Now that word mature comes from a Greek word, teleon, which means complete, fulfilled, lacking nothing.

[10:30] One commentator wrote that this sense of maturity is in someone who is so wholeheartedly devoted to Jesus that their conduct is blameless.

Wholehearted devotion. It's not any kind of maturity we're talking about here. This is mature in Christ. The goal of Paul's ministry was to present people mature in Christ.

And what that means is to be Christ-like. Would you hold your spot in Colossians 1 and flip over a couple pages to Ephesians chapter 4?

I want to see how Paul talks about this in another way. Similar way. In chapter 4, verse 11, we read, and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body.

So God gives leaders to the church to equip the church to build up the church. gospel ministry takes place among all of us. All of us are gospel ministers building the church up.

[11:46] And then look at verse 13. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood. Same word.

To mature manhood. And then look at the next clause. To the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Our goal is to present everyone mature in Christ to be like Christ in all that they are in every area of their lives.

It's all about Him. Paul uses this maturing Christ language all throughout his epistles. But when we turn to the Gospels, it's a different kind of language.

And so instead of talking about someone mature in Christ, the Gospels talk about being disciples of Jesus Christ. Discipleship. And so when we talk about it this way, the goal of our church is to make mature disciples of Jesus.

You remember Matthew 28. Luke quoted it when he was praying and starting our worship service. Jesus commissions all of His disciples of all time. He says, go make disciples of the nations.

[13:01] Make disciples of me, Jesus, of the nations. Jesus Himself has commanded us to be about this business of making mature disciples of Jesus.

And a disciple is someone who is a lifelong learner of Jesus and His ways and a lifelong follower of Jesus and His ways. Not only do they know who Jesus is and what they taught, they learn in order to obey, to observe all that He commanded.

Now, what does a mature disciple of Jesus Christ look like? Well, it has a variety of appearances. But you remember we were preaching through the Sermon on the Mount.

We've been preaching through the Sermon on the Mount and early in the summer we were working through the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are just a wonderful profile of a mature follower of Jesus.

Do you remember where they start?

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Humility is a hallmark of a mature disciple. It starts all there. I know it's not about me, it's about Him.

[14:10] Jesus radically changes a sinner to think less of themselves and more of Him, more of God. And so that's where it all starts.

Poverty of spirit, spirit, that is the root and then it blossoms into the beautiful peacemakers that we are to be.

Sharing the gospel, helping people be at peace with God through the blood of Jesus, be at peace with each other, peace within ourselves. But it doesn't stop there. Peacemaking isn't the end. Being persecuted is. Mature disciples catch heat for the name of Jesus. That's what we're called to. Making mature disciples of Jesus Christ. Now did you notice the word everyone? It's repeated three times in verse 28 alone.

[15:14] So you see, Him we proclaim warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ Jesus. Now, when you hear the word everyone, you might start thinking, whoa, are we talking like seven and a half billion people on the face of the planet right now?

And in one sense, yes we are. Jesus says, go make disciples of the nations, all 7.5 billion of them. It's good we're not in it alone. God's worldwide church is carrying out His mission. But the way to think about this too is to be considering this. everyone we come into contact with and is responsive to the gospel, everyone we present, we want to present mature in Christ. Now, I want to point out something very interesting about this. Notice in verse 27, to Him God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Gentiles. What's that a reference to? Well, a Gentile is a non-Jew. Remember, back in the first century, a Jew would think of the world in two categories, Jews and everybody else.

[16:30] Gentiles. And what Paul seems to be saying here is that, hey, we proclaim Christ to everyone, Jew or Gentile. we warn everyone, we teach everyone in order to present everyone mature in Christ.

Now, let's dial that in a little bit. So for us as a church, do you know what that means? Here's what that means. Regardless of someone's ethnicity, regardless of someone's gender, of their socioeconomic status, of their age, of their present marital status, or their past marital status, of their past history with the law, our aim as a church is to present everyone mature in Christ.

All are welcome. All are welcome. Everyone we come into contact with and is responsive to the gospel, we are to present them mature in Christ, to help them grow in Christ-likeness.

And of course, there's that word present. Paul uses it earlier in verses 21 and 22 of chapter 1. He says, and you who were once alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, he is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

And so, there is a direction of that word present. Think of it as an aimed present, aimed at God. Our presenting everyone mature in Christ is towards God.

[18:11] We present them to God. So do you know what that means? Our ministry is an act of worship. Our proclaiming Christ and presenting people, everyone mature in Christ, it is worship of the living God.

We are presenting them to him. our ministry is Godward. It's for his glory. It's an act of worship. The goal of Paul's ministry, and therefore the goal of our ministry, is to present to God everyone, everyone we encounter, everyone who's responsive to the gospel, everyone mature in Christ, that they become more and more like Jesus.

it's all about him. That's the goal. Now let's look at the method. Now you may be asking yourself the question, okay, the goal is to present everybody mature in Jesus.

How do we do that? How do you get towards that end? How does that take place? Well, in the first part of 28, we have the answer.

[19:24] him we proclaim. Warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

How do we present people mature in Christ? We proclaim Christ to them. Him we proclaim. Remember, it's all about him. In order for somebody to become like Christ, they've got to hear Christ proclaimed again and again and again.

him we proclaim. Now the one great need of everyone on the planet is Christ. Him we proclaim to everybody.

Think about it this way. Think about a timeline of a maturing disciple of Jesus Christ Christ. And it starts with when we were non-Christians.

When we were non-Christians, we were dead to God. We were living in darkness. We had no hope in the world. We, our hearts, were devoted to anything and everything but God.

[20:38] That's what we were living for. Do you know what someone who's living in darkness needs to hear? They need to hear Christ proclaim to them.

Jesus is the light of the world. He's the only one that can transform a heart that is living for oneself, transform that heart to a heart that is empowered to live for the one true God.

Only Jesus can do that. So what do we proclaim? Who do we proclaim to non-Christians? Jesus.

Now let's say a non-Christian hears the gospel, God gives them ears to hear, and they believe.

And at that moment their eternity changes. A radical transformation has taken place in one moment. And now we have an immature disciple of Jesus.

He's a baby Christian. Christian. What are we going to proclaim to that baby Christian? You know, what you really want to start doing now is reading every book of the Bible twice every day.

[21:52] You want to pray every minute of every day, and if you do, here's a list of 900 things to be praying for. Our inclination is to point people who just become Christians to to-do lists.

You know what we need to point them to? Him we proclaim. They need to learn about their master. They learn to know what he taught, and they need to learn his ways, and so we're going to point them to him over and over and over again.

They're born again. They want to live for Jesus, right? And they're looking at their lives, and they're seeing, oh man, where do I start with Jesus?

Him we proclaim. How about someone who is no longer an immature disciple, but is a maturing disciple? These are the kind of people who they have a split devotion from time to time.

There are significant areas of their life that still need to come under the lordship of Jesus. What are we going to tell them? What are we going to proclaim to them?

[23:04] Him we proclaim. We call them to Jesus. We point them again and again to him. Who he is, his ways, and see over time him do a work where every area of their life comes under his reign.

How about a mature disciple, a brother or sister who has a wholehearted devotion that results in a blameless life? What do we proclaim to them? Jesus!

Now, a wholehearted, a mature disciple, just to clarify, they're not sinless. Perfection hasn't reached this person. In fact, they would probably say something like this, you know what, I am more aware of God's holiness than I ever have been, and as a result, I am more aware of my sinfulness.

It's not the blatant sins I did when I was a little baby Christian. These are the more refined sins that I do now, but I see them as even more grievous in God's sight, so they're more aware of their sin, yet they would also say, and I'm more aware of what Christ has done for me.

One of the distinctive marks of a mature Christian is not that they're just dwelling on who Jesus is a lot of the time. They are seeking to make disciples of Jesus as well.

[24:31] They're seeking to proclaim Him to others, to help present others mature in Christ. This book is Christ revealed.

He reveals Himself to us through this book. It's a living book. And so we help people follow Jesus by showing them Jesus through the book, showing Him His ways through the book.

So here's what I'm trying to tell you. No matter where you're at on the timeline of a maturing Christian, whether you're not a Christian yet, or you're a mature Christian, do you know what you need to hear most, and most often?

Christ for you. That's what you need to hear. He's for you. He loves you. He died for you. He was raised for you. He's interceding for you, and He's coming back in order to bring you to Himself so you can see each other face to face.

If you just look at the first chapter of the book of Colossians, do you know what Paul does with these Christian Colossians? He preaches Christ to them.

[25:49] Take a look at verse 15. Talking about the preeminence of Christ. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for by Him, Jesus, all things were created in heaven and earth, visible and

invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Jesus and for Jesus.

And He's before all things, and in Jesus all things hold together. You know what Paul's doing? Hey, Colossian Christians, here is your Savior, Lord of creation.

And He doesn't stop there. Look more. He goes into verse 18, and He is the head of the body, the church. He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him, Jesus, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him, Jesus, to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His, Jesus' cross.

And so not only does He proclaim Jesus as Lord over creation to these Colossian Christians, He doesn't stop there. He goes, He's Lord of redemption, Lord of the church. He's Lord of it all.

[26:56] So here we see in the book of Colossians, Paul proclaiming Christ to Christians. This is who your Savior is. And if that weren't enough, in verses 21 through 23, Jesus, Paul takes, okay, here's Jesus, Lord of all, and he goes very personally, he says, He's your Lord.

Look at verse 21. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His blood in order to present you holy and blameless, above reproach before Him.

Paul is preaching Christ to these Colossians, Colossian Christians. He's telling them who Jesus is and what He has done for them. Do you know that goes by another word?

Do you know what it is? The gospel. He's proclaiming the gospel to these Christians. Him we proclaim, a.k.a. the gospel.

It's the good news. And we never outgrow the gospel. We never outgrow the good news about Jesus. It is the old, old story that never gets old.

[28:10] It's new today as it was yesterday. This past week I had lunch with a brother from the church and he is a mature brother. I touched base with him this morning.

I'm like, how? He's been a Christian for over 40 years. That's a long time of walking with Jesus. And so here we are having lunch together. And we reach a point where we're kind of both reflecting on past mistakes and past hardships.

And it was kind of like out of nowhere. He said something to the effect of, and I am so grateful that God has borne all the wrath for my sin in Christ Jesus.

Here he is, 40 years in the faith, reveling in the gospel work of Jesus. Jesus at lunch. 40 years in the faith, we never outgrow the work of Jesus at the cross.

We never do. He's 40 years in the faith and it happened, he's talking about like it happened yesterday. We never outgrow the good news of who Jesus is and what he has done for us, what he's done for you, what he's done for me.

[29:27] Him we proclaim to both non-Christians and Christians. It's all about him. It's all about who he is and what he's done.

That verb translated proclaim, it's in the present tense. And so we're to keep on proclaiming. Him we proclaim and then proclaim again. We proclaim, proclaim, and proclaim. And this proclamation of Christ involves both warning and teaching.

Did you notice that? Him we proclaim, warning everyone. That Greek word translated warn literally means to place something into someone's brain.

It's a word of admonishment. It works kind of like this. Hey man, in light of who Jesus is, in light of what he's done, really you don't want to reject him.

We're proclaiming Christ and warning everyone. In light of who Jesus is and what he's done, don't stray from him, sister. In light of who Jesus is and what he has done for you, brother, don't grow cold in your devotion to him.

[30:41] A word of warning as we proclaim him. It's part of the proclamation of Christ. And by the way, that word warning is a present tense verb as well. We're to continue warning.

It's part of our life together as a church. Part of our love for together as a church. Helping each other. But in addition to warning, we also see there's an ongoing teaching as part of our proclamation of Christ.

Christ. That's what we see Paul doing in Colossians 1. Constantly teaching who Jesus is. Lord of creation. Lord of our redemption. Lord of all.

Constantly teaching what he has done. He shed his blood on the cross in order to make peace between a holy God and sinful man. You. Constantly teaching what he is doing.

Did you know right now that Jesus is interceding for you at the right hand of God? Constantly teaching what he will do. He's coming back.

[31:43] And we see throughout the New Testament in both Paul and in James that the promise of his return is to encourage us. Constantly teaching that his bride, the church, the church, who we are.

We are he, the apple of his eye, the blood-bought people. And we're to proclaim him to everybody. Would you look at Colossians 3, 16?

This is a command to the Colossian church. We read, let the word of Christ, the gospel, dwell in you richly.

Teaching and admonishing, warning one another in all wisdom. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thanksgiving, thankfulness in your heart.

We preach Christ to each other in a variety of ways. We're to teach them to observe all that he has commanded.

[32:56] So, warning everyone and teaching everyone both have important and vital roles in our proclaiming Christ to everyone. God uses it all to bring about maturity in his disciples.

Do you know what we do on Sunday mornings at our breakfast that we reach out to the community? Do you know what we do there? We preach Christ. Do you know what we do here Sunday mornings when we gather as a church?

We preach Christ from the Bible. Do you know what the King's kids are doing right now as they're gathered together? We're preaching Christ to them. Do you know what?

It's going to happen in our life groups. Preach Christ to one another. In our men's and women's Bible studies, we preach Christ to one another. Do you know what Billy does through the Gospel of John at our Thursday evening youth meetings?

He preaches Christ to our young people. As we show acts of mercy, we're looking to proclaim Him. Him we proclaim. It's all about Him.

[33:58] Our goal? Present everyone mature in Christ. Our glorious method is the Gospel. To preach Christ to everyone, both non-believers and believers.

And on a final note, let's look at our strength. Our strength is Christ Himself. Christ provides the power to be faithful.

In verse 29, for this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me. The work of proclaiming Jesus, this proclaiming Christ to everyone, warning everyone, teaching everyone, it is not easy work.

Making disciples of people is not easy. It's hard work. In fact, if you look up at verse 24, Paul writes, now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.

And in my flesh, I'm filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Hard work. Look at verse down at 29 again. For this I toil. It's a word that means to work to exhaustion.

[35:05] And then the next word, struggling with all His energy that powerfully works within me. And then in verse 1, for I want you to know how great a struggle.

Those words struggling and struggle, they come from the Greek word that we get the word agony from. Agony. The work of advancing the gospel, of proclaiming Christ is hard work.

Rejection. Alienation. People questioning our motives. Charges of intolerance.

Getting labeled narrow-minded. Not being taken seriously. Being put on the fringe of your family.

Putting on the fringe of your workplace. The proclamation of Christ can be offensive to people.

And then we can be assumed upon. Taken advantage of. And then there's the whole part of change comes so slow and it can be so discouraging.

[36:10] And then when you're laboring in a church and you're serving in a church and no one seems to notice, feel underappreciated, taken for granted, it can be hard work.

