

# A Vision Of UNITY

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[ 0 : 00 ] It's great to be in church with us tonight. It's been a long day. It's been a great day. So many new things here at St. Paul's. We are sitting sideways. It was kind of interesting seeing people come into church this morning and for the first time trying to work out, where do I sit now?

You know, like it's all so different. We're faced the wrong way and there's a little bit of confusion, but it's a lot of different stuff, a lot of things backwards. You know, Sam's got his shirt tucked in tonight and he's wearing a tie and he's had a shower.

Um, and, uh, you know, Andrew Green, it's summertime. It's 27 degrees. He's got shoes on and, uh, Nick's got his best thongs on. I mean, it's, uh, there's so many things and I'm saving money ready for vision Sunday with shampoo and hair care products.

Uh, so it's, it's, it's a, it's, it's a lot of things different. We're coming to church today, uh, and it, it marks a vision month for us. Uh, this is the kickoff as Sam has indicated and it's one of the annual highlights, uh, for me with church calendar.

Uh, it's, you know, up there. I don't want to diminish Easter and Christmas at all, but it's up there in terms of my views, in terms of for us and the importance of it for us as a church. Um, I'm especially excited for this, uh, four weeks.

[ 1 : 10 ] Uh, every time I get the vision month, I think this is going to be the best vision month ever. Like this is so important for us. And, and this one is particularly important because there is something that has, uh, been bothering me for about 18 months now, which has kind of been resolved for me in the last couple of months.

Um, it started for me at the end of our time to build project and the opening of the international Chinese school at the beginning of 2015. Uh, they were, uh, two major projects that are a significant focus for us over a four year period.

Uh, and both of these major projects and many small ones and a before and after required vision. Uh, and, but as I saw it, they weren't the vision.

That is the, the vision for St. Paul's was not to do stuff with our buildings and to start a school. That wasn't the vision. That's, it was something else. There was a, they weren't the major goal for us. They served a much larger vision, but what was it? That was, that was the important and the missing piece for me. Uh, and it's an important missing piece because a common vision for a church has a special unifying effect.

[ 2 : 20 ] It draws people together to a common focus and commitment to see God's purposes achieved through them, uh, as a church. And so a church without vision, uh, tends to lack cohesion as it clings to present or past traditions and resist the possibilities that change can bring.

And without looking forward to the possibilities of what, uh, God can do, there is no challenge to our faith individually or corporately and, and no excitement associated with seeing specific targets met become reality as God works amongst his people.

Now, while we have had a vision that united us, uh, in time to build in the National Chinese School, there were very significant things. In fact, 95% of the church voted to proceed with both of those things.

We poured a bunch of resources into a short period of time and made it happen. They weren't the vision, the big vision. They wasn't the big thing that we're seeking to do together.

Um, and yet the vision was there. Uh, we've, we've actually been working on it, uh, but the vision in fact needed to find us. Um, I wrote a vision statement for us in 2000, uh, sorry, I wrote a vision statement for us for vision 2020 when I launched it back in, uh, the end of 2009.

[ 3 : 41 ] Uh, that vision statement was a mistake. It's one thing that I regret. You know, we, we went through all this rigmarole, uh, back in the end of 2009. We got this thing printed up in a booklet.

And, uh, basically as soon as the ink was dry in the booklet, it was like, eh, that's, you know, uh, I, I, you know, I've, I've worked with everything else in there. I continue to push everything else in there. But the one regret was the vision statement that I'd wrote in that booklet. And it's still in print, still floating around, you know, old things die hard. Uh, what has been receiving quite a lot of attention since the end of 2009, uh, is our purpose and our values as a church.

Our purpose and values are about who we are. And since 2009, we've been great on this gradual journey, if you like, of rediscovering who we are as a church. Our vision, if you like, has been to rediscover our purpose.

That's kind of what we've been working on. And the process of rediscovering the reason why we exist has resulted in the vision finding us. As we've captured our purpose, the vision has found us. [ 4 : 49 ] And this vision, uh, that I'll be talking to you about tonight is an intersection of my life and my ministry passion. Uh, it, it's, it's also an industry.

It's also an intersection of the needs of our community and also the gifts and the passion. Uh, for us as a church. And you bring all those things together and where they meet, you have a common vision of God's purposes being worked out amongst it.

And so I, I regard it as a God moment. Uh, it was in July this year. Uh, I was away on retreat with a purpose pastors and one of our wardens. And, uh, and our goal was to do as we do these retreats each year is to work out what's, what's the thing that we really need to nail as a church?

What do we need to improve on? And where, where do you think God's heading, uh, for us in the future? So we try and work on how to take that next step for us as a church into the next year.

There was no plan for us at that moment to formulate a vision statement.

Uh, but the more we talked and reflected on that very first night, it just became clearer and clearer that the vision found us. Uh, I went to bed on that first night with my mind just spinning and my heart was just sort of starting to burn again with this passion that I have for us as a church.

[ 6 : 04 ] And even in the very early stages of this, uh, forming vision, it was connecting so well with, with my passion for ministry, but also, uh, what I would see that we were being shaped here at St. Paul's.

Uh, since then the staff and the parish council have been kicking it around, sitting on it, praying about it, sharpening it, um, and praying about it and just get to a point where we're just gone.

That's it. It's so closely connected with our, with our purpose. Uh, we have had it in visual form since I introduced this new logo back in 2010.

Back in 2010, I sat with some graphic designers and said to me, so what's your, what's your vision for the church? What's your passion? I went, ah, it's this, this, and this, and this. And they drew that. And it's like, it's been our logo ever since.

And so, um, so the vision's been there. I'm just slow, you know? Uh, you know, as Sam said, we've got our limitations and that's one of my limitations. Well, you know, it's, it's been there and it's been obvious.

[ 7 : 05 ] Just haven't seen it. So in case here, so here it is. In case you didn't know what St. Paul's, uh, purpose is, uh, it reads, St. Paul's exists to know Jesus, treasure Jesus, and represent Jesus for God's glory and the joy of all people.

That statement is about who we are. You, you, it's absolutely essential for us that that statement is about who we are. That's the reason we exist.

We don't exist for any other purpose than that. Therefore, given that that's who we are and that's why we exist, this is what we seek to do.

Our vision is to be united in our desperation for the world around us to encounter Jesus and our desire to represent the diversity of Chatswood.

Now, that vision just there is the basis by which we will evaluate all of our ministry practice and determine what we will and what we won't do, what we need to start doing, what we need to stop doing.

[ 8 : 02 ] Now, I've been reflecting on that and I've been working with it with parish council and, and, uh, staff since July. And, uh, and, and there is so much of my, my personal ministry passion, which is connected to that statement.

So I don't, I don't expect you in this moment, having just heard it, to sort of all of a sudden, oh, praise God, drop to your knees and yes, that's what I've been waiting for, that sort of thing. You know, I, you know, give it time, give it time.

And, uh, my, my intention over the next four weeks is to unpack it for us. Um, and in, and in doing that, I want to make the connections between who we are and what God seeks for us to do, uh, to become a little bit clearer for us.

Um, and that, and that in the hope of that, that your, your hearts will grow in passion for it in such a way that it changes your life.

As it has already for me since July. We'll talk about that in a little bit. There are four key words linked in four key ideas here that are my focus over the next four weeks.

[ 9 : 04 ] The words unity, diversity, us, and the world. And today I want to simply focus on the word unity. It's there in the first part of the statement. It says, we seek to be united in our desperation for the world around us to encounter Jesus.

And I think we want to be united in wanting that outcome because our purpose statement is explicit. Absolutely explicit in saying that Jesus is the main thing for us as a church.

Jesus is our all-consuming passion. Now, I said a moment ago that a common vision for a church has a special unifying effect. And that's true. But it's not the foundation.

It's not the deepest foundation of our unity together as a church. Our unity is founded on the person and the work of the Lord Jesus. On the person of the Lord Jesus and his work of redemption through his death and his resurrection.

In Colossians chapter 1, we get a glimpse of why Jesus is the main thing for us. Why he is the ultimate and all other things are not ultimate.

[ 10 : 09 ] All other things should take their proper place as being less from Jesus. And this is part of the discovery that we've been making as a church. Rediscovering our purpose of Jesus being the main thing for us.

Verses of 14 to 20, we are given, Colossians 1, 14 to 20, we are given a litany of amazing truths about the Lord Jesus. And they are probably the most concentrated descriptions of the glories and the majesty of Jesus in the entire New Testament.

There are at least 15 of them that I want to run through very quickly for you. Verse 14, it says, In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Verse 15, he is the image of the invisible God. Verse 15 again, he is the firstborn of all creation. That means he is the specially honored firstborn and only son over all creation. The inheritor of the estate, so to speak. Verse 16, it says, By him all things were created in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

Verse 16 again, all things were created through him. Verse 16 again, all things were created for him. Verse 17, he is before all things. Verse 17 again, in him all things hold together.

[ 11 : 21 ] Verse 18, he is the head of the body of the church. 18 again, he is the beginning. 18 again, he is the firstborn from the dead. 18 again, in everything he is preeminent. 19, in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Verse 20, he reconciled all things to himself, whether on earth or in heaven. Verse 20 again, he makes peace by the blood of the cross. Let me just say, friends, if your heart ever wavers, grows cold to the magnificence and the treasure that Jesus is, can I just encourage you just to come to these verses?

Come to these verses and just reflect again and again who Jesus is, what he has achieved for you. Memorize this list of glories and ask God, this is the key point as well.

Ask God to give you affections, to give you passions that correspond to the magnificence and greatness of Jesus. Because it is so easy for me to run through a list of that, it's the third time I've done it today, to run through a list of that and for my heart not to be warmed, strangely warmed. It's so easy for me to sit there and go, oh yeah, Colossians 1, I know it. Did a Bible study on that. Memorize it. It says here that Jesus created all that is.

[ 12 : 41 ] They were created through him. And it also says that all things were created for him. All that came into being exists for Christ. That is, everything exists to display the greatness and the glory and the magnificence of Jesus.

That means that nothing, absolutely nothing in the universe exists for its own sake. There's not a single thing in this universe that exists for its own sake. Everything, from the bottom of the oceans to the top of the mountains, from the smallest particle to the biggest star, from the most boring school subject to the most interesting science experiment, from the ugliest cockroach to the most beautiful human, from the greatest saint to the most wicked genocidal dictator.

Everything, everything exists. Exists to make the greatness of Jesus more fully known. And that means you, it means me, and my life, and your life, and it means us at St. Paul's as a church. We exist to make Jesus look magnificent as he is. He's the sovereign Lord of all. He's the center and he's the foundation.

Our unity is founded in who Jesus is. He is, as it says in Colossians, he has the supremacy over everything. We are also united, not just in the person of Jesus, but also the work of Jesus.

[14:08] So we're united in Jesus and by his work on our behalf. Have a look at, let me jump to Ephesians chapter 1. We get again the magnificence of Jesus and what he has achieved for us.

Verse 3 of Ephesians 1 is the summary verse of the chapter. It's about what God has done for us in Jesus and what our response to Jesus should be. It says, Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing.

Every spiritual blessing in Christ. Nothing is lacking. Nothing is overlooked. Nothing is held back by God.

And then we get a list over the next few verses of what these things are. Verse 5, it says, We have been adopted as God's children. We call the creator of the universe Father.

And all the intimacy that belongs with that. My dad's birthday today, I rang him up this morning. He's 78. Quick calculation. Fortunately, I didn't mention it, a number.

[15:15] And I rang him up and talked to him and said, Hey, Dad. You know, the privilege of Christians to be able to do that with the Father of the universe. At any time.

Direct access to him. Through Jesus. We're adopted as his sons. Verse 17, We have been redeemed. We were separated from God because of our rejection.

But a price has been paid by God to buy us back to himself. Verse 7 again, We have forgiveness of sins. The very thing that separates us from God has been forgiven.

The offended one, the rejected one, paid our debt to get us back to himself. And the slate is clean. There is no record or wrong. Nothing is ever going to be brought back up again. There is nothing to pay. The debt's clean. I've heard this great story. In fact, it's a slight difference from the story I told this morning.

[16:13] I checked the facts since this morning. Bloke bought a Bentley and he's driving his Bentley in Europe. And it broke down on a motorway in Europe.

So he rang his dealer back in London and said, Hey, dude, my Bentley's broken. And they said, We'll send a technician. And he's like, What? Send a technician over in Europe from London.

I mean, it's not very far. It's here to Melbourne sort of thing. And they flew this dude over on a private jet. They got the Bentley, took it to the airport and put it on the plane.

It was a jet that you could put a car on. Put it on a plane, flew it back to London with the guy in the car. Now, of course, the guy who owns the car is thinking, Crap, this is going to hurt.

This is going to be very expensive. And about four to six weeks later, no bill. Got his car back, no bill. And so he rang up the dealership and said, So, what's the damage?

[17:14] And they said, What do you mean? They said, you know, fixing my car. And they said, No, no. There's no bill. There's no problem with your car. Hang on a bit.

This bloke came over at a private jet and flew my car back. No, that didn't happen. And they, What are you talking about? They said, Bentleys don't break down. Bentleys don't break down.

And so, this guy was just astounded at something that should have been thousands, thousands, thousands, thousands of dollars. The slate's wiped clean. No bill to pay.

And this is the picture here of Ephesians. We have forgiveness of sins. In verse 8, We have been lavished with all wisdom and understanding. God doesn't leave his people in the dark. He reveals to us, as we've just seen in our Proverbs series, how things work in this world.

The way things actually are. How they work. And how do we live in accordance with it. Verse 9, God has made known to us the mystery of his plans for the world. We're not in the dark as to what the goal of eternity and time and space and everything, where it's all heading for.

[18:18] Verse 13, We are so intimate with God that we have received the Holy Spirit. God lives in us. Verse 14, Verse 14, We are now guaranteed an eternal inheritance.

We have riches in heaven that would just blow our mind, that have reserve written all over them. They're guaranteed. And I think that Ephesians 1 is meant to overwhelm us.

We put it together with cautions of the massive cosmic list of what God has achieved for us in the person of the Lord Jesus. Every single one of these blessings is staggering enough in itself.

But you put them together and it is an awesome scene of how much God has achieved for us. And the big statement right through Ephesians chapter 1 is this little statement in how God has secured all this stuff for us.

It is in Christ. Verse 3, Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is what meant, that's our response, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

[ 19 : 21 ] Verse 4, God chose us in him. That's in Jesus. Verse 5, We are adopted through Christ Jesus. Verse 7, In Jesus we have redemption. Verse 9, God purposed these things.

In Jesus. Verse 11, In Jesus we were chosen. And please notice the motivation here from God. Verse 4, In love he predestined us.

In verse 7, We have redemption in accordance with the riches of his grace. Verse 9, He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure. Love, grace, good pleasure. Why has God done all this? It's because it's his character. It's who he is. It's not because we're lovely. It's because of who he is. And notice too that there's a direction.

For those of you a little bit iffy about vision statements and stuff like that, God has a vision. Verse 9, And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times would have reached their fulfillment, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

[ 20 : 32 ] That's God's vision of all things. God's grand plan is to move all of history towards a single unified goal. His vision is to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ.

The goal of time, the goal of space, is all things under the lordship of Jesus as they were meant to be at the beginning. And I would suggest, therefore, that the single-minded submission to Jesus, single-minded submission to Jesus, is essential for the function of the church that's united under Jesus, under his lordship.

It is practicing now what will be for all of eternity united under the lordship of Jesus. And so our purpose statement as a church says that is our main purpose.

We want to know Jesus and treasure Jesus and represent Jesus for God's glory and the joy of all people. And if this vision for all things is to be united under Jesus, if that's the vision for all things, then that is the vision that shapes our life as a church and our practice as a church.

Jesus is the primary basis of our unity. God has made us one. We belong to him. He is our lord. He is our savior. And we are mutually accountable to him. And what Ephesians goes on from there into chapter 2, calls God's people to work out the unity that they already have in Jesus, in our life together.

[ 22 : 01 ] As we're called to not just have unity, but also to practice unity, Ephesians 2, we see that all the barriers that separate people have been broken down by Jesus.

Jesus is the great leveler, the great uniter of people. In Ephesians 4, we are told to live out our status of unity with our fellow believers in Jesus. In the first two verses of Ephesians 4, we are told to live as true followers of Jesus, with an attitude of humility and gentleness and patience and bearing with each other.

Then in the third verse, we are called to make every effort. That's hard work, in other words. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

Verse 3 in Ephesians 4 doesn't call us to develop a unity. It calls us to maintain the unity that we already have in Jesus. And verse 4 names seven key elements that affirm the base of our unity. And they all proceed with the word one. Seven elements. These seven elements are on the front page of our website. They were put there in 2010.

[ 23 : 12 ] You know, I'm slow. One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. That's who we are as a church.

What Ephesians affirms is that unity within the church is the natural outcome of being reconciled to God through Jesus. But we need to work on it. Ephesians 4 doesn't just refer to behavior that works for unity.

It describes behaviors that, in fact, fractures unity. Sensuality, impurity, greed, falsehood, anger, laziness, unwholesome talk, bitterness, raging, brawling, slander, and malice.

You see, we've got to work at it because the church is made up of natural enemies. That's who we are by nature. And our diversity as a church always, always threatens our unity.

And what binds us together is not a common education, not a common race, not common income levels, not common politics, not common nationality, not common life experiences, not common accents, not common jobs, not common church tradition, not common dress, not common hairstyles, not common interests, not common denomination, not common Bible understanding, not common Bible understanding, or anything else, a myriad of other things.

[ 24 : 38 ] The key to practicing unity is embracing the wonder of what we have in Jesus. The Lord Jesus, as I've already said, is the great leveler of humanity. The very basic admission requirement into the local church and to this church is to see our desperate need for Jesus.

That's the basic admission requirement, our desperate need for him. We have every one of us, every single one of us, no matter how well we project from the outside, have fallen short of what God expects for us, and therefore every single one of us come to Jesus as a beggar.

Our hands open saying, please give me mercy. And so whether this is your first time at St. Paul's tonight, or whether you've been here for 40 years, we're all in the same boat. All in the same boat. This is a level playing field as a church. There is no place of special privilege and acknowledgement, only places of grace and responsibility. We all began at the cross.

If you're Christian, you began at the cross, and we all finish at the cross. And that is humbling, and that is unifying. We are just as much in need of his grace. Now, when you start the Christian life, as what you live, you've done it for 60 years.

[ 25 : 57 ] Christians come together because they have been saved by Jesus Christ and come under his common lordship. And I just cannot put the central, central importance of unity any better than the great John Stott in his commentary on Ephesians, when he wrote, it is simply impossible with any shred of Christian integrity to go on proclaiming that Jesus by his cross has abolished the old divisions and created a single new humanity of love, while at the same time we are contradicting our message by tolerating racial or social or other barriers within our church fellowship.

We need to get the failures of the church and our conscience to feel the offense to Christ, to weep over the credibility gap between the church's talk and the church's walk, to repent of our readiness, to excuse and even condone our failures and determine to do something about it.

I wonder if anything is more urgent today for the honor of Christ and for the spread of the gospel than the church should be, and should be seen to be, what by God's purpose and Christ's achievement it already is a single new humanity, a model of human community, a family of reconciled brothers and sisters who love their father and love each other, the evident dwelling place of God by his spirit.

Only then will the world believe in Christ as peacemaker. Only then will God receive the glory that is due to him. Jesus is our all-consuming passion.

Now, Agnes Malauka was a renowned deep-sea cave diver. It was, in her words, an all-consuming passion.

[ 27 : 43 ] She uploaded her thoughts on YouTube, and this is what she said. She said, I dream of caves. It's an all-consuming interest. It's a passion. It's an obsession.

There is no greater feeling in the world than finding a passage that no one ever in the history of the world has ever seen before. It is like a pursuit that is inherently dangerous.

If you are pursuing the boundaries of your sport, you will find yourself taking bigger and bigger risks. And to me, those risks are worth it because the rewards are worth it. And on the 27th of February, 2011, she met that risk head-on when she died in one of Australia's longest underwater caves in South Australia.

Now, we can admire the passion that drove her, a passion for which she paid the ultimate price.

What Christianity proclaims and what I want to emphasize for us as this church, I want to continue to emphasize, I want it to be the banner over my life and over your life in an increasing sense, week after week, month after month, year after year, is that there is something grander, there is something bigger, there is something more majestic, more fulfilling to be consumed by than caves. Or by your reputation, or your vocation, or your family, your spouse, your kids, or your possessions, or your health, or your shopping, or your travel, or your books, or your education, or sex, or toys, or tradition, or ministry, or even St. Paul's, or even the vision statement of St. Paul's.

[ 29 : 26 ] In fact, it's not something, but someone, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. What if the Lord Jesus, what if his people were passionate, they were obsessed, they were consumed by him above all other hopes, and dreams, and visions, and identities.

Our treasuring of the Lord Jesus above everything else, I believe, has risen over the last number of years, but I believe it's got to go even further. Only when we are taken by the wonder, and the glory, and the awe, and the majesty of the Lord Jesus, when we treasure him above everything else, will we start to make the choices that God calls us to.

And I think that's the point of those two little parables that Sam read out for us in Matthew 13. There's one main point in those parables, and it's simply this, having the sovereign and saving reign of Jesus in our lives is so valuable that if we lose everything in order to have it, it is a joyful exchange.

It says, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy, he went and he sold all that he had and he bought that field. Now, I'm taking the kingdom of heaven there to, in its full biblical context, as the reign of God and Jesus triumphing over everything that stands between you and everlasting life and everlasting joy in God's presence.

I'm treating the kingdom of heaven here as the rule of God to save us from eternal destruction and to bring us into the enjoyment of Christ forever. And it says here that when that man found that, he sold everything he had and he did it with joy.

[ 31 : 08 ] To know Jesus, to be known by Jesus is so valuable that losing everything else in this world but getting Jesus is a happy trade-off. That is phenomenal.

Or to put it more personally specifically, you can lose everything with joy if you gain Christ. And so the most basic question that God poses to each of us, to each of our hearts tonight and I think to us collectively as a church as we look to the future, has something or someone besides Jesus taken title to you, to your heart, to our collective heart, that is, that is, we're looking for something else apart from Jesus.

Something else is our functional trust. Something else is our preoccupation. Something else is our loyalty, our service, our fear and our delight. What is it that you're looking to?

Who is your functional saviour and Lord? I'm not asking you whether you've got a fish sticker on your fridge. I'm not asking you whether you've got a cross tattered in your head somewhere or what your daily quiet time like or whether you can recite the prayer book or that you give vast amounts of money to justice and mercy stuff around the world.

I'm asking whether Jesus has the functional title of your heart. Ask yourself some questions. to who or what do I look for for life-sustaining stability, for security and for acceptance?

[ 32 : 45 ] What is it? What do I really want or expect out of life? What would really, really make me happy? What would really make me an acceptable person?

Where do I look for power, for success? There's some of the questions to ask as to what has the functional title of your heart. Now the answers to those sorts of questions begin to tease whether Jesus is in fact our true treasure, our greatest treasure or whether we have something else which is a functional idol, something that we're looking to that takes on a God-like status for us.

Whether we're looking to Jesus for our hope, for our security, for our identity, for our meaning or whether we're looking to something else, an idol. You see, everything that displaces Jesus from front and center in our lives displaces him from the place of supremacy the Bible calls it an idol.

In the Old Testament especially, in the New Testament words like inordinate desires. Romans 1, 18 to 25 is very telling. I'm not going to read the whole thing.

It says that the reason we create idols is because we want control in our lives. Even though we know we owe God everything. Verse 21 says, For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him.

[ 34 : 05 ] And then down a few verses in 25, it describes the strategy by which we take control of our lives. We get God moving over to here and this is the strategy that we take control moving God out of the way.

It says, we take created things, good things that God has made, we set our hearts on them, we build our lives around them.

That's what we do according to verse 25. We take good things that God has made and we make them the ultimate thing. You see, because we are made by God, we are made to worship, we are worshipping beings, and we are made to worship something.

And because, that's because how we are created, and we cannot eliminate treasuring Jesus, we cannot eliminate God out of our lives without creating God's substitutes.

and every single one of us does it. They are the thing we look to for hope, for identity, for contentment, for satisfaction, for salvation, for joy. And they never give it to us.

[ 35 : 16 ] You see, all treasures, all idols, all inordinate desires shape our identity, they demand our allegiance, they capture our hearts, and we will give our attention to them, we will spend money on them. To grow in unity in Jesus, we need to grow in treasuring Jesus, but to grow in treasuring Jesus, we need to dislodge the other treasures that we have both individually and corporately as a church.

Now, every one of us has treasures that we look to, and hopefully on your seat tonight, I just gave you a sheet. This is out of Tim Keller's Gospel in Life study book.

Just, the whole book's worth the price of that sheet, but I encourage you to buy the book anyway. And he's also got a book called Counterfeit Gods, which also has a section on how to dislodge the idols of our hearts.

What I encourage you to do, what I encourage the whole church to do this throughout the course of this week, is to go away and just reflect on this moment. What is it that's got the functional trust in my life?

Let me tell you that I am so grateful for the leaders in this church, the people I get to work with. At the retreat in July, they were, they, and I know they love me and they graciously love me by telling me you were failing.

[ 36 : 31 ] They graciously pointed something out which they said, that thing in you Steve gets in the way of this church, this church's vision. It's the thing that's getting in the way.

It was fantastic. It was hurt, obviously. Every prick hurts. I mean that in the pointy sense. And they, they love me enough to say to me that, Steve, even though we know you love the people of St. Paul's, it's not always evident.

It's not always obvious. And they need to know it. They need to feel it. They need to know it. And I know enough about my heart to know that that there is tracking down to some idol in my heart that needs to be dislodged, that I might treasure Jesus, that I might love people more.

And I'm grateful for them pointing it out, something I knew was true, but I'm grateful they pointed it out for me. Every sin has its foundation of something other than Jesus being the functional center and treasure of our heart.

If you flip over on your sheet, or it depends on what side you're on, but there's a list of four things there, power, approval, comfort, control. The main controlling idol in my heart is control.

[ 37 : 56 ] That's a good thing that God has given. I'm the senior pastor of this church and so there is an element where I ought to be in control. But when it becomes the main thing, it's an idol, it dislodges Jesus.

What I need to see to grow in Jesus is to repent where I put something else, success for St. Paul's vision and success as a church or whatever it is, I put that as a functional thing in terms of my identity being wrapped up in that, a sense of security wrapped up in that, a sense of purpose being wrapped up in that, and saying, no, Jesus control.

I need to repent of that idol and I need to say, thank you, Jesus, because you're in control. It's your church. You take that idol away from me because I've got something greater. I've got Jesus who is in control of his church.

He's Lord of his church. And he's got something better. My security needs to be wrapped up in him, not in this idol. Becky Pippitt writes in her book, Out of the Salt Shaker, whatever controls us is our Lord.

The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people they want to please. We do not control ourselves. We're controlled by the Lord of our life, whatever that is.

[ 38 : 59 ] And I want to be, and I want to keep calling us to be captivated by the wonder and more of the Lord Jesus Christ. No lesser treasures. See, when we treasure Jesus above everything else, every other treasure that leads to factions and frictions, we put in their proper place, because that's what they do.

These idols lead to frictions amongst us. Don't miss the word joy in this verse. In his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field.

The loss of all treasures is not sad when we gain Jesus. It's not sad when we gain Jesus. And so St. Paul's friends, we exist to know Jesus, treasure Jesus, and represent Jesus for God's glory and

the joy of all people.

That's who we are, and therefore, as a result of that, the consequence is we are united in our desperation for the world around us to encounter this Jesus, and we are united in our desire to represent the diversity of Chatswood.

I want to talk about diversity next week.