

“Rebirth” Series

Sermon 4: “Recommit”

January 30, 2011

Do you recognize this document? It was formally adopted on the 4th of July, 1776, although it wasn't signed till a month later in Philadelphia on the 2nd of August. Every signature was an act of treason, and the penalty for treason was death by hanging. 56 men signed this page; they had a whole lot to lose. Ben Franklin was the only old man (70 years old). 18 were under 40, three were in their 20s – judges and lawyers and merchants and farmers and doctors and ministers and politicians.

- John Hancock was one of the richest men in America. He already had a price on his head – 500 pounds. He signed his name in enormous letters he said, "so that his Majesty could now read his name without glasses and could now double the reward."
- Ben Franklin said, "Indeed we must all hang together, otherwise we shall most assuredly hang separately."
- One big fat guy, Benjamin Harrison, joked with a little skinny guy, Elbridge Gerry, about their hanging together. He said, "With me it will all be over in a minute; but you, you will be dancing on air an hour after I am gone."

Many of these guys would become prominent men in the early years of our country. Two were Presidents, seven were Governors. Several would become US Senators, one died in office as Vice President. But the cost...

- Many would fight in the war. Nine died of their wounds or other hardships during the war.
- Five were captured and imprisoned – each one of them treated with a particular brutality.
- All were at one time or another driven from their homes and victims of manhunts.
- 12 had their homes burned.
- 17 lost everything they owned.
- Several lost their wives, their sons, or their entire family. One guy lost 13 children.
- Two of them had wives who were brutally treated.

And yet not one defected. Not one backed off his commitment. In fact one guy, the last name on the list, Abraham Clark... Two of his sons served as officers in the Continental Army. They were captured and put on a prison ship where 11,000 American captives died. There they were treated with

special cruelty because of their father. Near the end of the war Abraham Clark, their dad, was offered their freedom if he would recant and come out for King and Parliament. What would you say? For your sons, would you agree? With anguish and utter despair he answered simply, "No."

Guys, is there anything you believe in that deeply? Is there anything you would be willing to sacrifice like these guys for? What would you put yourself in harm's way for? Is there anyone or anything you are so deeply committed to, is there any idea or any dream so powerful that you would sign on irrespective of the cost? ... If there is not, you are living for too little.

** Unveil **

What we are asking you to sign this morning doesn't look nearly so elegant as our Declaration of Independence. And I suspect that most of us won't be hunted as traitors because our names are here, we won't be driven from our homes, we won't have to watch our families suffer because of the decisions we make today ... probably. But these guys were committing themselves to building a kingdom of this world. We are committing ourselves to something infinitely more important, infinitely more powerful, infinitely more beautiful, infinitely more grand. The sacrifices they made brought them honor and fame in this world. What we do today probably won't. But the sacrifices we will make for this dream will bring honor and glory to our God, and I hope his blessing to us. I value both of those a whole lot more than honor and fame in this world. Don't you?

Today we are starting over. We're asking you to sign on to something new. Now some of you are looking at this and you are thinking, "It doesn't look all that new. It looks like the same vision we had before; it looks like pretty much the same purposes we've seen before; I haven't seen those core values before, but they don't feel new." But don't be deceived. If you choose to sign on today, you are signing on to something fundamentally new, something fundamentally different. On the outside we will look similar to what we were before, but inside there will be a new heart. And our new heart will make this a very different place. Before you sign this thing, let me show you what I mean.

This is our Vision: Capital City is a place where God is building Christ-Driven 24/7 Christians. That's what this church is here for. That's what our logo means: Christ Driven, 24/7. That's not an x in the logo, that's a chi, the 22nd letter in the Greek alphabet. For 2000 years we Christians have been

using the chi as a symbol for Christ. It's the first letter of the word "Christos" (Christ). So we have used it for centuries to mean Christ.

The X stands for Christ, the D means driven. Christ Driven, 24/7... And we mean it. Christ Driven. That's hard. We don't mean "Christ aided," or "Christ assisted," or "Christ influenced," or "Christ nudged." We mean Christ driven. That's not asking God to be our co-pilot, that's handing him the keys. 24/7. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's not "When it's useful," or "When we are in trouble," or "When it's convenient." It's not "24/6," or even "23/7." Christ-Driven 24/7. Are you in for that much? Guys, if you sign this, that's your goal, that's your pledge, that's your promise. That's what it means to call Jesus "Lord," to accept Jesus as the Lord of your life.

There's one more piece to this Christ-Driven 24/7 – this is huge. This is the difference between Capital City yesterday and Capital City today. You see, there are two parts to building Christ Driven 24/7 Christians. Part one is to bring people face to face with Jesus. Part two is to help them grow them up into mature Christians. We're not bad at part 2, but we've been lousy at part 1. We do a fair job helping Christians grow in Christ. But we have not been taking Jesus outside these walls where people can meet him face to face. Our vision is to bring people face to face with Jesus, and then grow them in Christ. If you sign this, you are promising to take Jesus outside these walls. We are here to grow his kingdom, wider and deeper; we are here to bring them in, and to grow them up. Do you buy that?

The way these things work is the Mission part explains how we are going to accomplish the Vision part. The Vision is what we're about; the Mission is the how. We are going to build Christ-Driven 24/7 Christians by worshiping God first, by seeking the lost second, by pursuing our own spiritual growth third, and then by building community and showing God's compassion wherever we can. Now ... that looks like the same mission statement we had yesterday. But that's deceptive. It's really not. There is a profound difference. You see, I have taught here for over a decade that worship of God comes first, and the rest of these – well the order really doesn't matter. I was wrong. I believe I was wrong. And I fear that has taken us off course.

I still believe that everything flows out of worship. (1 Chronicles 16.27-29; Psalm 95.6; Hebrews 10.25; Rev 5.13) The old Westminster Catechism got it right: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." That's what we are here for – to worship God in Christ. That's what puts life in perspective – worship. That's what God deserves –

worship. The most important thing we do here at Capital City – as a family or as individual Christians – is worship. Do you believe that?

But where I messed up was in believing and teaching that the rest of these could be scrambled up any way we wanted them. They can't. Because unless we intentionally put others first, a church will start to become self-absorbed. It will start becoming more about what I want, what I like, what I need – more than bringing people face to face with Jesus. Nearly 50 years ago, in the First Baptist Church of San Jose, California, they taught me an acrostic. I still remember it. J-O-Y, JOY, Jesus – Others – You. Jesus comes first (God is always first), others come second, you are third. We serve Jesus first, we serve others next, then we take care of ourselves. Do you buy that? I think Jesus did.

Seeking the lost has always been a part of our mission. But it has never been our highest priority, after worship. (Matthew 28.18-20; Mark 16.15; John 20.21; Acts 1.8) We give a lot of attention to discipleship – growing Christians up in Christ. We are pretty good at compassion – loving on people (especially family) in the name of Jesus. We are pretty good at fellowship – there's a powerful family feel in this place. But as long as I have been here we have never been good at seeking the lost. I'll preach on it now and then. We'll teach a class on it from time to time. But it has never obsessed our heart, it has never consumed our heart – like it consumes God's heart. Well, that was the old Capital City, that was yesterday. When you sign this this morning, you are signing on to something new.

We will not be content with being an attractional church any more. We talked about that last week. Attractional churches welcome the lost -- we do that pretty well -- but they don't passionately pursue the lost. Good attractional churches grow, but they grow by attracting Christians. Guys, we don't use our baptistery enough. We are pretty good at "Come and See," but we have failed at "Go and Be." Well, that was the old Capital City, that was yesterday. When you sign this this morning, you are signing on to something new.

We want a brand new heart, a heart that is consumed by what consumes God's heart. And God sent Jesus to seek and save the lost. And he sends us to seek and save the lost. And we will pursue that ahead of discipleship, ahead of fellowship, ahead of compassion. We are no longer an attractional church, a "Come and See" church, we are becoming a missional church, a "Go and Be church." We come here to give him the worship he deserves, we come here to get pumped up, and then we go out – and that's where the

real work of Capital City takes place. We go out be like Jesus, we go out and take Jesus with us. We go out on a mission, to bring people face to face with Jesus. Sound scary? It terrifies me. Sound right? Worship God first, seek the lost second, take care of ourselves third. If you want to know what this will mean for us practically, come back the next couple of weeks. That's what I will be talking about.

Mission #3: We pursue spiritual growth. (Colossians 1.28; Ephesians 2.10; Ephesians 4.11-13; 1P 4.10) We used to call this one “Equipping for service.” That wasn’t bad. You see, some Christians think that growing in Christ is about the head – learning more about God, learning more Bible, eating more spiritual food. That’s as dumb as thinking that getting fit is all about eating – just eat and eat and eat. To get fit you need some food, but you need some exercise too. Growing in Christ is about just about the head, it’s about the heart, and the hands as well. There are a lot of Christians who are fat and lazy. We know a lot of Bible, we know a lot about God, we think, but we are not getting out and doing his work. Spiritual growth is about feeding the mind, shaping the heart, and putting our hands to work – for God. When you sign this thing this morning, that’s the path of spiritual growth you are committing to.

Mission #4: Building community. Why?

- Because in the New Testament, in our Bible, there is no evidence, at all, of a single Christian who wasn’t plugged in to a church family. There were no lone-ranger Christians in the Bible. When we accept Jesus, we accept his church too. So we commit ourselves to building community.
- Why? Because alone we wander, away from God. Alone we tend to push God to the sidelines. When we are alone there is no one to challenge our stupid ideas and our stupid habits. We are stronger together and we are smarter together than we are alone. So we commit ourselves to building community.
- Why? Because there are about 100 “one another” verses in the Bible. The Bible tells us to love one another, and honor one another, and confess our sins to one another, and teach one another, and encourage one another, and carry one another’s burdens, and build one another up, and be devoted to one another. It’s a long list. And it’s a list you can’t do if your church is out in the woods or at home in front of a TV set. Real church takes real people dragging each other to heaven.

Mission #5: Showing compassion. Why? Because the Bible is full of verses like these.

- The Bible says, “Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.” (Galatians 6.10) That’s showing compassion. And I want to live life God’s way.
- The Bible says, “If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?” (1 John 3.17) And I want to love like God loves.
- The Bible says real Christians are feeding the hungry, and giving drink to the thirsty, and taking care of outsiders, and giving away clothes, and visiting the sick and those in prison. (Matthew 25) Do you remember that stuff? We did a whole series on it a couple months ago.

But mainly we show compassion because we are learning to love like Sam. Jesus says, “Love God with all your heart, and mind, and strength – that’s the first and greatest commandment; and the second is equally important: Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” And guys, if we love God more than we love ourselves, and we love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves – we’ll bleed compassion.

That’s our mission. That’s how we carry out our Vision. Then there are these core values. You’ve not seen these Core Values officially posted before, although we have talked about most of them. Our elders have adopted this list. These are non-negotiables. This is the way we want to conduct ourselves, this is the way we want to do business, in every program, in every ministry of the church. They are in order – the order matters. And the first 4 are in pairs, intentionally.

Empowered by God’s Spirit – because we are going to need his wisdom and his strength to do this stuff. Empowered by God’s Spirit the Bible is our final authority, and we are captivated by grace. We will never equivocate on God’s truth, but we will always speak truth with grace. That pairing is so powerful. Outside this building, on the cornerstone you will see these words etched: a place of truth and grace. That’s how the apostle John described Jesus: full of truth and grace. And that’s the kind of reputation we want to build for Capital City – full of truth and grace.

Empowered by God’s Spirit – we are a holy people, but also culturally relevant. Holy means to separate from, to be different. We separate from

sin, we live a different kind of life, we walk a different path. But we don't separate from sinners. Our job is to love on sinners and to bring them face to face with Jesus. So we will try to answer questions real people ask, and we tackle problems real people face, and speak God's truth in a way real people can hear and understand. We will be holy, but we will be culturally relevant.

And empowered by God's Spirit we pursue excellence in all things. Because God deserves our best. Do you buy that? God deserves our very best. Not at the expense of any of the other core values. These things are ranked. Truth and grace must never be sacrificed for excellence. Holiness must never be sacrificed for excellence. But God deserves our very best. . .

Does all this sound over the top? Do I sound like a preacher bent on annoying people because I am reading too many books? Maybe you like the looks of this, but you'd really rather not commit to all of it. Maybe you'd rather implement change by baby steps. This is a bit much, all at once. Maybe you'd like to be a part of Capital City Christian Church, but kind of as a spectator, kind of as an honorary member for a while. Can't there be levels of commitment? Can't we leave the radical stuff for the super-saints?

Here's the deal, is there anything on this board, is there anything I have talked about this morning that doesn't come right out of the Bible? Is there anything here that goes beyond what God expects when we call Jesus our Lord? You see, we want to call him Lord, but then we just want to meet him half-way. We want him to settle for less than what he asks of us. One of the great young preachers in our country is a guy named Francis Chan. That guy is good. I want to show you two clips from some teaching he was doing not too long ago. ** Here's clip one. (0.0 – 1.27)

God wants us to build Christ-Driven 24/7 Christians. That means going out and taking Jesus into our world. And then it helping each other grow into what he wants us to be. He wants us to devote ourselves to worshiping him first – before anything else; he wants us to seek the lost before we worry about what we want or what we need; he wants us build community and to live a life that bleeds his compassion. Guys, the question is not whether I am asking too much; the real question is whether God will accept any less.

Today we are birthing a different kind of church. A church built on God's word and God's will. A church composed of people who are willing to give

God a radical obedience, and who are willing to live a life of radical service. Because that's what he asks, and he deserves it, and we wouldn't want to follow a God who asks any less.

So what are you going to do? Some of you will be tempted to sit there, and nod your heads in agreement, and do nothing ... different. I want you to watch one more clip from Francis Chan. ** (Clip two: 1.27 – end) Guys, it's not enough to know the truth. He calls us to do it.

Here's what I'm asking you to do this morning. I'm asking you to recommit yourself to a different Capital City Christian Church. I'm asking you to make a covenant with God, and with each other. A promise to God, and each other – to build a different kind of church. This is big, because we are committing ourselves to taking it up a notch.

Let me answer a few questions you may be asking yourself.

- If I am not a Christian, should I sign the board? The answer is, "No." You can't do this stuff in a God-honoring way if Jesus is not the center of your life.
- If I am not a member, should I sign this board? It depends. Some of you are not official members, but this is your church home. If you are a Christian, and this is your home, if you want Capital City to be your home, and you are willing to help us build this church, you are welcome to sign these boards.
- But I would rather not make a commitment. I have a personal distaste for commitment. Well, guys, the church is not a country club. God's church is not a place where you come to be served. It's a family, on a mission, from God. we don't need associate members, honorary members in the church. We need partners.
- If I don't sign, can I still come? Of course. We'd like to love on you and challenge you until answer God's call on your life.
- Can I think about it? Yeah. We're going to leave these boards down here for a few weeks. Think about it, pray about it, talk about it. But don't wait too long. It never pays to wait on doing the right thing.