

The Engagement ...This Kind

Introduction and context

Back in January we started a series called the mission

We started looking at the early church?

Why did we do that? Because I am concerned that a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy is a grey smudge

People have lost sight of the glory and majesty of who we are called to be

Then we moved on and we looked at The Battle she is engaged in with and the nature of our enemy

This morning I want to look start looking at The Engagement

A battle isn't a battle until the engagement

One thing I am struck with that differs so vastly from the early church and the church of today, is that the early church knew three things very clearly:

1. They knew who God was
2. They knew what they believed
3. They knew what they were called to do

There is real confusion today about the Christian church.

About her nature, her task, her message

There seems to me to be real confusion in the heart of many Christians today. They seem caught between two worlds, unsure of their stance before heaven and unsure of their role on earth.

- Christianity is not what the media says it is.
- Christianity is not good works accomplished by great men.

- Christianity is not a day of the week, an obligation that we feel to Sunday because that is how we were raised.
- Christianity is not a building, a ritual or a form
- Christianity is alive, it is passion, it is burden, it is hands lifted and hearts open wide passionately surrendered to Christ

Genesis 26:17-18

17 So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. 18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them.

Mark 9:28-29

28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" 29 And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Paint the picture:

- The Lord has just come off the mountain.
- He is confronted by a crowd that had gather around the disciples
- One man, the father of the boys, steps forward and volunteers and tells he is the reason for the uproar because of the condition of his son.
- The lord asks a few questions. Probes the situation. Makes inquiries as to the nature of the ailment, then simply address the demon and commands for it to come out.

Later on that evening, the disciples gather around Jesus and ask Jesus how come they could not do this miracle. They wanted to know how come they had failed.

Luke 10 records the very successful campaign that they had run.

They came back talking of their great success at casting out demons, talking of the miracles they had seen.

Everyone in the district would have heard or known.

Yet now they pray and nothing happens.

They had the power weeks or days ago, but now... nothing!!

Jesus sits down with them and makes a very interesting observation.

“THIS KIND come out only by prayer and fasting”

The disciples saw the issue as being the power of the enemy. Jesus identified the issue as being the method in which the devil was being dealt with.

The issue was not that the devil was not going to be dealt with, but how and when.

We are in a similar situation today

The world is desperate

The world is dying

As a nation have seen the great things of God at one stage or another....We were once the greatest mission sending force in the world, yet today we are the 3rd largest unreached people group behind India and China

But now we are sitting here wondering, looking at the church, looking at our lives, and wondering what has happen

There are 5 aspects in this story I would like to briefly look at before we go on.

First the boy.

The boy has an illness

It is an illness that knows no cure outside of the miraculous intervention of God

Nothing that anyone else has tried works.

Not the big names

Not the successful ministers

The illness is so traumatic that those that love the boy can do nothing to stop this self-destructive behavior. The boy has no control and everything that is tried fails.

In this story, the boy represents the world.

Our world has an illness for which there seems no cure.

Our world has an illness which drives it to try and wound and kill itself on an ongoing basis and in a very dramatic way.

Secondly there are the Disciples

They represent the church in this current hour.
They represent you and I.

We have known power in the past.
We have experienced revival and have known influence in every
corridor of human endeavor, from science to politics to community
and business.

But now we seem to have lost our effectiveness and our influence.

We tried today what we have tried previously to do and to no avail

Crowds gather around us and look at us with mocking eyes and
whispers and look at our vain attempts.

In their hearts the world cringes.
In its heart the world wants to see a miracle, hopes and longs for a
miracle
They look at all the huffing and puffing
The claims and the falsehoods
And they wonder to themselves that if this is what the church is
reduced to this, then there is no hope for the rest of us.

Third- there is the devil

Now this devil is not a 'special devil'. It's not some special force, some special principality of the air, some special regional demonic influence that has developed a special anti-Christianity praying power

There is nothing new under the sun friend and that especially applies to an imitator and an imposter

There is nothing today that we are facing that hasn't already been dealt with in some way or manner in church history.

But it is none the less the devil that we are confronting, evil in our age and he must be dealt with – and he must be dealt with now or the boy will die.

Fourthly The need

We are all aware that the need today in the world is great and terrible.

Sin has racked out world and person after person we love seems to be with out power and continues throw themselves into the fire and destruction

It is situation, a circumstance we are desperate to try and overcome.

We have tried so many things.

We have put our faith in activities and programs that once seem to work but now no longer work.

Our method and methodologies were once powerful, but now they are pitiful.

The many things we are trying to do and trying to apply to our churches to see the church come back again to it's greatness, are proving useless and having no effect at all!

It puts us into the exact same position as the disciples.

Jesus response today, as then is that our methods are not correct.

Our ignorance and lack of understanding is holding off the world's deliverance from the forces of darkness.

Finally the response of Jesus.

The answer back then, is the same as the answer now.

We have to look no further than Christ for our answer

He is the answer to our world that seems hell bent on its own destruction

He is the answer to our family and friends that continue to be tossed into the fire of torment and damnation

He is the answer to these situations of powerlessness that we now face.

We must listen to the words of Jesus

THIS KIND.....

We must look at how Christ dealt with the situation to fully comprehend what we must do today.

THIS KIND.....

Jesus stopped a while.

He looked at the situation analytically.

He discussed the problem none emotionally, then like the master physician He measured the cure.

He was aware of the desperate nature of the situation, but the answer was still as simple as it always has been...

This kind of devil....

This kind of problem,

This kind of situation....needs to be dealt with this kind of way.

So what is the answer for us today?

For that we must journey back in time to the Old Testament.

Gen 26: 17-18

17 Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them.

The picture is one of Isaac in trouble, in a difficulty.

If you read the context, you will find that he had been living in another part of the country, and God had blessed him in a very striking manner.

Isaac had become the object of envy of those who were living round and about him, and they had forced him to move.

Genesis 26:16 ESV

(16) And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we."

And so Isaac was compelled to move with his family and all his servants, possessions and belongings away from the water and fertile ground, the fruitfulness that he had known for years

Then he came to this valley of Gerar and decided that he would dwell there.

the moment he arrived he was confronted by an urgent and a very desperate need - and that was the need of water.

I do want to emphasize that,

This

need was the need for something that is absolutely essential to life.

Life was going to be lost in a devastating way if this need, this situation, was not addressed immediately and urgently.

Issac was not merely confronted by the problem of seeking some beautiful

spot where he might pitch his tent, or erect some kind of dwelling place for himself.

He was not looking for entertainment or for luxuries.

He was not looking for any kind of accessory to life.

The

whole point of the story is that he was looking for something that is an absolute essential, and without which, life cannot be maintained at all.

What we have in the world and the church today is not an issue of the need for more luxury.

It is not an issue of the need for greater entertainment.

It is an issue of our fundamental existence.

I said at the beginning that America has fallen from being the greatest missionary sending force in the earth to the 3rd largest unreached people group in the world.

In 1954 – 64% of Americans were in church on a Sunday am.

In 1994 – 14% of Americans were in church on a Sunday am.

In 2004 – 4% (by some studies) of Americans were in church regularly on a Sunday am.

My concern is that is that people don't see their own Christian walk or the state of the church as being in need.

They think everything is alright, that we don't need to change anything

We don't pray for souls
We pray for luxury
We don't agonize over living water, we whine because we can't go to our day spa as often

Christians today have accepted this as our lot in life.

As the church we have accepted the fact that we are powerless in the face of this enemy we have come to accept and believe that we are second rate.

The problems facing the church are not new problems.

How do we know this.....Because there are no new answers

Church growth studies tell us we need to relate so we try and make popular something which is fundamentally designed to be abrasive and offensive.

A gospel of hope is not a weak or socially accepted gospel, but a confrontational gospel.

It says – you don't have to live like you are living any more – you don't have to be that person any more... come follow me!!!

People tell us say that what we need is mass evangelism, big crusades and programs, larger churches, bigger auditoriums and we spend billions each year

It's a lie.

American has been building bigger buildings for 50 years and producing smaller Christians

We need an army of people passionate about taking a living Jesus to a dying world

Hear me know very clearly.....

The salvation of the earth is an individual responsibility not to be placated through corporate church programs.

Friend, this isn't an issue of comfort, this is an issue of life and death

This isn't about air conditioning, this is about Living Water

Our starting point- we must become desperate and absolutely convinced of the desperate need we have for a visitation of God.

We must understand with our inner being that THIS KIND can only be dealt with one way

THIS KIND must be dealt with spiritually

THIS KIND must be forcefully

So where did Isaac turn?

Did he turn to the water divines, the so called men who were experts in discovering water?

The people selling the latest cure-all?

No.

He once again dug the wells that his father Abraham had dug.

Isaac realized that the situation was so desperate there was no time for experimentation.

The position was so urgent that if they didn't get water right then they were going to perish very quickly.

He said to himself, *"my father was once here, he was an expert and had great success at surviving in the desert and prospering. So lets return to the wells of my father."*

"My father dealt with this problem before, I will humble myself and walk in the steps of my father"

Isaac knew that Abraham had found water everywhere he went.
So Isaac followed in his fathers footsteps.

The church over the years has tried so many things.

Our method and methodologies were once powerful,
but now they are pitiful.

It puts us into the exact same position as the disciples.

Jesus' response today, as then, is that our methods are not correct.

Our ignorance and lack of understanding is holding off the world's
deliverance from the forces of darkness.

Our pride and arrogance is sending people to hell because we will not
humble ourselves and re-dig the wells of our fathers

The answer lies NOT in the new, but in the old

Jesus said that *this kind* needs to be dealt with in a very specific
manner.

As in the days of Isaac, so now.

The word fasting that we read in the scripture in Mark means not just
the absence of food for a period of time, but prayer and attention in a
very specific manner, in a very focused manner.

What we need is a new generation with and old answer.

A new generation with an old spirit
A new generation with an old passion

The Moravians

Perhaps the earliest recorded outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the First Great Awakening was experienced by a small group of Moravian Christians in Germany. The Moravian brethren were a persecuted group that had been tortured and imprisoned all over Germany.

In the summer of 1727 on the land of Count Zinzendorf where they were hiding from religious persecution, they gathered to observe the Lord's Supper.

This small band of Christians experienced the presence of God so profoundly that the prayer meeting begun a few days later and continued supernaturally for twenty-four hours a day and was not broken for more than a hundred years.

Out of that prayer meeting, hundreds of missionaries were sent to carry gospel to unreached peoples around the world.

The impact of the Spirit of God on the lives of the people in the prayer meetings had an effect so profound, that it not only touches the way they acted, it touched the way they lived.

Amongst the most noted is the story of two young men in their late teens, early twenties.

These young men heard of an island in the West Indies where an atheist British landowner had 3000 slaves.

The owner had said, "No preacher, no clergyman, will ever stay on this island. If he's ship wrecked we'll keep him in a separate house until he has to leave, but he's never going to talk to any of us about God, I'm through with all that nonsense."

Three thousand people brought to an island in the Atlantic, there to live and die without hearing of Christ.

Two young Moravians heard about it.

They wanted to go, but the atheist wouldn't let them

So they sold themselves to the British planter as slaves and then used the money they received to pay for their own passage out to his island, for he wouldn't even give them transport them.

As the ship left its' pier in the river at Hamburg, the Moravians from the community had come from to see these two lads off

The families were there weeping, for they knew they would never see them again.

As the gap widened and the young boys saw the widening gap, one lad with his arm linked through the arm of his fellow, raised his hand and shouted across the gap the last words that were heard from them, they were these:

"MAY THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN RECEIVE THE REWARD OF HIS SUFFERING!"

In 1904 in Wales

26 year old Evan Roberts felt impressed by God that revival was coming. He told friends *'I have a vision of all Wales being raised up to heaven. We are going to see the mightiest revival that Wales has ever known. The Holy Spirit is coming soon, so we must ready.'*

Though only a young student, Roberts claimed God would give him 100, 000 souls if he were obedient.

He and 4 or his university friends got together and prayed

As a result a revival broke out that would touch the world Churches were filled for two years across the entire nation. Just as he had predicted 100, 000 converts were added to the church.

The impact was astounding

Drunkenness was immediately cut in half and many taverns went bankrupt.

Crime was so diminished that judges were presented with white gloves signifying that there were no cases of murders, assault, rape, robbery or the like to consider.

The police became unemployed in many districts.

Stoppages occurred in coal mines, not due to unpleasantness between management and workers (as had been the case) but because so many foul-mouthed miners became converted and stopped using foul language. The horses which hauled the coal trucks in the mines could no longer understand what was being said to them.

But it didn't stop there

In North America

News of the Welsh Revival provoked a similar response in America in 1905. Ministers gathered in various conventions to prepare for the coming awakening.

In Philadelphia, Methodists soon reported 6,101 new converts in trial membership. The pastors of Atlantic City churches claimed there were only 50 unconverted adults left in that city. Revival also swept through the South. First Baptist Church in Paducah, Kentucky, added a thousand people within a couple of months. Every store and factory in Burlington Iowa closed to allow employees to attend prayer meetings. When the mayor of Denver declared a day of prayer in that city, churches were filled by ten o'clock. At 11:30 virtually every place of business in the city closed as 12,000 gathered for prayer meetings in downtown theaters and halls.

India and the Far East

News of the Welsh Revival also encouraged those praying for revival in India to increase their efforts. The resulting awakening touched every province in that nation. The Christian population increased by 70 percent during the Indian Revival- sixteen times as fast as did the Hindu population. In many places meetings lasted five to ten hours.

Korea experienced three waves of revival in the first decade of the new century. The best known being the 1907 'Korean Pentecost', where Church membership quadrupled during the decade.

Pacific Islands' Africa and Latin America

Revival swept through the island nations of the Pacific as well. In Indonesia, 100,000 evangelists in 1903 became 300,000 strong within the decade. On island of Nias two-thirds of the population was converted to Christ.

In Madagascar Protestant church membership increased by 66 percent.

Between 1903 and 1910 the number of Protestants living in the African continent increased from 300,000 to 50,000,000.,

Conclusion

The first great awakening lasted about 50 years world wide – although only about 10 years in the USA.

It had a profound effect on both church and society.

This awakening restored the concept of missions to the church.

The awakening in New England shaped the moral character of the 13 colonies that would become the USA.

George Whitfield is attributed with having urged separation from England and of having shaped the life spiritually of the men who signed the declaration of independence.

It laid the foundation for the First American Revolution

What about you and I?

What will our legacy be?

These men and woman had nothing more than we have.

They had the same opportunities

The same obstacles

The same challenges

The same bible

The same Christ

I urge you...it is time

I urge you now; we must see this battle we are engaged in, in a very specific way

We must see it not as a battle for our mortgage or even our health, but for the lives and souls of men and women