**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 11-13-2022
Target #1 - Abide in Jesus**

Two days ago, America celebrated Veteran’s Day. And for all you veterans here today, thank you for your service to this country in seeking to protect and defend us. It is truly appreciated.

And speaking of veterans and service, I recently watched a video by a veteran who was also a leader in the church. His name is Cliff Christopher. In this video he was talking about symptoms of healthy and strong churches and symptoms of unhealthy and weak churches. He shared a message on leadership and what having a healthy church looks like.

During this man’s speech, he shared about some of his time in the army. Now this speaker was a rather tall man, I believe somewhere between 6’3” and 6”5. And he was sharing about the time when his assigned cot was far shorter than his body. And as you might guess, the man was struggling to get comfortable and to have a good night’s sleep in this cot, this bed.

Eventually he decided to speak to his commanding officer about it. Anyone want to guess how that went?

Well, the commanding officer asked him how the size of his bed affected their mission. And that question helped him to realize that his comfort and his best night’s sleep possible was not essential to the mission becoming accomplished.

And so, the speaker got used to sleeping in a bed that did not fit perfectly with his stature. His personal comfort and convenience were not the top priority of the mission of the army.

And the speaker emphasized how every day the mission that the army was on was stated. And it went something like this. We are here to remove Saddam Hussain from the sovereign nation of Kuwait. Everything was to fit under this mission.

But as a church leader now, the speaker saw a great parallel between the importance of prioritizing the mission and vision of something in the military with prioritizing the mission and vision of a church community.

He spoke about the need to have a sound and healthy and biblical mission or vision as a church and how everything is meant to fit under this mission or vision.

We at Chestnut Grove Church adopted a clear, concise, and biblical sound vision about a year ago. We believe that the Lord has called us ***to be a light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ.***

This means that in some ways, everything that is done within our church community must fit under this vision. Like the man with his cot in the army, the things that we focus on and consider critical must be in alignment with this vision.

Scripture teaches that God’s people parish because of lack of vision. If there is no clear vision, it is hard to succeed.

Vision gives focus. Vision determines priorities. Vision helps us to see where we are and where we need to go.

This is true in the military. This is also true in sports. Coaches don’t just tell their players to figure something out on the field or on the court. Game plans are developed. There is a vision on how to succeed.

As God’s church, friends, I believe that the Lord strongly wants us and other church communities to have a strong vision that helps to filter what we do to thrive.

Churches are not to be aimless, but to have a clear focus on what is needed to follow Jesus well as a community of believers.

So, we have this beautiful vision of being a light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ. But the next things to consider is how is this to be accomplished? How do we live this vision out? How do we know that we are moving towards accomplishing this vision with the help of God? What are the essential steps needed to accomplish this vision?

This leads to our new sermon series. Today and for the next two weeks together we will be looking at 3 steps or targets which I believe will help propel us forward in fulfilling our vision to be the light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ that the Lord has called us to be.

The first step or target is to **ABIDE IN JESUS**.

One of the places in the Bible where this is clearly taught is in 1 John 1:1-3. John the Apostle writes these words.

**That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.**

So how does this relate to ABIDING IN Jesus? It is with the word fellowship. Our Triune God created people for fellowship with Himself.

This fellowship is something that John and the other apostles experienced, as we saw Jesus with their own eyes and touched Jesus with their own hands. And most importantly, this fellowship was experienced through a deep relationship with their Lord.

They walked with Jesus for years during his earthly ministry. But John is saying that even though Jesus has returned to heaven, those that put their trust in Him can have fellowship with Him right here and now.

As John states in the third verse, “we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

John knew Jesus very closely. In fact, in John’s Gospel he refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus’ loved.” John had learned to abide in the love of Jesus.

And John wanted everyone else to experience the fellowship with God and other believers that he himself had experienced and was continuing to experience.

Friends, it is important to remember that this letter that we call 1 John was written to Christians. Just because the audience was Christians does not mean that they are living out the full vision that the Lord had for their lives.

The word “fellowship” is very connected to the word “abide.” When two people truly stay close to one another, they are abiding in connection with one another. This may be a spouse, a close friend, a family member.

Friends, God created us for fellowship, for relationship, for friendship with Himself.

And the key to living out this rich fellowship is by learning to practice abiding.

This is our first target. To practice abiding in Jesus.

We cannot be a light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ without daily abiding in Jesus.

It is by abiding in Jesus that the light of Christ grows brighter within us. We are stoking the fire of the light of God by abiding in Jesus.

**It may seem like a passive thing. But abiding in Jesus is actually a very active word. It involves time and intentionality.**

In thinking about this passage from 1 John and about how we can succeed in abiding in Jesus, what is the key?

I believe that the key is to develop an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus through prayer.

Truly, we cannot abide in Christ very well, let alone share the love of Jesus Christ very well, if we are not actively caring for our personal relationship with Him. And the most important way to do this is through prayer.

We need to be in communication with our Triune God throughout each day. We are to be speaking with Him more than we are speaking with anyone else. He is our first love. He is our life.

Prayer takes many forms. Look at the psalms, for example. There are all different emotions that were being experienced by the psalmists, whether it was joy and celebration or sadness or anger or fear and whatever other emotions. But they did not hide their emotions, but instead turned each of them into expressions of prayer.

Friends, we must talk with God about everything. The good, the bad, and the ugly. We must be real with Him. Relationships develop with communication. The depth of a relationship is evidenced by how real the parties are with one another.

Similarly, God doesn’t want us to put on a happy face, as that old song goes, but instead turn your face towards God no matter what.

More than anything God wants from us, He wants us. He wants us to get to know Him very well and to allow Him to get to know us very well also.

Jeremiah the prophet wrote this:

**Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.**

**So, step #1 in living out our vision statement of being a light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ is to abide in Jesus.**

**And this is done by developing a strong prayer life and getting to know the Lord better every day. THIS will ENABLE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST TO GROW GREATLY WITHIN US. Next week we will focus on our 2nd core value, which is learning and growing.**

**But today, just remember, everything begins with choosing to actively abide in Jesus.**

Let us pray…

Resources:

[www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)

Video featuring Cliff Christopher (please contact me for me information on the video if you are interested)