

Helping People find a New Identity in Christ - Luke 5:12-16, 27-32
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Holy smokes! Genesis Church turns 15 this Friday. Our launch date was Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006. If you had been in a room with the four families who were in the initial planning that became Genesis Church you would know that it would be hard for them to believe the good grace that God has given to our church. Yet, the basic idea of what our church is today was formed in those early meetings as we set our vision and values. Those have not changed and they have shaped who we are 15 years later.

It took us months to choose a name and branding for our new church. But we liked the idea of giving people a fresh start, a new beginning in Christ. The purpose statement we wrote down in those initial meetings was, *Genesis Church exists to help people find a new beginning in Christ and become more like Him*. Our story began with a few relationships Mike & Heidi had with dechurched people living in Eureka which formed the desire to start a church that would be a good place for them. Thus the church planting began, and here we are!

To understand the journey, though, we have to begin by understanding that the church is God's idea, and Christ is the owner and builder of His church. Genesis Church never belonged to any of the first four families, nor the elders, or even the members. We are Christ's church, and we proclaim that proudly. We also need to understand what the church is at the core. When most people in our culture think of the church their focus is on a place, a building sitting on a piece of property. Yet, Biblically the New Testament church is not a place. In fact, the early church met in homes and in public spaces in their city. Others think of the church as a hierarchy of leadership, with pastors, bishops, elders, etc. They think that the leaders are the church. This too is not true. These people are part of the church, but they are not the core. Others view church as an event, something they attend where their focus will be toward a stage where things will happen that meet their needs, entertain them, and lift their spirits. But no where in the New Testament is the core focus of the church on an event. In the New Testament the church is always a people, a community of faith. Those people gather, come together to experience the means of grace (preaching, worship, sacraments, prayers) where they will grow in Christ and toward each other. It is also a people scattered on mission in their city for the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Pastor Mike's definition of church is, **the church is the Gospel formed and shaped community of faith gathering together and sent out as an extension of the Mission of God**. At the core, Genesis Church is a community of faith, a people redeemed by God's grace through the cross of Christ, covenanted together to grow as disciples and to live on mission. This is who we are!

Now, back to our purpose. The first clause of our purpose states that we exist to help people find a new beginning in Christ. What this means is that it is our desire for Genesis to be a safe place for all people, no matter what culture, background, faith story, or struggle to explore faith and encounter Jesus. This means that we want the culture of our church to be loving and welcoming, and the preaching of our church to make sense to all people. Think about two types of people that live here in our city. The first are the dechurched. When we planted Genesis the bulk of the people who were not in church were dechurched. The common story we encountered shared some kind of spiritual background, often Catholic, Lutheran, even Baptist, but their experience in church as a kid did not connect, so they left the church. Now as adults they wanted something for themselves and their kids. But the other, and growing group here in Eureka are the unchurched. These people were not taken to church as children, have no framework to understand the stories in the Bible and our spiritual language, and even do not know the meaning of Easter and Christmas. It is our

desire to intentionally keep these people in view as we shape the culture and values of our church. William Temple said it well when he said, "The church is the only institution that exists primarily for the benefit of those who are not its members."

Why do we want Genesis to be this kind of church. It's simple, we see in these two stories the reality that if we can just get people to Jesus, He changes lives. We know the Gospel is a stumbling block because when people hear the authentic message of the Gospel they are confronted with their own sin, the reality that they cannot save themselves, and the knowledge that they will need to repent. We don't hide this. We are Jesus people who want to make much of Him. Yet, what we want to do is remove every barrier in front of the Gospel. So we want to work against churchy culture and language. We don't want people's experience at Genesis to be cold or feel like they are entering a different culture. We want them to feel loved by Christ and His church, welcomed, and blessed by their experience here. And we want all of this because we deeply believe that if people encounter Jesus they will find a new beginning in Christ!

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Ezekiel 16	Ezekiel 17	Ezekiel 18	Ezekiel 19	Ezekiel 20	Ezekiel 14	Ezekiel 15

Reading from this past week: Luke 5:12-32

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Luke 5:1-11

Family Worship

Song - *O Great God*

<https://youtu.be/gOPbanJKWE8>

Gospel Project

Story: Peter escaped from prison.

Story Point: God rescued Peter from prison.

Big Picture Question: What is our mission as Christians?

Answer: Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 12

New City Catechism

Question #15: Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?

Answer: That we may know the holy nature of God, and the sinful nature of our hearts; and thus our need of a Savior.

Verse: Romans 3:20

Scripture

Luke 5:12-16, 27-32

- What happens in these stories when people meet Jesus?
- Do you think Genesis is safe for people who are different from us, or who haven't heard about Jesus? If not, what can we do to make it good for them?
- What can our family do to help our neighbors meet Jesus?

Prayer

*Pray that Genesis would be a safe place for any person from any background, faith story, or struggle to explore faith and meet Jesus.

*Pray for the Rockwood School District this week.