

Lighthouse Bible Church

December 29th, 2013

Selected Scriptures – Psalm 63 *Scripture Reading: 1st Cor. 1: 18 - 25*

‘Losing your Passion and Desire for Christ’

Stand – Read – Pray

Since this is the last message of 2013, I thought that it would be a fitting time to look at the state of the church, not our church in particular, but the church in general. And when we do that we will be able to compare that to our church today and our individual lives within the church.

Two weeks ago Mike shared a message on God’s plan for the church and how to choose a church. He said the kind of church you want to find is one that professes Jesus Christ as God, it is a church based on the word of God, it is a church where the cross is the heart of the message, it upholds the will of God, it submits to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and looks forward to His soon return.

This morning, I want to look at the state of the church and see why the church, generally, has lost its passion and desire for Christ and seems to have, for the most part, embraced the world by being more passionate about people and programs and numbers and acceptance and tolerance and political correctness, than they are about and undying passion and desire for Christ.

In Psalm 63 we read the heart that David had for God and the passion and desire he had to serve and love God and to experience the fullness of God in his life; they very same things we are called to today. He is really a fulfillment of **Matthew 22: 37** where it says **you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...**

One thing that set David apart was how he was described and viewed by God Himself. In **1st Samuel 13: 14** and in **Acts 13: 22** David is described as a **man after (what) God's own heart who will do all of My will**. He wasn't perfect but he had a deep passion and desire to love God and serve Him above all else.

Look at **Psalm 63: 1 – 2**: **O God, You are my God; early will I seek You, my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary to see Your power and glory.**

Listen, David didn't long for relief from his situation or circumstance, he didn't even long for water in the dry land, he longed for God. He longed for **God's power and glory**. Do we have that kind of longing and passion and desire and love for God today, above all else?

When we step into the sanctuary of God, in this place, do we long to see His power and glory? You say, how do we see His power and glory today? Well His power is magnificently displayed in the presentation of His gospel, right. **Romans 1: 16** for **I am no ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the (what) POWER of God unto salvation.**

His power is displayed in the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and people coming to faith through that message. **1st Corinthians 2: 4 – 5**: **says and my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of POWER that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the POWER of God.**

Colossians 1: 11 says we are **strengthened with all might according to His glorious POWER for all patience and longsuffering with a joy.**

His power is displayed in the **living hope** we have in **Christ's resurrection and our secure salvation** because we are kept by the **POWER of God** 1st Peter 1: 3 – 5 says. In Romans 9: 22 the **POWER** of God is displayed in His **longsuffering toward unbelievers**.

The **glory** of God is most majestically displayed in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. John 1: 1, 14. **In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His GLORY as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.** Matthew 16: 27 says that **Jesus will come back again in the GLORY of His Father**.

In Romans 9: 23 it says **God makes known His GLORY by showing mercy to those who are prepared for glory**. The scriptures are replete with displays of God's power and glory. He is going to come back in power and great **glory** too. Matthew 24: 30 says.

Do we long to see His power and glory today like David did; the apostle Paul sure did. He said in Philippians 1: 21 **for me to live is Christ and to die is gain**. He said in Philippians 3: 8, 10 **I count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ**.

This is a deep desire and passion and love for Christ that was not some kind of sentimental feeling or some expectation of what Christ should do for him or having some felt need met, this is a spiritual passion and desire for God.

Listen, if people don't have that kind of passion and desire for God, it will show itself in a lack of passion and desire for what God deems as important; and that is His church. It is His church that Acts 20: 28 says that **Christ purchased with His own blood**. And it is in His church where His power and glory are best displayed, right.

So what is the state of the church today and why are so many churches today filled with people that don't have that spiritual passion and desire for Christ and His church? Well, let me suggest some reasons that seem to be predominant in many of the churches of our day. One reason that there is a lack of passion and desire is:

1) **A Lack of Holiness and Personal Sins that easily ensnare people**

Hebrews 12: 1 – 3 ...and the sin that so easily ensnares us

Psalm 97: 10 says you who love the Lord; hate evil

1st Peter 1: 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Peter tells them later in 1st Peter 2: 11 abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

2nd Corinthians 7: 1 says therefore having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Proverbs 28: 13 says he who covers his sins will not prosper but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy

When we take our sin seriously and take steps to remove our desire for it, it will increase our desire for Christ. Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5: 6 blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.**

But the church itself needs to deal with the sin of its people in the form of loving, restorative, church discipline, if necessary, as outlined in **Matthew 18: 15 – 17** and **Galatians 6: 1** and **1st Corinthians 5** and other places.

Many churches today wink at sin and flaunt their sin ignore their sin and even incorporate their sin into the church. When churches use swear words in their messages as a way of identifying with unbelievers or they host drinking and smoking parties or use sexually explicit expressions from the church platform all in the name of reaching the lost, then they really don't have a passion and desire for Christ

I think another reason that the people of the church have lost their passion and desire for Christ is because:

2) They love the things of the world more than the things of Christ.

Remember what John said in **1st John 2: 15 - 16** **love not the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are not of the Father but is of the world.**

It is laying up treasures on earth that **Matthew 6: 19** says not to. It is having a passion and desire for sports, activities, leisure and such, more than a passion for Christ. It is as **Colossians 3: 2** says **setting your affections on things above, not on things of the earth.**

We can even love the things that God wants us to love, but love them too much:

We can love the blessings of God more than the God who blesses us

We can love the ministry God gives us more than God

We can love our families more than God. Remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 10: 37** **He who loves father or mother or son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me and he who does not take up His cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**

Another reason that people have lost their passion and desire for Christ is because:

- 3) They allow distractions and busyness to crowd out their Passion and desire for Christ.**

It really boils down to and becomes a matter of priorities and those **things**, those **activities**, those **hobbies**, those **clubs** or **organizations**, **sports**, **television** and **internet/facebook** that can rob us of our passion and desire for Christ because it robs our time with Him.

There is nothing inherently wrong with any of those activities but when they distract us and busy us from our service to Christ and become the priority, then we become ensnared by them. In that passage **Hebrews 12: 1** it says that we are to **lay aside every weight ... that so easily ensnares us.**

You remember in **Luke 10: 40** where it says **Martha had a sister named Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet to hear His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving...**

Another reason that people have lost their passion and desire for Christ is because:

- 4) They have unrealistic, unbiblical Expectations of or Discontentment with God, His Church and their Christian life.**

Many people leave the church because they are angry or upset with God because something has happened in their life or the life of a loved one or someone they know and love. Some kind of trial or test that causes them to be angry with or to blame God for. *When in reality they ought blame devil*

They don't understand that trials and tests and difficulties in life mold us and shape us into the image of Christ. **James 1: 2 - 4** says that these may be **producing patience and maturity and completeness** in the one who is going through them. **1st Peter 1: 6 – 7** adds that these may be to show **that the genuineness of your faith ... may be found to praise, honor and glory of Jesus Christ.**

It may be that they have unbiblical and unrealistic expectations of what the Christian life or life in the church is supposed to be like. They were told that when they became a Christian their marriage would get better, their children would be better, their health would be better and their finances would be better and when that doesn't happen, they become disillusioned & discontent.

When they are told that this church will meet your felt needs, emotional needs and spiritual needs and those needs aren't met, they become discouraged, discontent and resentful.

Another reason that people have lost their passion and desire for Christ is because:

5) There is either too much legalism or too much Grace in church

Some churches come from a legalistic point of view where you must keep this list of do's and don'ts as a means of showing your spirituality and gaining favor with God.

Or they are always comparing others around them by their own pre-conceived standard of what the Christian life should be and when others don't meet that standard, they look down on them. They are the ones who make the judgment as to whether others are saved or not based on their own external criteria, and then separate themselves from them when they don't meet that criteria.

They become much like the Pharisees whom Jesus denounced over and over again for their legalistic, self-righteous form of religion. The legalist is the one who compartmentalizes everything and has no room for grace at all.

On the other hand you have those who go to the other extreme of little or no boundaries at all because we are all under God's grace. Just let go and let God. Love everyone and don't judge anyone because we are all under God's grace. They can do what they want, they are saved and under God's grace. It breeds a kind of 'you have not right to judge anything' type of attitude.

Both extremes of legalism and grace have crippled many churches much like we see in some of the churches in Revelation 2 – 3.

Another reason that people have lost their passion and desire for Christ is because:

6) Lack of Love for God and for People

Jesus said in **John 14: 15, 21** if you love Me, keep My commandments. You see, a lack of disobedience or indifference to the word of God and His commands is showing a lack of love for God Himself.

Jesus said in **John 13: 35** by this all will know you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

Paul said in **1st Thessalonians 2: 8** so affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives because you had become dear to us..

The church today that promotes self and personal needs ministries is a church that does not love God or love each other.

They can't because they are too busy loving themselves, expecting others to love them and care for them and meet their needs instead of showing love to others so that all will know that they are His disciples. What did Jesus say in **Matthew 22: 37 – 39** you shall love the Lord you God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

Along with love there must be a heart of forgiveness. If we truly love someone then we will be willing to forgive them. **1st Peter 4: 8** says **above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.**

Another reason that people have lost their passion and desire for Christ is because:

7) Being more afraid of man than of God

In **Proverbs 29: 25** it says **the fear of man brings a snare.**

When we care more about what man thinks than what God thinks, we become ensnared with what people think about: what we say, how we act, what we do, how we look, how we dress.

Many churches today want to be politically correct by saying the right things and not offending anyone. So consequently they don't talk about sin or hell or judgment and have successfully watered down, done away or preach a different gospel all for the sake of being afraid of offending someone.

Churches are afraid to speak against what God speaks against. You dare not denounce homosexuality, especially now, because you can get kicked off a TV show or have some protest outside your church. So churches avoid politically charged issues and just speak of God's love and tolerance and let's all get along and find some common ground.

Listen, as much as the apostle Paul loved people, he would not be a people pleaser. He said in **Galatians 1: 10** **for do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men I would not be a bondservant of Christ.**

He said in **1st Thessalonians 2: 4** **but as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who tests our hearts.**

Many churches and Christians allow the opinions of others to influence their attitude and decisions and are, in essence, held captive to them when they view their opinion more important than how God views things.

Another reason that people have lost their passion and desire for Christ is because:

8) People in churches have an improper view of themselves

How many times have you heard someone say ‘it is not about me, it is about God’. But is it really and is that what churches promote today. The question becomes ‘why do people go to church’. Many go for what they can get out of it because that is what many churches are promoting.

But what happens when they don’t get what they want out of it? Many times they stop going or they go somewhere else, like a consumer mentality until they find what they want. When people act like that then you have to ask the question ‘who is it really all about...God or you?’

They are not doing the music the way I like it...but it’s not about me it’s about Jesus. They take too much time preaching and the services are too long

... but it's not about me it's about Jesus. They didn't vote the way I wanted ...but it's not about me, it's about Jesus.

You see when people desire a church that focus' around their felt needs, their problems, their desires, their circumstances, their wants, they are desiring a church that is foreign to scripture, but that's what many churches use to appeal to them today. *Believe me, next to God and Christ, people should be the priority of ministry, but not for their sakes, but for the sake of the kingdom of heaven as people are encouraged to use their gifts for others and not for themselves as 1st Peter 4: 10 – 11 says.*

One writer (*Mark Blocher President of Christian Worldview Concepts*) said this “there is a relative ease with which professing Christians move from church to church. Their mobility is a reflection of just how individualized the gospel has become for so many. Leaving a church should be painful and a last resort, occurring only after having exhausted every avenue of reconciliation and restoration. Just as a marriage should only be dissolved for very extreme and rare reasons, leaving a church should be done only under extreme circumstances. The flimsy personal reasons many people have for jumping from church to church suggests a fundamental deficiency in their grasp of the local churches role in their lives. People depart local churches as easily as they change dry cleaners and barbers, often without showing any Christian grace”.

Paul said in **Philippians 3: 8** **I count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.** Not many churches today promote that kind of passion and desire for Christ and not many attenders in churches have that kind of passion and desire for Christ. You can't have an improper view of yourself when you have that kind of view of Christ.

Lastly, people have lost their passion and desire for Christ because they have lost their passion and desire for His word.

When the word of God is relegated to the background and the music or dramas or entertainment or other worldly means of trying to win the lost become the focus, the church cannot or will not be **the pillar and ground of truth** as **1st Timothy 3: 15** says. **John 17: 17** says **sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth.**

It is the only thing that can save someone **Romans 1: 16**, it is the only thing that sanctify and grow someone **2nd Timothy 3: 16**, it is the only thing that God Himself has **exalted above His very name Psalm 138: 2** says.

If the word of God is not the priority, then we will raise a generation of biblically illiterate self-centered that will be indifferent to Christ, to Sin, to Obedience, to Loving One Another, to Holy Living and any other principle in Scripture.

I praise God that this church was founded on the principles of the word of God and continues to live by them, and that many of you have a strong passion and desire for Christ and His word and have a love for one another and for the lost.

If I had to articulate the state of 'our' church today it would be said this way. **Revelation 3: 7 – 13** in part. **I know your works...I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it for you have a little strength and have kept My word and have not denied My name ... so all will know that I have loved you because you have kept My command to persevere I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world...I am coming quickly! Hold fast to what you have...**

May our church, Lighthouse Bible Church, of whom **Christ is the head, and from whom the whole body is joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

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Introduction:

The Passion and Desire of David:

Matthew 22: 37, 1st Samuel 13: 14, Acts 13: 22
Psalm 63: 1 – 2

The Power and Glory of God and Christ:

Romans 1: 16, 9: 22 - 23, 1st Corinthians 2: 4 – 5
Colossians 1: 11, 1st Peter 1: 3 – 5, John 1: 1, 14
Matthew 16: 27, 24: 30

The example of the Apostle Paul:

Philippians 1: 21, 3: 8, 10, Acts 20: 28

Reasons for a lack of passion and desire for Christ:

- 1) Lack of Holiness and Sins that ensnare
Hebrews 12: 1 – 3, Psalm 97: 10,
1st Peter 1: 15, 2: 11, Proverbs 28: 13
2nd Corinthians 7: 1, Matthew 5: 6
Matthew 18: 15 – 17, Galatians 6: 1
- 2) Loving the things of the world
1st John 2: 15 – 16, Matthew 6: 19, 10: 37
Colossians 3: 2
- 3) Distractions and Busyness
Hebrews 12: 1, Luke 10: 40
- 4) Unrealistic Expectations and Discontentment
James 1: 2 – 4, 1st Peter 1: 6 – 7
- 5) Too much Legalism or too much Grace
- 6) Lack of love for God and People
John 14: 15, 21, 13: 35, 1st Thess. 2: 8
Matthew 22: 37 – 39, 1st Peter 4: 8
- 7) Being more afraid of Man than of God
Proverbs 29: 25, Galatians 1: 10, 1st Thess. 2: 4
- 8) An Improper view of Themselves
1st Peter 4: 10 – 11, Philippians 3: 8
- 9) The Word of God is not a priority
1st Timothy 3: 15-16, John 17:17, Romans 1: 16
Psalm 138: 2, Revelation 3: 7 – 13

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