

Why I Am Not a Seeker-Sensitive Pastor

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Well, I had a perfectly fine message prepared for you this morning from the book of Proverbs 6 and I was fully prepared to preach that. I had sent it and the title information out to people, and everything was set to preach from Proverbs 6 here this morning, and then in between the completion of my preparation and this hour, I attended a seeker-sensitive service somewhere in the general Cincinnati area last night. I wanted to see what they do more directly firsthand and to see for myself in person what was handled and how it was done, and having prepared a message on Proverbs 6, I felt like a little bit like Jude may have felt when he wrote in Jude 3, "I felt the necessity to appeal that you contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all handed down to us." After seeing what I saw last night, there was something of superseding importance that needed to be addressed here today and I'm glad that our worship center is a little extra full today. Those of you that are visiting, perhaps found us through radio, welcome, it's good to have you with us. We're so delighted to have you.

There is absolutely no need to detail the message which I heard last night. There is no purpose to be said in laying that out. Suffice to say, and I am being fair in what I am about to say, it was a 35 minute, the message was, the primary message was, it was a 35 minute personal story with a few brief Bible verses sprinkled in. There was no question that what the center of attention was designed to be, it was the speaker and their story from their life. Beloved, in a show that was designed to attract non-Christians by definition of ministry philosophy, there was nary a single meaningful word about Jesus Christ or the call to take up your cross and follow him.

Now, I realize the influence that this sub-species of spirituality has, especially in our region; it is predominant throughout the world, it's predominate in our nation, but it is especially influential in our region, generating all kinds of positive press coverage even, and as I went to bed last night, I felt like I had a responsibility to speak about that with some measure of clarity to you here today. I'll be honest with you, I could not sleep last night after hearing what I heard. Now, possibly the reason that I couldn't sleep was also related to the Mexican food that I had after that service, there might have been dual things going on in my body and mind at the time, but still this was on my mind and in some ways this is a message that took 30 years to preach or to prepare, I should say. It won't take 30 years to preach. It might seem that way if you love seeker-sensitive ministry. But here's what I want to address: why is it that Truth Community Church is not

a seeker-sensitive ministry? I'll speak it from a personal level: why am I not a seeker-sensitive pastor? Those two questions are kind of wound together, aren't they? Well, we're going to answer that today, not exhaustively but hopefully with enough that it brings clarity to your mind so that you see the distinction and why these things matter. This is not a matter of personal preference, beloved. You don't choose a ministry philosophy like you choose what top you're going to wear on Sunday morning to church. This is not in the realm of personal opinion to be able to make decisions and still say, "I'm going to speak for Christ."

These things are not debatable and so why is it that Truth Community Church is not a seeker-sensitive church? Why is it that we don't chase after the fads that would perhaps exponentially increase our numbers? Well, I'm going to give you a series of points without really developing them too much. In some ways, what I have to say won't be anything too new perhaps that you've heard, but this is a matter of taking things that we have studied together, things that we commit ourselves to in membership and in our church philosophy, these things that we stand for have implications, and beyond that, there are reasons for them that are outside of ourselves; there are reasons for them that are true even if you and I had never existed. They were true before everyone in this room was born, they'll be true after everyone in this room is gone. Why is it that we do things the way that we do? Why is it that you will never hear me come up and speak for 35 minutes on a personal life story and say that that's the message for the day? Why is that? Well, I want you to understand these things and, beloved, I want you to understand as we go into them, that we're talking about matters that shape the entirety of life, the entirety of a church, the entirety of what your expectation should be, what you demand, what you require from those who would say, "I will lead you spiritually. I will tell you about God and you can follow securely what I say." You have a right to certain expectations based on what God has said in his word, but if you're going to hold ministries or pastors to that standard, you need to know what those principles are. You need to know why. This is something we've talked about as elders in past meetings, it's things that I have been encouraged to speak on, and so there is a broader context than just last night that brings this to bear.

Why is it that we're not a seeker-sensitive ministry? Point 1: Scripture is the authority, not men. Scripture is the authority, not men. Now, this word "authority" is right at the core of everything that is at stake here and the word "authority," speaking generally, not trying to be too technical, the word "authority" refers to the right or the power to require obedience, obedience in what you believe and obedience in what you do in life, and the question is: where does authority come from and where does authority reside? Here's the thing, beloved: if a man would speak for God, he must understand the grounds upon which he speaks. He must understand that which gives him basis to open his mouth. From what source do we find the place where God has made himself known? Where do we go to hear God speak? The way that you answer that question is going to determine if you're a pastor, what comes out of your mouth when you speak to people, and if you're in your position in the audience, you say, "This is what I expect to hear from a man who would teach me." And the answer is this, is that a biblical pastor understands that Scripture is the foundation. Scripture is the authority. The 66 books of the Bible are what

determines where we go. That is where God has made himself known and therefore, and therefore when the people of God or those who claim to be the people of God gather together, you'd better believe that Scripture should be at the center of that. If Scripture is missing, something is fundamentally wrong. And I can tell you, I did not even need to open a Bible last night. It was barely mentioned, the Bible was.

Now, in light of what I've said that Scripture is the authority and you look for Scripture, well, it would be important for us at this point, for the sake of integrity, to go to Scripture, wouldn't it? So turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3. I want to show you a couple of things here. And as you are turning there, beloved, here's what you have to understand. I'm going to get ahead of my notes here. I'll probably circle around and say a couple of things once or twice here. The Bible, specifically our Lord Jesus Christ, made it very plain and stated something that gives you a realm of discernment that is very valuable and you should treasure more than gold. Jesus said in Mark 7 that a man speaks from that which fills his heart. A man who stands up and speaks, particularly in the realm of a spiritual gathering, is going to put on display what it is that he loves; what it is that he cares about; what it is that he thinks is important. And so, beloved, when a man gets up and talks about himself for 35 unbroken minutes, he has told you what he loves. He has told you what he wants you to see. He has pointed attention at himself. That is not biblical ministry, my friends. So as you listen when somebody steps up to speak or you hear somebody on the radio, you ask yourself, "From what basis does this man speak?" because, beloved, personal stories are not at the center of what speaks for God. It couldn't be that way. God is at the center of who speaks for God and God has spoken in the Bible.

2 Timothy 3:14. I want to show you a couple of things here. Paul wrote to Timothy, Paul is passing the baton of ministry because Paul will soon be dead, and he writes to Timothy and says, "Timothy, here's what I want you to do after I'm gone." And he says in verse 14, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Now, whether maybe you've seen this in the past from this passage, maybe you haven't, the totality of humanity is present in that passage: you have those who do not know Christ and you have those who do. In both instances, what they need are the Scriptures. The unsaved man, the person who does not have salvation and needs to be led to it, needs the sacred writings which give the wisdom that leads to salvation. James 1 says that it's by the word of God that we have been born again. It is Scripture that is the instrumentality through which God brings about the new birth and creates faith in the human heart. You have to hear the word of God, "Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ," Romans 10.

So when a ministry says that it's seeker-sensitive and there are all kinds of theological problems with assuming any sinner is seeking God, Romans 3, if at the core, at the heart of a ministry that desires to reach the lost for salvation in Christ and not simply use them to accumulate numbers to build up their audience for other purposes, then at the core of

the message is going to be a scriptural biblical message that explains to them the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, with a Bible open saying, "Here is what God has said. Here is what Christ said. Here is what Christ did on the cross. He rose again. You can be saved if you turn from your sin and put your faith in Christ. If you take up your cross and follow him."

On the other hand, you say, "Well, we're here together together to build up the people of God." Great, that's our motto here at Truth Community Church: teaching God's people God's word. You see in verses 16 and 17 that it is Scripture that makes the man of God adequate for every good work, for anything that you would face in life. It is the Scriptures. It is God's word that enables you and builds you up to be able to respond to life and to live in a manner that is pleasing to him; that would bring you to spiritual stability. No matter how winsome the story, the personal story might be from the platform, that doesn't help you, that's not an anchor of eternal truth when you start going through the choppy waters of life. It doesn't do you a bit of good to say, "Oh, I remember what So-and-so said on Saturday evening." There is no strength for your soul in that. It is a completely different matter, however, to say, "I have the promises of God revealed to me in these specific Scriptures and my soul draws strength from that. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, therefore I will not be afraid." You get that kind of strength and courage from God's word, not from somebody's personal story. You've got to understand what the authority is. We feed on Scripture, not personal testimonies.

Go on in 2 Timothy, I'll make this just a little bit...any pastor who has any sense about eternal matters is going to be sobered greatly by the next four verses in 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy 4, Paul says, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word." What word? This word that I was talking about that leads the lost to salvation and builds up the people of God, the Scriptures that have been breathed out by God. That word. "Be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." Any man who would stand up and open God's word should do so with a great sense of fear and trembling in light of this charge that Paul gives to Timothy because Paul makes this solemn charge, he places Timothy under a solemn oath in the presence of God, of Christ Jesus, of the living and the dead, you do this, you preach the word. Do you know why I'm not a seeker-sensitive pastor? Do you know why I don't want to tell personal stories as that which would be the mark of my ministry? I'm afraid to. I'm utterly terrified of the prospect of taking one step in that direction because Scripture has charged the man of God, "You preach God's word. Don't tell stories. Don't tell things that are designed to tickle the ears that people say that they want." Under a charge like that from 2 Timothy 4, how could a man say, "Ha, I think I'll talk about myself this time," again and again and again? That's irrational. That's not biblical ministry, beloved.

Mark the man of God by the fear and the reverence that he shows to Scripture and by the responsibility that he feels in the light of passages like this because, beloved, here's the deal: somebody who feels that weight won't talk about his personal stories as the ongoing mark of what he does. He's going to feel the responsibility; he's going to have a fear in his heart, a respect for Scripture, that forces him to talk about that. That's why I'm not a seeker-sensitive pastor. I don't want anything to do with that realm. That's why Truth Community is not a seeker-sensitive church, it's because Scripture is the authority, not man. We seek to please God, not men by our ministry, and if men come in, if men and women come in and they are profited by it, great, that's wonderful. But the primary goal, the essential thing is not to make the man in the pew happy; to make him satisfied with what you say. It's not to have this obsequious sense of trying to ingratiate yourself to a person who doesn't even know Christ. You don't speak to them to ingratiate them, you speak to them to call them to a saving faith and repentance in Christ if you love them and are not simply trying to use them. Please understand that. How could you have eternal priorities on your mind, how could you speak to someone who has an eternal soul that is rushing toward judgment before God and say, "You know, I see your plight there as you're tumbling along in sin, as you're dead in trespasses and sins. Let me tell you a couple of funny stories about me." Don't tell me that a seeker-sensitive pastor has a love for souls when that marks his ministry. If you love a soul, you'll give that soul what it most needs whether the person wants to hear it or not. Scripture is the authority, not men.

Secondly, why is Truth Community Church not a seeker-sensitive church? Why am I not a seeker-sensitive pastor? Point 2: church belongs to Christ, not men. The church belongs to Christ, not men. In addition to the question of authority, there is a fundamental matter of ownership that is at stake when the people of God meet together; when an organization claims the label of church and appropriates the label of church to itself, there is a fundamental question of ownership and, beloved, understand this: the church belongs to Jesus Christ by right of divine gift and by right of divine purchase. It's his, it's not ours. This isn't my church, it's not the elders' church, it's not your church. The church belongs to Jesus Christ and him alone. It belongs to him by divine gift and by divine purchase. Let me explain what I mean by that. When Jesus prayed on the night prior to his crucifixion, prayed to his Father in what has become known as the high priestly prayer, he repeatedly emphasized that he was going to the cross for the sake of those that God the Father had given to him. In the covenant of redemption before time began, God pledged a people to his Son and the Son said, "I will redeem them." And as he moved into time, as he took on humanity, as he moved to the cross, he was doing what was necessary in order to secure the people that God had given to him before time again.

Look at John 17. It is astonishing how often Christ says this in this compact passage here. Notice how often Jesus refers to people as that which the Father had given to him, referring to the elect, referring to those who would be the beneficiary of his atoning work at Calvary. John 17:1-2, "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.'" Jesus says, "I am about to go to the cross. I am doing so in order to

give to a group of people eternal life." And who are those people?" As he prays to his Father, he says, "They are the ones that you have given to me."

Follow along with me here, verse 6. I have a very important point to make about this in terms of how it pertains to ministry. Jesus said in verse 6, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." "There is this group of people, O God, that you gave to me and I have served them and I am about to save them with my reconciling death on the cross." Verse 9, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours." Verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Verse 20, as Jesus was praying this way, I like to point this out to people, he shows that he wasn't simply praying on behalf of the apostles, he was praying for Christians like you and me as well. He says in verse 20, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word." Christians are those who have believed the apostolic testimony about Christ and come to repentance and faith in him; that God has given eternal life based on the reconciling death of a perfect Savior on behalf of those he came to save.

Now, beloved, understand this: the Father gave a people to Christ, that was a gift established before time began between the Father and the Son, and when the church gathers together, there is a manifestation of that gift taking place. Why am I not a seeker-sensitive pastor? Why is Truth Community not a seeker-sensitive church that would give itself over to messages by men about men to men? Isn't it obvious? The biblical pastor would never want to step in between that gift from the Father to the Son and say, "Look at me here in the midst of it," and call attention to himself when presumably the people of God are gathering together, when there is this eternal gift which the Father gave to the Son. Those people belong to Christ and it is right and it is appropriate and it is the way that things should be that if Christ's people are gathered together, he would be the predominant topic of discussion. It's unthinkable to have a proper view of the church, a proper view of God's gift to Christ and say, "Let's talk about me tonight," and go on and on and on and on and on about you. That's not right. That's not biblical ministry. Beyond that, a true pastor understands that Jesus Christ paid a price for his people. The eternal Son of God shed his own lifeblood as the price of their redemption to buy them out of slavery to sin. If you're here as a Christian, it came at the great cost of the life of Christ on your behalf, not because somebody was clever enough to push the right button to make you respond to Christ.

Look back at the Gospel of John 10:11. Remember, the point here is that the church belongs to Christ, not to men, and that affects what we say and what we do when we gather together. John 10:11, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." Verse 15, "the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." Verse 17, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again." The Father had given and appointed this people for Christ before time began and he loves the fact that Christ is

fulfilling his part, Christ is doing the work that he promised in which he said, "I will save them with my own blood." The Father loves that and as Christ is moving to Calvary, there is this great pleasure of God upon him as he said again and again, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Verse 17, "the Father loves Me, because I do that." Verse 18, "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative." Look at chapter 15, verse 13, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

Brothers and sisters in Christ, esteemed guests, as if I were going to give a valedictory speech, Jesus Christ paid for you at great personal cost. He gladly left the realm of heaven in order to become a man, in order to be able to go to the cross and lay down his life in love for you so that you might be reconciled to God from your sin to his holiness. You are right with God based on the work of someone else; right with God based on the righteousness and shed blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing of your own merit. Nothing that you did. All of him. All because he laid down his life for the sheep. What was he doing? He was paying the price. What does that mean? It means that those people belong to him by right of purchase as well as the fact that God the Father gave those people to him.

Beloved, we really have to get our arms around this. We really have to wrap our mind around the implications of this. That means that the people of God, that those who belong to Christ, those who are true Christians, belong to him. It's not our place as a church in ministry or mine as a pastor, to step in between that ransom price, that purchase price, between Christ and his possession, and say, "Look at me. Let me talk about me for a while. Me. Me. Me. Me." Do you see how utterly inappropriate that is? That is not right. Those aren't your people to talk to that way. You talk to them about their shepherd who gave his life for them. You talk to them about his authority, his love, his grace, his keeping hand. You point them to Christ. And if you have any sense about that at all, the thought of telling your personal story is abhorrent. That platform, preacher, is not given to you as a platform for self. That platform is given to you to elevate Christ; to make him known; to make him sweet; to make him lovely to his people. That's why I am not a seeker-sensitive pastor. The church belongs to Christ and the biblical pastor puts Christ at the center then, not himself.

He does so even if it means he understands that lots of people won't listen. Lots of people will go away someplace else. Do you know what? They did that to Jesus too. John 6, we looked at it three weeks ago: many who were following him left when they didn't like what he said. You see, the whole point, the goal is not to accumulate numbers just for the sake of numbers, the goal is to be faithful to the one whose church it is. That's why you speak what you speak. And you have to settle those things in your mind, that has to be clear in your mind before you can begin to say what's a good church look like or the pastor says, "What am I going to speak about on Sunday?" That has to be clear. We are walking, as it were, speaking metaphorically, we are walking on sacred ground. We are walking on that which was planned in the halls of eternity before time began; that God, the Son and the Spirit said, "This is how we'll do it," acting out of their single essence saying, "This is what we want. This is the will of God." And that is preeminently manifested in the redemption of his people. So it's not ours to say, "Let's tweak this so the

spotlight can be on me. Let's tweak this so you'll think about my story going out." No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. That's not what we do. When Christ's people are gathered together, they belong to him and the appropriate topic of discussion is only Christ and only his word. Whatever he has made known in the pages of the 66 books of the Bible, that's an appropriate topic of discussion. Your personal experience, pastor, is not relevant to the issue. Objection. Out of order. This is Christ's church, we focus on him.

Thirdly, a little bit of a Trinitarian emphasis to what I'm saying here this morning. There are many many other things that I could and should say but just trying to gather this up in one message in one place. We've said that Scripture is the authority, not man; the church belongs to Christ, not man; thirdly, the Holy Spirit testifies to Christ, not man. Do you want to see a work of God on display? Do you want to know where the Spirit of God is truly at work? Don't look for the fog lights, don't look for really fancy stage design, don't look for false signs and wonders. If somebody had the power of healing, they should be at a children's hospital exercising that indiscriminately to relieve suffering. The fact that they don't do that, shows that they don't really have that gift. How do we mark out a work of the Spirit of God? Well, in part you mark it out that the Spirit testifies to Christ, not men. We're still in the Gospel of John. Before Jesus departed the earth, he promised his disciples a great gift, he promised to send to them the Holy Spirit to be with them, to comfort them. He says, "I'm going to depart soon but understand that I'm going to send a Helper to you to be with you and that Helper is none other than the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit."

Look at John 14:16, Jesus said, and again, just manifesting his great love for his people, his great love for his disciples...he provided for us, beloved, do you see this? He gave us everything that we needed in the Scriptures and in the Spirit to ensure that we would pass through the deep waters of this earthly life on this sin-cursed sod to enter safely into heaven with him and to be with him forever. He guaranteed the outcome by his provision for us before you were even born with his death on the cross and with this promise that we see in John 14:16. He said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is," this Helper is, "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." The blessed promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit, true for every believer in Christ. Not that there are some Christians who have the Spirit and others who don't. No, God freely gives the Holy Spirit to everyone who believes.

And what does this Spirit do? What is his work? Well, verse 8, chapter 16, verse 8, I should say, starting in verse 7, of course. He says, "I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away," this is Jesus speaking. "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." Somehow the presence of the Spirit was superior to the earthly physically confined presence of Christ. Verse 8, Jesus says, "He," that is, the Holy Spirit, "when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father," verse 11, "concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been

judged." Sin, righteousness and judgment being the theme of what the Spirit testifies to. Then Jesus goes on in verse 13, in part the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to point us to Jesus Christ. I love this, verse 13, "when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." Look at what the Spirit of God does. As he worked in the apostles to unveil God's word in the subsequent decades, what was the topic? What does the work of the Spirit point us to today? It hasn't changed. "He will glorify Me." The Holy Spirit can be recognized when the attention is being put on Christ in a way that exalts him, brings him glory, and calls man to submission and trust in him. That's how you recognize a work of the Spirit, he glorifies Christ. He brings Christ to the center of attention, and he does that when a Bible is opened.

Now, beloved, recognizing and part of what makes the deception of seeker-sensitive ministry so pernicious is that they are more than happy to talk God talk. "God did this. God did this for me. God will do this for you. God will help you like he helped me." You notice the distinction, right? You can talk about it in those terms but if you never get around to talking about Christ, the Spirit of God is not present in it because he glorifies Christ; he points people to Christ. And beloved, here's the thing: you can recognize a work of the Spirit in a church, in a ministry over a period of time by saying, "Does this ministry consistently point me to the saving and keeping work of Jesus Christ or not? Or do they drown you in self-preoccupation and here's how you can get your problems helped and here's what God will do for you." Understand there is a big cleavage of distinction between those but if you're not listening for it, the lines might get kind of blurry to you. The Spirit points men to Christ. Beloved, why is it that we're not a seeker-sensitive church? Why don't we get up and talk about men? Talk about our personal stories? It's because the Holy Spirit does not share the limelight with sinners so that they can make themselves the center of attention. That's not the work of the Spirit of God, to call your attention to a man and his story no matter what kind of little spiritual twist he tries to put on it in the end. The Spirit glorifies Christ. The Spirit testifies to Christ. Do you know what that means for me as a pastor? It means I want to be in step with the Spirit. I want the work of the Spirit to be manifest. I want to be working consistently with his purposes, not at cross purposes with it, and that narrows the field of discussion to the one blessed person of our Lord Jesus Christ and what he has revealed in his word.

So, again just to kind of create a little bit of a physical picture in your mind, you have the Spirit of God shining a spotlight on Christ as the work of his ministry, and the pastor who wants to pull attention to himself is like he's trying to grab the spotlight and redirect it so that it's on him; to jerk the spotlight out of the hands of the Spirit and place it on himself. That's not good. That's not right. That's not biblical ministry. That's why we're not a seeker-sensitive church. That's why I'm not a seeker-sensitive pastor. I want, we want as a church, to let the Spirit of God keep the hands on the spotlight and we ask him to always direct that spotlight to our blessed Lord and no one else. Not to men. Not to women. Not to boys. Not to girls. To Christ and Christ alone.

Now, finally, maybe you're starting to understand why I couldn't sleep last night, huh? You see, that are so many critical principles that are at stake when you see what is going

on on a church platform. People speak out of that which fills their heart. Churches over time show what they think is important by what they focus on over time. You can't miss it when it's not there.

Fourthly, why do we do what we do? The apostles preached Christ and not men. The apostles preached Christ and not men. So here's the picture. I'll get to the apostles in a second. Here's the picture: you've got the Bible testifying to Christ. Before time began, you've got the Father, Son and Spirit saying, "We'll do this work of redemption that will lead people to reconciliation with a holy God despite their sin through the work of Jesus Christ." You have the Spirit of God making it his priority to point people to Christ. And fourthly, you see the men that Christ appointed to be his representatives on earth, that's exactly what they did too. There is a perfect divine symmetry, there is a divine consistency woven all the way through.

Now, I'm not sure how much this pulpit weighs, it's a very heavy pulpit. I'm glad right now that it's very heavy because I want to just lift something up and turn it over but I'm not nearly strong enough to do that with this baby. Seeker-sensitive ministries, saw this last night in some of the things that were said, this is all about principle, not about people, I hope you see. Seeker-sensitive ministry depends on marketing itself as the friend to sinners. "We've got free coffee for you. Comfortable seats. Come as you are, we'll make it fun. We're not like your grandma's church. We'll spin a story and we'll still get you out on time. Just hang out with us and all will be good. We are your friend. We're cool." Don't tell me that that's not what they're trying to communicate. "We're cool." Beloved, Scripture condemns that whole mindset out of hand.

Look at 1 Corinthians. How can we gather together clever marketing techniques in order to get people to like us to be here? What do we do? How can we make it happen? Do you know what? At Truth Community Church, we don't ask that question. We don't care about that question. That's never been a topic of discussion at any elders' meeting that has ever occurred in the history of Truth Community Church. Do you know why? Because that's not the point. 1 Corinthians 1:17. Why are we here if we're going to have a ministry that is in keeping with the work of the Trinity, the authority of the Spirit, the preeminence of Christ, the work of the Spirit? Why are we here? Verse 17, 1 Corinthians 1:17, the Apostle Paul said, "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." Beloved, it's not vague God talk that marks a true ministry, it's Jesus Christ and him crucified which the world despises; which the world does not want; which we say, "Sorry," but we preach Christ crucified. Verse 22, "Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." There is not room in that passage to be really cool to people who don't know Christ.

Go on. The apostles preach Christ and not themselves. Chapter 2, verse 1, Paul says to the church at Corinth, "when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know

nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."

He goes on in 2 Corinthians 4. I'm going to read a little longer passage than I had planned. That's okay. 2 Corinthians 4, beginning in verse 1, "since we have received this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Look at verse 5 with me, "For." Why do we do this, Paul asks rhetorically. "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake." Beloved, the man of God understands that it's not about him, that he is not supposed to be in a pulpit continually extolling his own story, his own virtues, or even his own sins. He points you to Christ. He steps out of the way and, as it were says, "Look at my Christ. Look at the Christ of the Bible. He is the one who calls you to salvation. He is the only hope for your soul. Only he can deliver you from sin. Only he is worthy of your praise and attention. Only him." He gets out of the way. He does not preach himself, he preaches Christ Jesus as Lord.

So what do you do when you've got a room full of unsaved people in front of you? Chapter 5, verse 20, rather than talking about yourself, you point them to Christ. Verse 20, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Why are we not a seeker-sensitive church? Why am I not a seeker-sensitive pastor? Why would I die first? I would rather preach to an empty room than to prostitute myself for seeker-sensitive ministry. Why? It's because Christ is too great and sinners are too dead to do it any other way. We dare not, dare not push Christ aside to put ourselves on display. Don't do that as a church. Whatever around there is in private discussions to talk about life circumstances, that's one thing, what a church does, what the purpose of a pulpit is, what the ministry is about, what a pastor should do is Jesus Christ and him crucified.

I've read this quote from Charles Spurgeon before, I'll read it one more time today, probably other times in the future as well, because you can hear somebody saying, "But don't you understand that that's not what the world wants? Don't you understand that people don't want to hear Bible exposition? You have to do something different if you want to attract a crowd." I don't want to attract a crowd, I want to hear Christ say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." That's what I want. Crowds can come and go, I don't care. I really don't care. That one phrase from Jesus is what I'm living for. Charles Spurgeon said it far more eloquently like this, he said, "This talking about Christ

crucified is said to be archaic and not at all suitable to the refinement of this wonderful age. But our mind is made up, and our foot is put down. If it be foolish to preach up atonement by blood, we will be fools; and if it be madness to stick to the old truth, just as Paul delivered it, we mean to stick to it. For we are persuaded that the cross of Christ, which stumbles so many, and is ridiculed by so many more, is still the power of God and the wisdom of God. Yes, just the old-fashioned truth—if you believe, you shall be saved—that we will stick to, and may God send His blessing upon it according to His own eternal purpose." Amen.

Father, may all who come behind us find us faithful. May your Holy Spirit be pleased to lead and direct and shape and prune this church and this ministry in whatever way you see fit, just so long as the clear, resounding, predominate message is Jesus Christ and him crucified. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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