

These are challenging times on so many levels and churches around the world have struggled with a new paradigm of ministry. Most of us were not prepared for this incredible shift from in person ministry to remote communication. We have exhorted our congregations to continue in the study of the word together, praying together and fellowship together in ways that have been fruitful and challenging.

New terminology like “Zoomed Out” have become part of our daily vernacular. We have realized that the spiritual bond that we have in Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives cannot be broken.

What is next?

Last week I challenged you to “Be Jonathans”. He lived **Believing the Plan of God**. God has the Plan. How do we know that plan? We see it developed each day. The only details of the plan that we know for certain are what has passed. Believe that whatever happens God has the plan even if it means losing what you think is yours. Even if it means a different life than what everyone including yourself thinks that you should have. God has the plan.

Jonathan lived **Believing the Plan of God, Believing the Purpose of God**. God has a Purpose for your life. Your purpose is to be satisfied with what he has given you to do. Your purpose is to share that satisfaction with the world. Your purpose is to bring God’s blessing of salvation to this world.

Jonathan lived **Believing the Plan of God, Believing the Purpose of God, Believing the Love of God**. Love your neighbor as yourself. One key reason that Jonathan was able to accept the loss of being king, even the loss of his life was because of the deep love that he had for David. Christ lost his life because of his deep love for us. We can do the impossible if we have a deep love for others.

As we face these challenges here at our Beyond Walls Church of Oversea Chinese Mission we also realize that brothers and sisters around the world are facing the same challenges. This month we are dedicating our focus to the mission partnerships that God has given to our church around the world.

On October 11th we will hear from our mission partners from India and England. On October 18th we will hear from Thailand and China. And on October 25th we will focus on Guatemala and Panama.

They face the same challenges as we face challenges of ministry change. It just looks different. We will learn about what they are doing and how we can partner with them more effectively. We are going to learn how we can have a 2020 Vision for the world as we look forward to spreading the Gospel in 2021.

Like Jonathan we can only personally fight the battles in front of us. And in God's big picture plan we can also partner with in specific places through prayer, finances and physical participation. And with this new virtual world we are going to hear directly from missionaries that we would never have the opportunity to connect with.

I want to challenge you to join us for prayer meetings. We are inviting missionaries to join us for prayer. Our prayer is often motivated by our personal challenges and problems. But prayer is so much bigger. We are praying together with brothers and sisters around the world who are also praying for us. Plan today to set these few moments each week on Wednesday evening to pray together during the month of October.

This month we will be studying 2 Corinthians 4. I want to encourage our Family Small groups and Disciple groups to join us in this discussion in your gatherings. This will help us to focus as a church. Our theme verse for this month is 2 Corinthians 4:18. Write this one down. Memorize this verse. Make it a part of your thoughts and prayers this month.

2 Corinthians 4:18

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

This month we are going to focus our Vision on what is not seen as we look at the world today. We are going to focus our 2020 vision on what has eternal impact. As we focus our Vision you are going to realize through our missionaries, through our scripture study, through our prayer, through our sharing the practical day to day affect that will come from an eternal perspective. **Jonathan had a 2020 vision.**

Today we are going to spend a few minutes on verses 1-6. We read in verse one,

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

When I read a passage like this I ask myself why is Paul writing these words? What is he trying to say to the readers of his letter? This was Paul's virtual ministry with the

people in Corinth. He had to weigh each word carefully because he could not be with them. Paul had no idea that his letter written to encourage and challenge people in Corinth would be read for thousands of years by untold numbers of people.

Our choice of words is vitally important. Since our service has gone virtual I have labored over each word and phrase of each sermon. I wish that more people in this world today would be concerned with each of their words. Words can destroy and words can heal. Words can discourage and words can encourage. Words can cause disillusion and words can inspire. Words can cause confusion and words can lead.

Words matter.

In Paul's ministry as an apostle speaking the Words of God he does not lose heart with the challenges. He does not lose heart with the hardships. He does not lose heart with the rejection. Why? Because of God's mercy, His forgiveness, He gave to Paul a ministry, a ministry of teaching and sharing the Gospel.

Paul never lost hope in the ministry to share the Gospel of Christ because he saw the world through the vision of God's mercy which all needed and he had the privilege of bringing others to the same hope that he had. In verses 2-5 we see three reasons why Paul could have this confidence. First in Verse 2 it says that we have to,

Renounce the Secret ways

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God

What are the secret ways?

I believe Christ said it clearly in Luke 6:45,

Luke 6:45

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

In each one of us are the hidden secret areas of our lives that very few people see or that we share. These areas are what influence our words and actions.

We can hide them. We can try to control them. But at the end of the day we will be the person that we harbor in our inner beings.

Paul knew that if he did not renounce the secret ways of his heart that harbored sinful desires and attitudes then he would have to be deceptive and distort the Gospel because he could not talk about full forgiveness and mercy. To share a Gospel of full forgiveness and transformation he had to live a life of full forgiveness and transformation.

Does this mean that Paul did not make mistakes or have failures? Of course not, this is the man who rejected John Mark. This is the man who had the thorn in his life that he could not get rid of. This is the man that honestly shared about his struggle of how hard it was to do right when his heart wanted to do wrong

He had to admit that the temper, the stubbornness, the temptations were sin. He had to accept the mercy of God that he was forgiven. Why did he renounce? Because he had to acknowledge the areas of his life that were sin, even if no one else could see them. He had to believe in the very depths of his secret being that he no longer wanted to be that man. He wanted to fully accept the Mercy of God.

Then in the sight of God who sees all things He could teach the Gospel that God intended.

Then It says in verses 3 and 4 that we need to,

Realize the Rejection

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Paul simply shared the Gospel of the Mercy of God. He Renounced the secret ways accepting the full salvation of God. Paul realized that salvation was not based on his eloquence, education, or enthusiasm. He Realized that acceptance of the need for salvation is God's responsibility.

This is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:1,

1 Corinthians 2:1

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

Rejection is not because you did a bad job explaining. Paul himself acknowledged that he was not an exciting speaker. The truth had taken over his life and he trusted God for the truth to take over the lives of others. People in the world today are searching for meaning and purpose but they are not searching for salvation in Jesus Christ. Paul knew as an apostle in his ministry he was simply to live and speak truth. And that message is found in verses 5 and 6 because Paul realized that his life would simply,

Reflect Christ

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

When we Renounce the Secret Ways and Realize that we will be Rejected then we can focus on simply Reflecting Christ in each area of our lives. Paul knew the secret of ethical decision making. Live like Christ. We have light by seeing the face of Christ.

The hardest things about wearing a mask for me is not seeing the full face of the person to whom I am talking. It is really hard to know what they are thinking. The face shows me so much about a person. We see the face of Christ through his life. We see the beauty of life through His life. This is why the class that Barnabas is teaching on Tuesday is so important because all scripture is centered in Christ. If you have time, join that class.

1 Corinthians 2:2

For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Paul did not want people to see Paul. Paul wanted people to see Christ. Reflecting Christ means serving others even if that means that it will be harmful to us.

My dear brothers and sisters in the Beyond Walls Church of Oversea Chinese Mission. How can we have the 2020 vision for this world and take heart in the ministry that God has given to us? How can we see in the life of Paul an example of what we can look like in our world today?

First, you must,

Renounce the Secret Ways

We cannot have the 2020 vision for the world if our sight is clouded by hidden sin that we do not want to renounce. There may be hidden areas of anger, jealousy, pride, selfishness. Areas of our lives that we really do not want everyone to see. We know that Scripture tells us things about our lives and priorities but if people really do not see what is driving me then what harm can it do?

There are pastors today who preach the Gospel. But they are not driven by the passion to see others accept Christ. They are driven by having bigger churches, a greater role in government, more money and recognition.

On the surface of our lives we appear to be fine. We appear to have it under control. But the secret areas are still there because we do not want to let them go

So how do we Renounce the Secret Things?

For everyone it first must be private. Look at your life. Compare your life to the life that Christ taught and lived. Then before God renounce what is sinful and shameful based on Christ and not on the norms of society. God knows the sins that are there but you have to know. You have to renounce them before you can change. Daily practice that well known verse

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

One of the challenges we face though is the confusion of what is truly a secret thing that needs to be renounced what is a cultural bias. Another challenge is that we can renounce but it is difficult to live.

This is where the spiritual community becomes vital because for some the process of renouncing needs to be shared with others. There are some things that we need to share with others. We may share for encouragement. We may share for accountability. We may share for counsel. And my prayer in our Beyond Walls church is that no one should be hesitant to seek the love and support of our brothers and sisters.

What keeps brothers and sisters from sharing their struggles? We forget that we are all sinners. Paul said it best. He said that he was the worst sinner. If you realize that I have the same struggles then you will be more open to share with me. We have

stopped having the conversation. The reality is that the world is rapidly changing around us.

I grew up in a society where many believed that it was sinful for a black person to marry a white person.

I grew up in a society where a person who struggled with having a desire for a person of the same sex was of the evil even if they chose not to practice a sexual relationship.

I grew up in a society where all Roman Catholics were going to hell.

I grew up in a society where women were not allowed to be leaders in the church.

I grew up in a society where when people of other countries became Christians they needed to give up their local attire and practices.

I am not saying that everything that I learned growing up was wrong. I am saying that we were not allowed to have the conversation.

Brothers and sisters, please do not be afraid to have the conversation. I may not agree with your conclusions. I may share with you what I believe Christ would have us live. **But I will never reject you.**

You have a place in our church if you have the mind of Paul where you are sincerely searching your soul to renounce the secret things that keep you from honestly following God. We will not lose heart in the ministry if we,

Renounce the Secret Ways **Realize the Rejection**

If we are truly preaching the Gospel then our teaching will be rejected because of the spiritual blindness from Satan. What concerns me today is that our Gospel is not being rejected because we are speaking truth.

Often today the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being rejected because we are not living truth. Our life is not consistent with our story.

My prayer is that our Gospel will be rejected because of spiritual blindness and not a rejection of spiritual hypocrisy.

Our church was founded on the passion to share the gospel of Christ. This month we remember the 59th anniversary of the founding of our church. Pastor and Mrs. Torry and Evelyn Shih came to NYC to live and share the gospel. His salvation experience is the foundation of this church. Do we still have the passion to share the Gospel of Christ no matter what we have to give up?

We will not lose heart in the ministry if we,

Renounce the Secret Ways

Realize the Rejection

Reflect Christ

This is the true story of a 2020 vision for missions today. This is what our mission partners are living today. We want to partner with missionaries who are focused on a Christ centric Gospel and not a Western Centric Gospel. This was the passion of Pastor and Mrs. Shih when they founded our church.

This is my prayer for each of my brothers and sisters in our Beyond Walls Church of OCM that

his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.