The Strategy of Heaven

Message Notes

Sermon intro:

- I want to start with somewhere I was last weekend - The Frontier
  - We have an ENORMOUS task in front of us.
  - Billions don't know!
  - We can PLEAD with God for an answer, but His response is that He's already given us an answer.
  - Matthew 16:18 (NLT) — 18 Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and **upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.**
  - So Jesus gives us the solution to the darkness, He gives us a solution to the problem, it is the CHURCH.

Passage:

- Ephesians 3:8–11 (NLT) — 8 Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. 9 I was chosen to explain to everyone **this mysterious plan** that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning. 10 God's purpose in all this was **to use the church to display his wisdom** in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was his eternal plan, which **he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.**
  - What Paul believed
    - The Church is God's **mysterious plan.**.. it is not a human invention to organize the Christians of the world, it's God's plan.
    - He wants to **use it to DISPLAY** His glory among the rulers in heavenly places - Look what people under the rule of God, filled with the Spirit, can accomplish!
    - He carried out the launching of the church **through Christ!** Christ is building His Church!
  - How Paul played it out in real life.
    - The church sent Him out
    - He favored going to CITIES, for CONVERTS, gathered for COMMUNITY, assembled as a CHURCH, led by leaders who were COMMISSIONED

Body

1. The Church is Heaven's Strategy

Summary line: "The Church is not just part of God's plan; it *is* God's plan — displaying the beauty, power, and rule of Christ to the world."----

1. **Jesus is building His Church.**
    - He is the one walking through the lamp stands.
    - He is the one preparing a place for the Church.
    - He deeply loves the Church; He is committed to the Church.
        1. "*As Christ loves the Church, and gave Himself*"
2. **The Spirit is empowering the Church.**
    - He does not fall on an individual, but on a people (look at Pentecost, and it was His presence falling on a group of people).
    - He is filling the church with His presence, putting gifts within people, and working within the church.
3. **The Father is using the Church like a Master Carpenter uses a tool.**
    - The Father is using the Church to demonstrate His glory.
    - He wants the unseen rulers to see His wisdom, His way, and His power.
4. **The Church is God's embassy and military fortress.**
    - **God's Embassy:** It is where kingdom business is conducted. It is a portal from heaven to earth, representing a different nationality, culture, way of life, and leadership.
        1. First - Focus on the Kingdom business being conducted at the Church. People saved, delivered, born again, married, etc.
        2. Second - Focus on the new store - **Raising Canes/ Time Square/ Growing up going to LSU store**
            1. Started in 1996 at LSU
            2. Now 900 stores
    - **God's Military Fortress:** He is using it to wage war against the kingdom of darkness. There is an encampment of God everywhere a church is established.

2. The Strategy has a Process

- Throughout the New Testament, we see the same pattern over and over again. It's a story of how the mission moves onward.
- Salvation comes
    - Bold proclamation
    - Signs and wonders following

    - Results left up to God
- Sanctuary forms
    - Dwelling place for God
    - Place of refuge for the hurting
    - Place of relationship and family
- Structure builds
    - Christians mature through teaching
    - Spirit empowers
    - Gifts are made manifest
- Sending happens
    - The spirit calls
    - The Church response
- Four stories
    - Acts 19 - Paul preachers and sees people saved, he then cultivate sanctuary with a few believers, he's faithfully disciples and trained them, and begins to set leaders in place, emphasis became a sending church.
    - **Gary and Marilyn Skinner** went to Uganda in a dangerous time. They met the imperial Hotel in downtown Kampala and saw The Church thrive.
    - Bethany went to Russia when the iron curtain fell and did Crusades in Pskov Russia. Thousands were saved and my dad turned into the translator **Nikolai Zalutsky** and said be there Pastor. Do the upcoming years. He became a bishop of 30 churches and then 300.
    - **Steve Murrel**l went with a group to the Philippines in the 80s. Many were saved and they needed somebody to stay behind. Steve stayed behind and knew that he was only there temporarily. He established a sanctuary. He didn't begin disc cycling people and setting elders in place. Now every nation's movement is 800 churches globally.

3. The Process involves YOU

- **Open your eyes and heart** to the role the Lord has for His people, the Church
    - The Church is NOT the way Christians organize themselves
    - The Church is NOT the communities social club
    - The Church is NOT an optional and occasional event
    - The Church is… the bride of Christ.
    - The Church is… the body of Christ on earth.
    - The Church is… the embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven.
    - The Church is… God's family formed by grace.
    - The Church is… the pillar and foundation of the truth.
    - The Church is… the temple where God chooses to dwell.
    - The Church is… the army advancing against the gates of hell.
    - The Church is… the lampstand shining light into darkness.
    - The Church is… the people called, sent, and empowered by the Spirit.
    - The Church is… God's plan A—and there is no plan B—for reaching the world.

- **Devote yourself** to what God is doing in the Church
    - Acts 2:42 (NLT) — 42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.
- See yourself in the process
    - SALVATION - Help the Church reach the lost
    - SANCTUARY - Help the Church provide a resting place for the presence of God and a haven of rest for people
    - STRUCTURE - Look at your own life as a pillar that God wants to build in his house! Each one of us will bring our unique gifts and talents to the table.
        - B-Group leaders
        - Weekend Serving
        - Outreaches
        - Missions Trips
        - Teaching
    - SENDING - This is where the mission really happens. Where is the Lord sending you?
        - **LIVE WITH A YES!**