

SERMON BY: RON ILOYE

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The Vision FOR 2024

Dear Mom and Dad,

“It has now been three months since I left for college. I am sorry for my thoughtlessness in not having written before. I will bring you up to date but before you read on you had better sit down. Okay?

I am getting along pretty well now. The skull fracture and concussion I got when I jumped out of my apartment window when it caught fire after my arrival here is pretty well healed. I only spent two weeks in the hospital and now I can see almost normally and only get these sick headaches once a day. Fortunately, the fire and my jump were witnessed by Roger an attendant at the gas station, and he was the one who called the fire department. He also visited me in the hospital, and since I had nowhere to live, he was kind enough to invite me to share his apartment with him. He is a very fine man, and we are planning to get married. We haven't set the date yet, but it will be before my pregnancy begins to show. His divorce is final now, and he shares custody of his 3 children.

The reason for the delay in our marriage is that Roger has a minor infection which prevents us from passing our premarital blood tests, and I carelessly caught it from him. This will soon clear up with the penicillin injections I am taking daily.

Now that I have brought you up to date, I want to tell you that there was no fire, I did not have a concussion or skull fracture, I was not in the hospital, I am not pregnant, I am not engaged, I do not have syphilis, and there is no divorced man in my life. However, I am getting a "D" in Art and an "F" in Biology and I wanted you to see these marks in the proper perspective.”

Your loving daughter.

Perspective is always important because it is the lenses through which we see the world and relate to it.

Vision puts things into perspective, it affects how you see things and in turn determines what you do. This is why we cast a vision out each year because it

shows us where we are going and gives us an idea of what we need to do to get there.

We are in the year 2024 by God's grace and as a custom we have to set the tone and agenda for the year by casting a vision.

When thinking and trying to determine what the vision for 2024 should be I realised two important things.

First thing I realised is that we are a God made church and not a self-made church.

A self-made church is the church that thinks that its successes are attributed to their efforts alone and nothing to do with God's grace. As a result, the self-made church is focused on its own carnal ambitions and dictates its own vision while forgetting or not even considering God's opinion.

Because we are a God made church, God sustained church and God led church than the vision of the church is not for me nor the other leaders to decide but only for God to decide.

The second thing I realised is that if we set the vision, we automatically limit God and rob the church of the greater things God wants to do.

Due to this discovery I have decided to let God be the one to give us the vision because he is the head of the church. Therefore, this sermon is done if you want to know the vision go ask God....

Does God have a new vision for us in 2024?

Gods Vision.

Gods vision for the church has not changed since he declared it approximately 2000 years ago when Jesus himself gave us as believers the great commission.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark 16:15-16 (NIV)

¹⁵ He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

This is Jesus' command to the church, and it has not changed.

Why has it not changed? Because unlike us humans God does not change, he's goals and ambitions every year. He changes them once they are completed.

Exodus 3:7-10 (NIV)

⁷ The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey--the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

The journey from Egypt to the land of milk and honey (Canaan) took 40 years to complete. This shows us that God's vision for the Israelites did not change each year, it changed when it was complete even though it took forty years - the only thing that changed was the steps and phases on the journey in order to fulfil the vision of reaching the promise land.

God's Vision for people knowing Jesus and getting saved has not changed but, over the years, how and what we as Christians have done to bring this vision to fruition has changed and that is exactly what God wants from us in 2024...He wants us to enter into the new phase on the road to completing the vision.- not changing the vision itself.

What is the change/next phase you might ask?

God's aim for us in the year 2024 is for us to take everything we have been doing to but take it to the next level. He wants us to continue the pursuit for Jesus and sharing it with others, but he wants us to do it better than what we did in 2023.

The aim for 2024 can be summed up in these simple words:

"You shall do greater things than these".

John 14:12 (NIV)

¹² I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father."

Jesus did not change the vision but what he did do was encourage his disciples to take everything they did with him and take it to the next level in his absence. Doing greater things meaning; a continuation of what they were already doing but now doing it in greater quantity and to a bigger audience.

I believe those same words are being echoed to us by Jesus. He's telling us that we have done well but... we will do greater things in 2024 than what we have already done. We will do them in greater quantity, to bigger audience and through different

strategies.

Some stats from 2023.

The young adult's ministry that was practically non-existent at the beginning of 2023 was able to feed over 40 families during the winter outreach in the month of June 2023.

Small groups- We went from 0 small groups due to COVID to over 15 functioning small groups.

Youth- We went from three children to having an average of twenty children attending youth services by the end of the year.

These stats are a clear indication of the potential we have as a church and in 2024 God wants us to tap into the great potential he has put in each of us in order to propel the good we already have been doing to the next level/phase.

Therefore, We won't start disciplining in 2024 discipleship has been happening but we will take it to the next level and be more intentional about it through our discipleship small group program that aims to make a disciples of everyone in our church and beyond that.(outside the church)

We won't start a new outreach programme instead, we will feed and pray for at least triple the amount of people we fed and prayed for in the previous year.

We won't start a prayer ministry...we will take the prayer ministry that has been around and take the next step of growth it by adding more life changing programs like for example Celebrate recovery program.

We won't start a worship ministry...we going to take the worship team we have and take it to the next phase of growth by teaching more young musicians, writing our own music and worshiping God with a deeper intimacy and excellence that has not been seen before.

This trend applies to every area of ministry in the church in 2024.

We need not create a whole new vision in 2024 because last time I checked God has not changed he's mind about wanting to see people healed, saved , people freed from demonic oppression - the gospel preached, marriages kept intact, families kept intact - children getting to know Him , he's people prospering financially, emotionally ,professionally and He's church growing to be the driving force for change in our nation of South Africa. God has not changed he's mind about the great commission just because it's a new year. The only clear change God wants is for us to always move forward and improve on how we go about fulfilling that Vision

God's vision for his people will not change each year; it will change when it's complete and we will continue growing until the goal is achieved. Which is why we must understand that:

“We don't have a New Year's resolution instead 2024 is about a new year's revolution!”

A revolution does not start and stop it grows stronger on a consistent basis. God prefers revolutions over resolutions because:

Resolutions change a person, but revolutions change a people.

Revolutions change nations, continents and their effects are remembered in the annals of history. Just as God sent the disciples to the world to start a revolution, we to are being called by God to reach out our comfort zones and be part of a Jesus revolution that would not only change our church and community but would change our nation!

Revolution over resolution is the aim for 2024!!! We will do greater things than these!!!

What will it take?

Fulfilling this vision will not be easy.

There are a few important things we must implement in each off our lives if we are going to succeed in our God given goal for the year 2024.

1. Faith in our God given identity.

Matthew 4:5-6 (NIV)

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

The Devil tried deterring Jesus from His God given mission through the tactic of questioning Jesus' identity. But Jesus knew His identity in God and was able to defeat the enemy and fulfil the mission.

Last week Pastor Allan told us that we are to be Satan's biggest headache and I want to add to that by saying that:

If you want to be the devil's biggest headache you must know your identity in God

What is our identity in God?

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV)

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will"

We are he's children! And have all the benefits that come with it!

Many of us might be and will be questioning our identity our potential and whether we are worthy and are able to be part of the revolution God has in store for us. If you are feeling that way, I must remind you that If God says you are worthy than there's nothing and no one that should stop you from using your full potential.

Remember that God saw a king when all Samuel saw was a dirty teenage shepherd Kid in David, God saw a liberator when the world saw a murderer in Moses, God saw revolution leaders when all the world saw were stinky fishermen and a dodgy tax collector in the disciples. Therefore, If God calls you, He's child than there's no excuse to doubt your identity and as a result not live up to your potential.

Remember:

There is no honour in dying full there is only honour in going to the grave empty having used all the potential God placed within you.

And if that's not enough remember this:

Your gifts and talents are God's gift to you, using them is your gift to God".

Trust in God's provision

God always provides for that which he has commissioned.

Matthew 14:18-21 (NIV)

¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said.

¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.

²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children."

Exodus 16:3-4 (NIV)

³ The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions."

If these two scriptural examples are not good enough than let me remind everyone of the amazing 40 birthday celebration, we hosted on the 5th November 2023. This event needed funding to be a success. We initially started off R0 and ended up raising over R90,000 in the span of two months- during tough economic times and

still had enough funds left over to fund another church project. This was an act of God's provision for the hand over of authority that He ordained.

Some may be wondering why I have not focused on numerical growth and instead have focused on doing greater things for God's vision. That is because growth is the not goal fulfilling the vision is. Growth is just a consequence of us being obedient to Christ and is therefore not something to put our energy into. Does this mean we will not grow? We will grow beyond measure but remember this scripture:

Acts 2:46-47 (NIV)

*⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,
⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*

As we obey God and take our calling to ministry to the next level God will add to us as He sees fit and will provide for all the needs, we will have in 2024.

our purpose as a church is to Pursue whole heartedly and fulfil Gods vision for this church. Jesus said..." I only do what I see my father doing." As a God made church, we will also say we only do what we see our Father doing! Because as long as God has not changed the vision, we as a church will continue on the mission of carrying out the great commission!

Amen.