

3 Things God Is Telling His Church This Year

Nov. 2, 2016, was the day of the seventh game of the World Series, and I was ministering at WoodsEdge Community Church in The Woodlands, Texas, at the request of my friend, Pastor Jeff Wells. Throughout the audience, I could see people expressing their team choice by wearing either Chicago Cubs or Cleveland Indians shirts.

As I got up to speak, I asked the crowd, “How many of you are Cubs fans?” Many enthusiastically responded in affirmation. I got a similar response when I asked, “How many of you are Indians fans?” Then I said, “Tomorrow, some of you are going to be celebrating because your team won the championship. Some of you will be sad and disappointed that your team did not. But at the end of the day, no matter who wins or who loses, you’ll still be Christians. You will still be members of the body of Christ, and you will still be part of the church.”

I went on, “In a few days, the presidential election will occur, and many of us may have different political preferences. And at the end of the day, some of us will celebrate, and some will be disappointed. But we must remember that our hope is not in the institutions of man, nor in a candidate or political party. Our hope is in the hope of glory, Christ Jesus. When the election is over, we will still be Christians and, as such, should reflect Christ even in our differences. Will we still be Christlike and love those who may disagree with us?”

A Return to Civility and Character

One of the biggest challenges in our society today is the lack of civility and character we display in our disagreements—even in the church. I’ve never seen so many people who are so

adamant and opinionated—politically and otherwise—that they allow their preferences to divide their families, their friendships and even their churches. It's painful and heartbreaking, especially from those representing Christ, on both sides of the political preference spectrum.

The only unshakable kingdom is the kingdom of the Lord; and we, the church, must still love each other in our disagreements if we are to help others find their place in the kingdom. John 13:35 says, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." How can we lead others to a relationship with God if we can't get past our own differences?

A Church United for a Nation Divided

In Mark 10:9, we see Jesus teach, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." This passage applies to the context of marriage, but it is clear that God is the one who brings the church together, and woe unto the man or woman who causes dissension and separation in the church. Proverbs 6:19 lists one who sows discord among brethren as one of seven things God despises.

We must walk in Christlikeness, crossing racial, denominational and political barriers to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We need to love with the love of Christ; it's the only way we can help others find hope in Christ.

Only a church united can bring hope and healing to a nation divided.

A New Season

Around the start of each new year, I always spend time seeking the Lord, away from media and other distractions, to really listen and process what He seems to be saying for the next season. And we have definitely entered into an interesting

season.

Last year, I sensed 2016 would be a time of re-energizing, refocusing and re-calibrating, and I believe that season is not over yet. In fact, I believe it is needed now more than ever.

I believe God continues to say to His church:

- 1. Stay Low:** Keep a posture of humility.
- 2. Draw Near:** Stay close to His presence. When we're permeated by His presence, the hope of glory, Christ Jesus, becomes a part of us, and the power of God in us can work through us.
- 3. Incline Our Ears to Hear:** When that moment comes and the Spirit of Lord speaks, we must obey and move quickly.

In Isaiah 43:1 we read this wonderful message, "But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.'"

What more do we need? Every decision, every direction and every circumstance that we may go through—be it difficult or great, challenging or victorious—the Lord Jesus Christ is the hope of glory in us. No matter what, we know He's with us, He's engraved us and inscribed us on His hands. We belong to Him, and His power dwells in us. There's nothing to fear when we recognize His commission and His anointing.

A Deep Work in Our Hearts

We need to be a people seeking consecration, asking and believing in faith for Him to do a work in us and get the rubbish out of our hearts. We must be sure to have proper perspectives; keep proper perceptions; be in proper alignments, agreements and associations; and keep right attitudes.

And after we've allowed Him to do a deep work in our hearts, sowing seeds of faith through simple obedience, He will pour out His rain and water the seed. We need to draw from the well that never runs dry because it comes from a source of water—Living Water—that never ceases.

Let's stay in prayer and fix our eyes on the Lord. As in the days of Esther, God can hear our prayers and expose the works of darkness and the evil intent of Haman. The Lord can turn what has been meant for harm and turn it to our good.

Psalm 61 reminds us that when our hearts are overwhelmed, we should be led to the rock that is higher than we are. From the shoulders of the Lord, we can see with a different perspective. The Lord is still bigger than any disparaging voices or giants in the land. Let us not be discouraged or disillusioned, lest we become distracted from our destination and our primary calling. This calling is to be the good news, bring the good news, and broadcast the good news of the gospel.

Be, Bring and Broadcast the Good News

Be, bring and broadcast the gospel. "Gospel" means "good news." With all the negative news we hear daily, may we be the bearers of good news. If we as the church are going to see lasting impact in our generation, then we must be the tangible expression of the gospel, be willing to bring the gospel of good news to so many who desperately need it and passionately broadcast and proclaim good news in and through our lives. We need good news in a world of bad news. Be it, bring it and broadcast it by the way you reflect and represent the Lord in your life.

I want to give this special note to church shepherds and Christians who are called to be ambassadors for Christ: Rather than fall into the trap of venting our personal divisive opinions, shouldn't we be cognizant of the need to unite the

church and help bring healing?

At the end of the day, we are to be Christlike even in our disagreements and our public discourse. Maybe Solomon's wisdom would be helpful. Who are those who really care about the baby (flock) versus those who would rather cut the baby in half just to win the argument? We all need God's grace.

Let's not miss our moments of opportunity to reflect Christ, even when we disagree. The world is watching. Even more, the one is watching who called us into the ministry. Be the gospel.

Lift Jesus higher, lift Jesus higher—for all the world to see. Let our (the church's) light shine, that people may see our good (tangible) works in such a way that it brings glory to our Father in heaven.

May this be a year when we the church find unity in our diversity, so we can be a plumb line of healing and hope within a culture of division. {eo}