

What Is Jesus Asking Of Vineyard Columbus On Our 20th Anniversary?

Rich Nathan
September 8-9, 2007
Luke 5:5

I feel overwhelmingly grateful for the grace that the Lord has shown to this church these past 20 years. When I think about all of the wonderful people who have made a contribution in making the church be what it is, I just end up saying over and over again, "Thank you, Jesus! Thank you for the hundreds of leaders that you've given us over the years. Thank you for the thousands and thousands of people who have served you in this church. Thank you for your grace in saving so many folks. Thank you for those who have gone out on the missions field, and for others who have gone out to plant churches. Thank you for those who have labored among the poor in the city. Thank you for those who have led us in worship, and for those who have offered counsel and care. Thank you for those who have taught our children. Thank you for those who have instructed us as adults. Thank you for the multitude of acts of kindness and generosity. Thank you, Jesus!" And thank you, church – you have blessed my life and the life of my wife Marlene.

When we pause to remember and celebrate anniversaries, we recognize that all of the goodness in our lives depends on the goodness of other people and the grace of God. There is no law that says that things have to turn out well for us. And so when I look around and see many, many places of blessing in this church and blessing through this church to the world, and I realize that none of it had to be, the only appropriate response it to say thank you.

For me and Marlene, we say thank you to you for loving us and loving our family in good times and hard times, and for always treating us with grace and kindness.

We could not approach a weekend like this without asking the question: What is Jesus saying to our church on our 20th anniversary as a Vineyard and my 20th anniversary of being senior pastor here? I've called today's talk, "What Is Jesus Asking of Vineyard Columbus on Our 20th Anniversary?" Let's pray.

You know, Jesus is the Chief Pastor of every church in the world. When you look at the Roman Catholic Church, it is Jesus, not the Pope, who is the Chief Pastor, the Chief Shepherd of the Catholic Church. It is Jesus, not the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the Chief Pastor of the Anglican Church. It is Jesus, not the President of the Southern Baptist Convention that is Chief Pastor of the Southern Baptists. And it is Jesus, not Rich Nathan, or some other person, who is Chief Pastor of Vineyard Columbus.

As the Chief Pastor, Jesus walks through his church and he examines his church. We see pictures of that in the Book of Revelation – Jesus walking among the lampstands symbolizing the churches that were there in the 1st century. Jesus examines the church and asks questions of the church.

So, what I've been wrestling with as I looked forward to this 20th anniversary is what is Jesus, our Leader, our Shepherd, our Head Pastor, saying to us on our 20th anniversary? What questions is Jesus asking of our church on this occasion? Or to put this more personally, I've been asking what is Jesus saying to me? What is Jesus asking of me as an under-shepherd, as someone who has been given delegated authority to lead his people?

Let me share with you the biggest question that is presented to me and to every pastor:

SLIDE

Will my life's work survive the fire of God's judgment?

I'm not an artist. I'm not a homebuilder. I'm not a doctor. I'm not a plumber or a computer network specialist. You are my life's work. I'm not in any way saying that this church is solely a result of my work. Vineyard Columbus has come about as the result of Jesus working through thousands of people. But for a pastor, the fruits of our lives is not primarily measured by how many patients have been cared for, or sinks unplugged, or computer problems solved, or cases handled. The fruit of a pastor's life is the health and quality of the church that the pastor has served in. So the biggest question that Jesus is asking of me on this 20th anniversary is will my life's work survive the fire of God's judgment?

Here is what we read in 1 Cor. 3:10-15,

10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care.
11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

I'm building on a foundation that was laid by the apostles. The question that Jesus is asking me is is the church that we are building here named Vineyard Columbus being built with gold, silver, or costly gems, or is it being built with wood, hay and straw?

Now, you all know that there are any number of activities done in churches that are just wood, hay and straw. So much church energy is spent doing what ultimately will not matter and will not survive the fire of God's judgment. Politicking over roles, and titles, who's going to serve on this board next year; who gets the title of deacon, elder, or bishop – it is all wood, hay and straw. All the committee meetings and energy spent in picking the colors of the carpet in the sanctuary; all of the church time that is spent arguing and debating over doctrinal fine points that have no real world impact – it is all wood, hay and straw.

When I think about gold, silver, and precious stones, I think about people obeying God when it is hard. I think about people breaking free from addictions. I think about couples who are alienated from each other, and on the brink of divorce, being reconciled in their marriages. When I think about gold, silver and precious stones, I think about single moms in tough situations choosing not to abort their babies growing up to love and serve Jesus. I think about churches being planted around America and around the world, particularly in un-reached people groups. I think about cities being much better places to live because the church is there. I think of kids who start off with lots of obstacles being given opportunities and encouragement to success. When I think of gold, silver, and precious stones, I think of the gospel being preached so that people can believe in Jesus Christ and receive eternal life.

Will my life's work survive the fire of God's judgment? That is the biggest question. But under that question there are three big questions that Jesus is asking of me and asking of this church on our 20th anniversary. The first big question that Jesus is asking is this:

SLIDE

How can we turn thousands of people into faithful disciples of Jesus?

You know, when I think of the thousands of people who are presently here and who call Vineyard Columbus their church home, and then when I think of the tens of thousands of people who pass through this church over a decade – there are just so many people coming here. And then I think, let's say each person who comes here brings into the church dozens of issues with them. Some people have a few more issues; some people have a few less issues – but, let's say every person comes into church with a dozen unhealed issues in their lives. This person suffers from anxiety and control issues; that person struggles with pornography or substance abuse; and that single woman moves from one loser boyfriend to another loser boyfriend; and this married man is inattentive to his wife and children and he draws his entire identity from his work; that person's finances are totally out of control, they have creditors hounding them, but they can't break the grip of charging and spending. And there is a couple who doesn't know who to handle their teenager's rebellion.

We've got these 7000 folks who come out to our weekend services and each of us has a dozen issues – that is 84,000 problems. And God keeps sending us new people and they come with all of their issues. How can we possibly deal with the multiple thousands of people and the multiple tens of thousands of issues? I mean, do we preach about every single problem that anyone could have over and over until people get it? Do we hire a thousand counselors?

And then, on top of just us, there is our surrounding community with its broken sexuality, and its greed, and all of its broken families, and power plays, violence and injustice.

Big question: How can we turn thousands of people into faithful disciples of Jesus? Here is the second big question:

SLIDE

How can we prepare people to keep their faith in the face of trials and persecution?

Jesus said in John 16.33

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

The apostle James said in James 1.2,

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

We are promised trouble in this world. The question that Jesus asked the church is have we prepared people sufficiently that your faith will survive inevitable troubles and trials? Will your faith survive cancer? Or the loss of a spouse? Or an unwanted, unsought divorce? Will your faith survive the death of one of your dreams – you are unable to have a child, or you are being laid off from the job that you love, or you are unhappily married, or you never finding a life companion? Will your faith survive a paralyzing accident?

A few weeks ago the youth pastor at the Anaheim Vineyard, who is by all accounts a wonderful, godly young man from a great family – 6'4", tall, good-looking, athletic guy who loves to play basketball, married to a wonderful wife, they have several young children. This youth pastor was on a staff retreat along with the other Anaheim Vineyard pastors. They were down by the beach and this youth pastor dove off of a pier. He had just dived there a short time before. But this time the tide had pulled out and he struck his head and broke his back. He is paralyzed from the chest down. Can your faith, can your families' faith, survive a freak paralyzing accident?

In this world, you will have troubles, Jesus promises. James said to count it all joy when you encounter various trials. The question that haunts me as I look out at the church is will you faith survive trials or persecution? What if America becomes an extremely hostile place to be a Christian? What if as a result of unforeseen circumstances, Christians begin to lose their jobs? Or are closed out of colleges? What if in America Christians begin to be physically attacked simply because they are Christians? Or some church leaders are put in jail?

It is already the case in some settings, in some university departments in some areas of the country where it is an extremely unpopular thing to be a Christian. But what if people in this church began to experience real persecution? I'm haunted by the question have I prepared you adequately for difficulties, for trials, suffering? There is no manual titled "Persecution Made Easy" Or "Ten Steps for Being Victorious When They Fire You For Your Faith." Or "The Dummies Guide for Handling Jail." They don't have those books out there.

How can we prepare people to keep their faith in the face of trials and persecution?

Here is the third big question:

Will the church continue to grow and thrive long after I am gone and my generation passes from the scene?

I've been the senior pastor of this church for the past 20 years. 20 years from now I will not be the senior pastor of this church. At least I don't think I will be. I will be 71. I certainly hope that the baton will be handed off long before that time to a wonderful man or woman.

A great challenge facing the people of God in every age is passing on the faith from one generation to another. The Israelites in the Old Testament were unsuccessful in this task. We read in the book of Judges these words:

Judges 2:6-7; 10

6 After Joshua had dismissed the Israelites, they went to take possession of the land, each to their own inheritance.

7 The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel.

10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.

Doing church is always a relay race; it is never a sprint. Every generation of God's people has to hand off the baton to the next generation. They have to do

that hand off well. But, friends, America is littered with once great churches and formerly great denominations. Churches that used to have an impact on their community. Denominations that used to see the power of God. But here is the question that Jesus is asking of Vineyard Columbus. Will Vineyard Columbus continue to grow and thrive long after my generation passes from the scene.

Here are the questions:

- How can we turn thousands of people into faithful disciples of Jesus?
- How can we prepare people to keep their faith in the face of trials and persecutions?

And

- Will the church continue to grow and thrive long after I am gone and my generation passes from the scene?

Let me offer one enormous answer to fuel discipleship, to energize people to keep their faith in the face of trials and persecutions, and to cause the church to continue to grow and thrive from generation to generation. What will ultimately survive the fire of God's judgment is loving Jesus more than anything else.

Loving Jesus more than anything else

What the millions of little answers to these questions really boils down to is one great answer: The one great answer demands that Vineyard Columbus and you who make up this church love Jesus more than anything else.

There is a story that the gospel writer, Luke, tells us about the disciples. We read in Luke 5 that the disciples, many of whom were fishermen, were out all night on the Sea of Galilee. They were rowing and throwing in their heavy nets. They were straining to catch fish, but they didn't catch anything. They came back and were on the shore washing their nets. They were exhausted. Their backs were killing them. Jesus comes along and we read in Luke 5:4 these words:

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

And then we read Simon Peter's response in Luke 5:5,

5 Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

I've always loved the little phrase:

But because you say so, I will...

Because you say so, I will. This has for almost 20 years been one of my favorite phrases in the entire New Testament. Because you say so, I will. May I encourage you to underline this in your Bible?

SLIDE - verse 5

Because you say so, I will.

This is the statement of a disciple who loves Jesus more than anything else. Lord, I am tired. Lord, I am angry. Lord, my back hurts, my shoulders hurt. I am exhausted from fishing all night. Lord, I have tried to make this marriage work. I have gone to counseling. I have prayed. We have had dozens of talks, my husband [wife] and me. My net has come up empty a thousand times. I am completely exhausted. If it were up to me, I would row back to shore right now. I would take my boat and chop it up into firewood and set it on fire and throw my net and fishing gear into the fire with it. Lord, I wouldn't try again in this marriage for anyone else, but because you say so, I will.

Here's the question that tests the depth of your love of Jesus and the possibility of you becoming a faithful follower of Jesus. What will you give up for Jesus; what would you sacrifice? What have you done for Jesus that you wouldn't do for anyone else in the world? What would you do? What have you done just for Jesus? Just because you love him.

There is an old rock and roll song that I love. It goes:

SLIDE

When a man loves a woman,
He will sleep out in the rain.
Give up all of his comforts
If that's the way she says
It ought to be.

Because you say so, Lord, I will. Because I love you, I will sleep out in the rain. Give up all of my comforts, if you say that's the way it ought to be.

Lord, I would not refrain from having sex before marriage for anyone else, but you. But because you say so, I will.

I wouldn't reconcile with my mother or father for anyone else but you, Jesus. But because you say so, I will pick up a phone and call them.

I am naturally shy. I absolutely hate, it gives me the willies, it send shudders up my spine, to talk about really personal or spiritual things publicly – to get up and

teach or to share my faith. I wouldn't do it for anyone else. But because you say so, I will do it for you, Jesus.

For you I will join a small group, even though I am busy and I would prefer to be alone and work on my computer.

For you I will go into recovery. For you I will get counseling. For you I will give 10%, 20%, 30% 50% of my income to attend the work of your kingdom.

For you I will break off an unhealthy relationship. For you, Jesus, I will not get an abortion even though it would be so much easier to end the life of this baby in my womb.

Do you understand that people do crazy, insane, absolutely irrational things when they are in love? Because you say so, I will. Lovers will travel 500 miles, a thousand miles, to be with their beloved for 12 hours. They will drive 12 hours there, spend a day together, and then drive through the night. Almost every guy in the world has a story like that. Just to be together for 12 hours. Sure...what's the big deal...1000 miles of driving. No problem. Just hop in the car and drive all night.

Marlene used to sit up and type my term papers until 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. I would hand her sheets and she would type away when I was in college and law school. I remember Marlene being sick a few years ago. She had a high fever. She was chilled and couldn't get warm. I saw this beautiful, sweet person lying in bed just shivering and shivering. I didn't care if I caught what she had, I just wanted her to feel better. I laid down next to her and wrapped my body around her to warm her up.

A person in love will risk their own health to comfort a sick child, to hold a sick spouse. Someone in love will give their kidney in a kidney transplant. They will go to the hospital 10 times, a hundred times to be with their child, with their mate, with their parent, with their sister or friend. They will allow their bones to be dug into for a bone marrow transplant.

We ask how can we turn thousands of people into disciples of Jesus – with all of our issues and problems, and baggage? The answer is white hot love for Jesus.

I had a guy come up to me a couple of years ago here at church and tell me, "I just want to tell you that this is the first church I have come to four times in a row."

I said, "Really? That's great."

He said, "Let me tell you who I am. I have been inside of penitentiaries for the last 20 or so years." He went down a litany of crimes he had committed. He was

a rough guy. Tattoos on his arms – rough guy. He said, “I drive 50 miles to come here to church. It is the first positive thing I’ve done in my life in several decades.”

I said, “You drive 50 miles to come here to this church?”

He said, “Hey, I have driven a couple of hundred miles to chase some woman. I figure I can drive 50 miles for Jesus.”

Why do you give a portion to your paycheck every week to church? Why when we take an offering for world missions do you reach into your pocket and take out your hard-earned money that you worked for. Why would anyone leave a comfortable job or risk social embarrassment by talking with a neighbor or parent or coworker about Jesus? Why do people move to places like Tanzania? Give up houses and all that stuff that we value – bank accounts, IRAs. Why do people do stuff like that? Because it is the shrewd thing to do? Because I have weighed it up, friend, and it makes totally great sense for me to give up my job, sell my house, and go to the middle of nowhere to preach the gospel. Why?

We don’t extend the kingdom because it is the most conservative way we can live our lives. We don’t plant churches, as we have done two dozen times in the past decade and have given away hundreds of people and millions of dollars. Why? Because that is the shrewd thing to do?

We do it because we are in love with the Lord. Because something has gripped up. Because in a real sense we are white-hot in love with Jesus. Because it is that kind of heart that Peter had when he said, “Not for anyone else, Lord, but because you say so, I will.”

All of this is the positive edge. The negative edge is found in Revelation 2 where Jesus the Chief Pastor speaks to various churches. In Revelation 2, Jesus examines the church of Ephesus. I don’t know if it was their 20th anniversary, but we read in Revelation 2:2-4 these words:

2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. 4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

It is never enough that we are involved in deeds of social justice. It is never enough that we maintain our commitments to Christian orthodoxy. It is never enough that we persevere or that we hold people morally accountable in the church. The biggest question that Jesus is asking of each of us at Vineyard Columbus is do you love me? Will you do anything for me. Will you continue to

love me in the future? Are there things that you would do for me that you would not do for anyone else?

And in response to the three big questions, there are three big answers. The first big answer is:

Having Jesus is better than your greatest fantasy without Jesus.

What do you dream about? What do you fantasize about when you think this would be fantastic. If this happened to me, this would be better than anything I could ever hope for. Maybe you imagine yourself in a different career, or that you are a professional athlete, or that you have a totally different body, or that you have a healthy child, or that you have a great marriage.

But you know, you could not conceive of anything in life better than having Jesus – not a billion dollars; not the greatest love affair in history; not becoming president; not the winning of a dozen Olympic Gold Medals, or having ten perfect, brilliant, healthy children. You can never have anything; you can never conceive of anything that would be better than having Jesus.

Do you believe that? In Matthew 13.45-46 we read this:

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

This is the parable of the pearl of great price. The evening that I was called to pastoral ministry, John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard, preached a message on the pearl of great price. You can’t have anything in life that would ever be better than having Jesus, and obeying his will for your life.

A few years ago I had a long distance phone call from a distraught father of one of our missionaries. He was concerned that his son, who I will call Aaron, was throwing away a successful career in order to traipse halfway around the world doing God-knows-what, trying to convert people. And he said, “Why Rich, what’s the point? It is unsafe there. It is dirty there. They don’t speak English. I will never see my grandchildren.”

I tried to be as kind as I could to him. I empathized with his concerns for his son. I empathized with his concern for his grandchildren’s safety; how difficult it would be to not see your grandchildren or your son or daughter-in-law. And then he said, “Why is the church doing this to Aaron? I know he respects you, Rich. Tell him to stay home.”

I said, “Jim, with all due respect, the church is not doing anything to your son. I’ve known your son for 20 years and he doesn’t do anything that he doesn’t

choose to do. This is Aaron's decision. This is not the decision of the church. And Jim, isn't it clear to you by now that Aaron sees life differently than you do, and to some degree, he has very different values than you do? Aaron is going after what is most precious to him. Aaron has discovered that there is nothing that he values more than Jesus, and attempting to do Jesus' will in this world. He is paying attention to his family. He is not being foolish with his children's safety. He is committed to their love and protection. Aaron is perfectly rationale, but he is going after what is most precious to him. He wants to help other people to come to know Jesus. That's what he values."

I have a son, Daniel, who is very precious to me as are his wife, Melissa, and our two grandsons, Jude and Asher. Daniel and Melissa are going with our two grandchildren to Tanzania for five years. Along with Melissa's parents, we raised our son, and they raised their daughter to understand this thing about the pearl of great price; to having Jesus and sharing Jesus with others is better than anything – house, career, the convenience of living in America, even – and this is very hard for us – continued contact with their parents or brothers and sisters. It's all about loving Jesus more than anything else.

This leads to this thought:

Losing Jesus is worse than any disaster that could ever happen to you.

You ask the question how can we prepare people to keep their faith in the face of trials and persecution? It is all about loving Jesus. If people are burning with white hot love for Jesus, they realize that the worse disaster that could ever happen to them is not having your house burn down, getting cancer, or even, God-forbid, having a sick child, or having a family member die. The worse disaster that could ever happen to a human being is losing a warm relationship with Jesus, having a wedge driven between you and Christ. The worst disaster that could ever happen to you is not any negative circumstance that you could experience. It is becoming bitter towards God and losing your faith as a result of that circumstance.

It was love for Jesus that was the secret of early Christian perseverance in the face of Roman persecution. One of the most moving accounts in ancient literature is the account of the martyrdom of a 22 year old woman name Perpetua. Perpetua was a young mom who had a baby that she was still nursing. She along with four other young Christians was arrested in the city of Carthage in 202 A.D. The Romans demanded that these Christians offer sacrifices on behalf of the emperor, but the Christians refused. They were thrown into prison.

The father came and tried to persuade her to offer the sacrifices to the emperor. He said (this is right from the ancient document on the Martyrdom of Perpetua, her father said,

‘Daughter, have pity on my gray head – have pity on me your father, if I deserve to be called your father, if I have favored you above all your brothers, if I have raised you to reach this prime in your life. Do not abandon me to the reproach of men. Think of your brothers; think of your mother and your aunt; think of your child, who will not be able to live once you are gone. Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us! None of us will ever be able to speak freely again, if anything happens to you.’

This was the way my father spoke out of love for me, kissing my hands, and throwing himself down before me...I tried to comfort him saying, ‘It will all happen in the prisoner’s dock as God wills, for you may be sure that we are not left to ourselves, but are all in his power.’

He left me in great sorrow.

One day while we were eating breakfast, we were suddenly hurried off for a hearing [before the governor]...all the others when questioned admitted their guilt. Then, when it came my turn, my father appeared with my son, dragged me from the step, and said: ‘Perform the sacrifice – have pity on your baby!’

The governor...said to me, ‘Have pity on your father’s gray head; have pity on your infant son. Offer the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors.’

‘I will not,’ I retorted. ‘Are you a Christian? Said the governor? I said, ‘Yes, I am.’ Then the governor passed sentence on all of us: we condemned to the beast and we returned to prison in high spirits...

Here is a woman who suffered the loss of everything including her baby boy. And she made this sacrifice out of love for Jesus.

And I know that whatever happens to you, or to one of your loved ones – betrayal by someone close to you, a lay off, infertility, cancer, the illness of a child, your faith can keep burning bright, if you are white hot in love with Jesus, if you value Jesus above everything else, if for you, you have the deepest conviction that the greatest tragedy that could ever happen to you would be for you to lose Jesus – he is the pearl; he is the treasure in the field.

And so, brothers and sisters, here is the third big answer again flowing out of love for Jesus:

Staying connected to Jesus will create a church of dangerous dreamers

You know, over the next 20 years we have a massive job of trying to convince aging baby boomers to not spend their retirement on some utterly trivial pursuit

like playing golf three or four days a week, or becoming snow birds – I hate that term. It makes me gag when I hear someone say, “We’re snowbirds.” That means they travel with the sun. I absolutely have no difficulty with someone saying, “Look, we have a place in Arizona. We go there in the winter, but you better believe that we are giving our all to Jesus when we are in Arizona. We are deeply involved in a church there. We are serving and investing our lives in people.” If by snowbird we mean that six months a year we get to just putter around and fix up another house; spending our retirements caravanning around the country – oh my goodness, what a waste. Because retirement is just more time to serve Jesus. It is more time to volunteer to do missions. It is an opportunity to pass the baton off well to the next generation.

But only Jesus can energize people as they age. Only Jesus can keep this church from becoming complacent in our success. Only Jesus can keep us on that tightrope of loving what is going on, and yet, reaching for what is not yet here. The great temptation facing our church, is to become prematurely old, to rest on our laurels, to say, “okay, we’ve arrived, by God’s grace. Let’s just settle here.” The moment we begin to do that, we begin to die.

Let me close with a couple of thoughts. Our church can never become complacent if the church remains connected to the heart of Jesus because the heart of Jesus is immensely huge. The vision and energy to accomplish that vision is infinite. Churches stop thriving, they stop growing, they stop stretching and sacrificing because we compare ourselves to the wrong things. What is it that Vineyard Columbus ought to compare ourselves to:

SLIDE

Vineyard Columbus

Other Churches in Columbus

If we as a church compare ourselves to other churches in Columbus, we might grow complacent. We are the largest church in Columbus. We could compare ourselves to other churches in the Vineyard Movement.

SLIDE

Vineyard Columbus

Other churches in the Vineyard Movement

And if we did that, we could get complacent and believe that we have arrived because we are the largest Vineyard Church in the world.

But if we compared ourselves in the heart of Jesus for the city of Columbus,

SLIDE

Vineyard Columbus

The Heart of Jesus for the City of Columbus

Well, here we are not nearly so great. And if we compare ourselves to the heart of Jesus for the world,

SLIDE

Vineyard Columbus

The Heart of Jesus for the world

We then realize how much more distance we have to run, how much we have to stretch. It all depends on what you put in the denominator regarding not growing complacent.

A few years ago I did a message to open up our new church building. It was called "Becoming Dangerous Dreamers." This past week I received a note from a couple in the church. I want to close with this note.

Dear Rich

We just wanted to take a moment to thank you. For 8 years my wife and I have been a part of this church. We met here in a Joshua House small group six years ago and we just celebrated our four year anniversary. It's been an amazing 8 years since I came to this church. The Lord has brought me out of abusive relationships, drug and alcohol addictions, and many other things. This church has been such a blessing to my wife and me over the years. I remember the all-church picnic when we got to come inside the new sanctuary before it was finished.

I particularly remember when we opened that new sanctuary. You preached a message about being people who dream big dreams for God. I think of that sermon every time the Lord speaks a crazy message in my heart. It's dreaming big dreams that took Laura and me to Africa over three years ago to walk hand in hand with the poorest people in the world.

It was dreaming big dreams that led us to ministry to former child soldiers and war brides. The broken children of the world became our family.

It is in dreaming big dreams that our new ministry gave water to a community of amputees in Sierra Leone last month. A large community whose members had to walk 2 miles every day to find water now have a well in their community. By God's grace we will provide housing for 1700 people living in tarp shacks within the next year. By his grace another community of amputees will have livestock to raise in the next six months.

By God's grace we will continue to dream big for him and he will continue to give us big dreams that we could never accomplish without him. He truly is able to do more than we can ask or imagine. Thank you for teaching us to dream big dreams!

Brothers and sisters, what is Jesus saying to Vineyard Columbus on our 20th anniversary? He is saying this: Love me more than you love anything else. Value me more than you value anything else. View the loss of me as the greatest disaster that could ever happen to you. Stay connected to me. Let me maintain your youth and your energy. And with my Spirit in you, let me help you continue to dream big dreams And we say, because you say so, Lord, we will. Let's pray.

What Is Jesus Asking Of Vineyard Columbus On Our 20th Anniversary?

Rich Nathan
September 8-9, 2007
Luke 5:5

I. The Biggest Question: Will My Life's Work Survive the Fire of God's Judgment? (1 Cor. 3.10-15)

II. Three Big Questions

- A. How Can We Turn Thousands of People Into Faith Disciples of Jesus?
- B. How Can We Prepare People To Keep Their Faith in the Face of Trials and Persecution ?
(Jn. 16.33)
- C. Will the Church Continue To Grow and Thrive Long After I am Gone?
(Judges 2)

III. The Enormous Answer: Loving Jesus More Than Anything Else (Lk. 5.5)

IV Three Big Answers

- A. Having Jesus Is Better Than Your Greatest Fantasy Without Jesus (Mt. 13.45, 46)
- B. Losing Jesus Is Worse Than Any Disaster that Could Ever Happen to You
- C. Staying Connected to Jesus Will Create a Church of Dangerous Dreamers