

Calvary Church In The 21st Century And In The Light Of The Return of Christ

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Our world and our nation is preparing themselves for the 21st century; likewise the church of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to be prepared as we are labourers in the harvest field. We need to be disciplined and trained in order fulfill God's plan. We need to have a vision for the new century. We need to be led by the Spirit and know what the Lord wants to accomplish through us.

What is our vision as a church in the light of the 21st century and the Second Coming of Christ? I believe first of all, we need stock for ourselves. We need consider what have done, where we are and then we can prepare ourselves to fulfill God's vision in us.

When I first came in November 1972, Calvary Church had a congregation of not more than 120 on a special Sunday. It's missions giving was not more than RM 1500 a year, not including special missions offerings from time to time. The organizational structure of Calvary Church was structured more for a missionary and therefore needed to be changed. The most prominent ministry during those years was the young people's ministry, the Christ's Ambassadors. Today, our congregation is more than 3000, not including the 21 outreaches and churches. Our missionary giving is almost RM 3,000,000 which includes funds from faith promises, monthly missions giving and designated offerings in 1996. We have 87 life groups. Our ministries include those to children, youth, men, women, senior citizens, families and many more.

Where are we going from here? The Lord gave me three key Scripture portions to describe the vision for Calvary Church. I would like to share them with you.

A Jesus Generation

Firstly, 1 Peter 2:9-12 says " But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light." Calvary Church is to be a Jesus Generation, which is a "chosen generation", a " royal priesthood " and a "holy nation". The purpose and the will of God is that we possess a ministry of a prophet, priest and king. This is not just for fathers but also for the whole church. We are the chosen generation for such a purpose. We are also a multi-lingual church worshipping and serving God in different languages. We are prophets and witnesses who speak and share the glorious Gospel message. We are called to be priests to stand as mediators. We are to be available to God and to others. We are also called to be kings. We govern the natural man and live after the Spirit. This is what it means to be a Jesus Generation. I believe this is God's vision for us.

An Equipping Institution

Secondly, Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up." Calvary church is to be an Equipping Institution. God's gifts to the church (apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors and teachers) are to equip the believers for service through education and training them, "... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ " (Ephesians 4:13-14). Do not confuse God's call and gift to the church. Every believer is called into the harvest but to the church, God gives specific gifts that have an office and responsibility.

An Evangelistic And Missions Minded Church

Thirdly, Matthew 28:19-20 says "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of this age." Calvary Church is to be an Evangelistic and Missionary Sending Church. This means that Calvary Church is to be involved in Evangelism and Missions. We must believe God for numerical growth by multiplication and be a Missionary Sending Church. We need to provide greater equipping opportunities by having multi-ministries. Our faith Promise Programme is a wonderful and successful tool for our missionary endeavours.

A Need To Be Prepared

A church with a vision therefore needs to prepare itself to grow in quality and quantity. We need to be a people who are willing to live like Jesus, be equipped and be His witnesses and missionaries. We also need facilities to accommodate the ministries. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and with favor in God." (Luke 2:52). We need facilities for a larger auditorium to cater for growth as the congregation gathers to worship, classrooms for School of Christian Growth as well as recreational facilities for our social and physical needs, in times to come, we will outgrow our buildings and therefore, we need to see satellite churches being set up.

We must also enlarge our Ministry Team. There is a need to believe God for More gifts to the church. In Romans 12:6-8, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve, if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." Our congregation must not be spectators but participators. The Bible teaches that every believer has a gift or more. In 1 Peter 4:10, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully and ministering God's grace in its various forms." We are all called but our gifts are given by the Lord and His anointing makes us successful. Furthermore, God has given officers to the church that he has appointed first of all the apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing. Those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues." All of us are called into ministry but our gifts are different. We need more pastors, ministerial workers and office staff. We also need more lay people to function in their ministry gifts.

In conclusion, the vision of Calvary Church is to be a Jesus Generation (that multiplies), a chosen generation (multi-lingual), a royal priesthood (irrespective of race), a holy nation (an imperative demarcation); an equipping institution that has multi-ministries where believers are equipped to be a perfect man; a Sending Church (of witnessing people-missionary) that goes and make disciples of all people. We must believe and let the Holy Spirit help us as we prepare ourselves for the 21st century and the soon return of Jesus Christ. Like John the Apostle, we can say, "Maranatha - Come Lord Jesus!"

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