

Series: "May the Church Be the Church"

Sermon "What I Would Take With Us: Gloria Deo, Imago Dei and Missio Dei" Part 2

Text: Matthew 4: 2-11; Genesis 2:26-27; John 17:13-19

RGJR/FBCCS/2-21-21 **UNEDITED**

- When my informal survey reveals 7 out of 10 people didn't quite get what I was talking about last week, that's on me not on you! It happens sometimes especially when using metaphors such as the rough ratio of 98% & 2% I used last week.
- Let me try to clarify. The 98% & 2% is not meant to measure performance or outcomes of holy activity.
- It was not about tasks! Not about doing 2% more church stuff to be prefect.
- The 98% & 2% was meant to illustrate, without any mathematical precision, the sly way the *Deceiver* gets into our lives and tricks us into believing we are doing something really good—glorifying God by our really good tasks—when we are actually fulfilling a slightly lesser motivation that puts us instead of Him at the center of our universe.
- I tried to return today with some way to help could clarify this. I think it might help us to go to the example of how Satan tried to pull this 98% & 2% trick on Jesus the Christ in *Matthew* chapter 4.
- As soon as Jesus was baptized by John and he openly embarked upon his mission, Matthew says, "*He was immediately led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.*" What was the nature of this "temptation?" This is what I am hoping we will see as a church moving forward.
- Pick up the story in *Matthew* 4:2 **READ Matthew 4:2-11.**
- Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights. Can we assume he was wrestling something important? I think we can assume he was considering the ministry upon which he was about to embark. Can we assume he wanted to align himself with God the Father on that ministry? Fasting was usually a means of **focusing** thoughts on God's will and living for God's glory versus living for even the basic human motivation of needing food.

- I have suggested that sometimes God uses **resets** to bring this focus.
- Why would **Jesus** need to focus? AND, if **he** did, should **we** ever easily conclude we are so close in our walk with God the Father that we don't need to focus like he did on living on the mission for God's glory and will versus are own needs and desires?
- If Jesus needed this focus, should we conclude that we are never tempted to put ourselves at the center of the universe and then proclaim we are honoring God? Should we ever easily conclude that when we are making decisions about ministry direction?
- ***I would conclude that if Jesus needed this focus, I do as well.***
- What was he preparing for in this focusing-fast? The devil was going to be given freedom to test Jesus—to trick him if he could. What would the test be about for Jesus? The devil would NOT test him about tasks and outcomes—about being able to get stuff done—about being successful in his spiritual activities. No, the test was focused on something much more subtle—a slim looking—oh, maybe seeming to be just 2% of the whole matter of life and mission.
- Jesus was hungry. It would not have been sinful for him to do the tasks necessary to eat. However, somehow, the devil tempted him in the meeting of his immediate, honorable and reasonable human need by miraculously creating bread for himself out of stones.
- Jesus could have done that miracle for the desired outcome of having food, but he refused. Why? Not because the act would have been sinful but because he, Jesus the son would have gotten the glory rather than God, the Father if he did the task that way at the behest of the devil.
- Jesus answer made it clear that he was there to live ONLY in accordance with the Words of God the Father and not even his

normal, honorable, reasonable human needs. Without some focus, the difference might seem so slight it didn't really matter. But the difference mattered enough to Jesus to continue suffering in hunger.

- This is what I mean by the 2% difference. This is what I mean by Satan's trickiest ploy against the mission of God. Without thinking about it, it would have been easy to assume making bread out of rocks and feeding his hungry belly was a good and right thing to do. The outcome would have seemed righteous
- However, Jesus had prepared ahead for this nuanced attack—by thinking in a focused way about his real purpose and God's mission. He had prepared for the trickery. He realized Satan would try to trap him with unexamined, *just-as-natural-as-can-be* living for his own good, seeming reasonable needs rather than living 100% for the Father's glory at the cost of continued hunger.
- ***Temptation number 2:*** Jesus you are God's Son. You are an absolutely necessary piece of the plan of redemption. Maybe even Satan implied, the Father loves you so much, Jesus!. So prove it. Show it to yourself and to others by a special revealing task. Show and ***feel*** (important to us today!) your personal significance by letting people see God the Father save your very important, significant life. Jump off the high point of the Temple wall and let people see how God saves you because you are indeed special. You will prove your own significance by your acts and outcomes—your **SUCCESSFUL** survival.
- Was Jesus special, critical to the plan, a significant child of God? Yes he was! He was **CENTRAL** to it all. So what was wrong with showing and feeling that reality? Humans like to feel their significance.

- What was wrong was that it would shift the focus from God's glory to Jesus' glory and in that little 2% shift, the devil would have defeated God's overall plan.
- **Third temptation:** Jesus, God says you will rule all of creation—you will be the Lord of all. Right? Right! Why wait? If that is true and it is a good thing, let's do it now. Here is the plan for you to do it. Here is how to get the outcome that will be successful. I can make it happen for you says Satan. Get lost Satan! It is not simply about that promised good outcome in God's plan happening, no matter how it happens. It is about achieving that promised good outcome **God's** way and in **God's** time so **God** gets the glory.
- This is what I meant by the 98% & 2% issue. Satan makes something sound so natural, so necessary, so right, so good, so righteous, so much a part of God's planned outcome trying to blind us by the feeling that it is 98% right so the 2% that we are not really doing it God's way for God's glory doesn't cause us to even pause. We just do it because success feels good and significant to us!
- ***I was surprised when discussing this this past week, that some of you feel like you are not very susceptible to this 98% & 2% trick of Satan. Some of you also seem to feel that FBC is not susceptible..***
- I have no problem admitting my weaknesses right now. One of them is that I am often susceptible, in the moment, to this trickery that robs God of the glory. I easily can convince myself that if the outcome seems good I don't have to put much thought into my real motives for doing what I do. I can be caught up into thinking ministry and the mission of God is all about making outcomes happen without giving much thought to it at all.
- Unless I am reading *Matthew* 4 wrong, Jesus gave 40 days of hard, painful, focused thought to this very temptation before doing his

ministry. Of course, you could say, he did this because **his** mission was infinitely bigger and infinitely more critical than mine, yours or ours as FBC. But, then I would say, of course, but he was also the perfect, sinless Son of God in the flesh.

- Still, he, the incarnate Son of God needed to do this. I believe he also needed to do this focusing at other times when he left the disciples to be alone in prayer. The clamor of the world around him, and even of his closest friends, to put himself at the center of the plan of God instead of the Father was always there for Jesus.
- I would also say, even if my part in the mission isn't at all as big as Jesus' part, God still deserves 100% of the glory not an acceptable, quick, pragmatic, successful looking 98% that makes me feel significant.
- My point was, as people and as a church, don't we desire to live **absolutely** for the motive of *Gloria Deo*—absolutely for the glory of God? Of course we do! Maybe, Jesus' example here suggests that is not always as natural and as easy to live this way as would we like to think it is. Maybe sometimes it takes a focused concentration of the TRUTH of God's word to make sure we aren't falling for the Devil's offers of outcomes that look good but do not give God 100% of the glory.
- So, if you thought I was preaching we need to "get our act together" and fix our 2% of failed outcomes by **doing** more tasks for God, I was not. **That was more the opposite of what I was saying!**
- If I wanted to measure my success on the basis of godly outcomes—how perfectly I live out righteousness for God, the percentages would probably be something more like 30% righteousness to 50% unrighteousness and 20% unknown—not 98% & 2%.

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- To put it another way, as someone else pointed out this week, this is not a fallacy about "outcomes" it is a fallacy about "targets." The targeted outcome is not ultimately righteous behaviors. The targeted outcome is God's glory producing what is produced in me and through me. The 2% is not a deficit in my behavior. Is the target my glory for success or God's glory even if it doesn't look very successful?
- Thinking that is the deceptive trick that takes my eyes off the true target for all God's children, including **THE** Son in the wilderness. That target is always, and only, God's glory—*Gloria in excelsis Deo*.
- ***Do we understand that now? Have I clarified it well?*** If you are listening or watching remotely, you can call in your response to my question at ***1-800 dumb pastor***—again, that number to dial is ***1-800 dumb pastor***.
- If you don't struggle with this potential deception, I admire you. I do struggle with it and I believe enough of us in this body do struggle with it, to make it worthwhile to stop and think about the "why?" of our motivations as we are making decisions about FBC's part in God's mission as a church.
- I introduced this motive of the glory of God—*Gloria deo*—with another metaphor. I said it was something I would "want to take with us if we move." What that means is I believe Scripture makes it a critical value for Jesus' church. I believe it is **THE** critical value for Jesus' church and we should not simply assume we are living by it because we make spiritual sounding and feeling choices in ministry.
- There are two other values that I believe we should take with us wherever we are being the church. They have in common with *Gloria Deo Latin* designations. They also have in common Satan's devious

slightly-twisting 98% & 2% attack. I've seen this attempted twisting of these other two values in me and all the churches I have known.

- As with doing all of the mission for God's glory, he attempts to shift the vector just slightly in each of these two. We are taught by our performance-oriented culture to measure outcomes *alone* as "success" when it comes to these values. Sorry, that's just another name for our culture's governing value of *pragmatism* and a tool to help with the twist.
- Oh, pragmatism! It is always with us. The Frankish Kingdom of Charlemagne in the 8th century was having problems converting the Saxons to Christianity. They discovered if they lopped off a few Saxon heads, the other Saxons were much more receptive to the Gospel. The Franks declared this Kingdom *missionary* work a success! I bet you see the problems with method, but there were also problems with motive. They wanted political success and called it **God's** work! That is a crass example. Satan can be much more subtle in using pragmatism with us, as I am trying to warn us.
- Let me quickly give you two more values I hope we take with us, along with Gloria Deo, wherever we are as a church. As I have suggested. Satan wants to deceive in these as well. The details will matter but we will simply touch on the big ideas.
- You've heard them both around here. One for nearly 2 decades and another especially emphasized since we have recently focused on **Genesis**.
- That Genesis-raised value is what we have called, in Latin shorthand, **Imago Dei—the image of God**.
- The idea of *Imago Dei* derives from Genesis 2:26-27. **READ Genesis 2:26-27**

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- To be created in the image of God means the very created existence of human beings has the PURPOSE of representing God in creation. And, guess what, we are to represent God **for his glory—Gloria Deo.**
- We, I believe not simply individually but especially relationally, are to show the world what God, in his glory is truly like. We are to rule this world as his regents always imaging him by ruling, as he would rule.
- We are to be like the statues, or images, that human kings erected in far away lands they had conquered to remind the people who was sovereign over them.
- The story of **Genesis** is the story of God making the image—calling the image to spread and fill the earth with his glory by representing Him—then the image failing by rejecting this purpose and claiming autonomy—putting themselves at the center of the universe and then—God restoring the line of the image to represent him again.
- Of course, the ultimate image—or what the Apostle Paul calls "*the image of the invisible God*" to the Colossians, is Jesus Christ himself. That's why we talk about becoming Christ-like as we live our lives to glorify God. As we image Jesus Christ, we image God and that is the very purpose for which we were created.
- Of course, sin played havoc and still does with that imaging purpose. Redemption in Jesus Christ restores us to that purpose by making us alive in Him even if we hide it by our own fear and sin at times.
- The purpose of the church is to glorify God—Gloria Deo. The human beings who make up the church were created to glorify God together by imaging God together—*Imago Dei*.
- Satan wants to twist that purpose as well by his deceptions. Sometimes he does it in big, crass, easy-to-see ways. We tend to call those twists, "cults." They usually end up being about a human who wants the purpose of the community to be giving them glory instead

of God. They are in the church for their significance rather than God's. They want to be the center of the universe. Those are easy to call out as wrong.

- My concern for us is, as it was with *Gloria Deo* that, *Imago Dei* is shifted just a bit by the evil one. It's that confusing 98% & 2% again.
- How? Well, we could talk about many ways but our *culture* tells us our purpose is to make a life that we find successful by the world's standards. Our purpose, according to the world is to be a success by the standards we set for success. These days that significance-giving success, can be just in our own head. However, other people in the church are required to validate it or they "don't love us."
- This is not why God made human beings. This is an *autonomous* definition that leaves God out of the equation and puts us at the center in the church, when he is the only factor that actually matters to the truth of the purpose of the church. ***The church exists for God's purpose not mine!!***
- So many people feel purposeless today. So, they spend their lives searching for anything that might fill that deep created need. Nothing will fill it except the purpose God gave us—to image him together. Some try to find purpose by doing many churchy—good-looking things that they hope will give them a sense of purpose and significance using the church of Jesus. ***Again, the church exists for God's purpose not yours or mine!!***
- This imaging God purpose is why people need to be redeemed and disciplined. The purpose of the church is not just arranging for people to go to heaven when they die. It is not simply proudly to know more Bible facts on a quiz. It is not to be a religious talisman for worldly comfort and success. It is not a stage for attention and significance.

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- We tell people of redemption in Christ by grace through faith so they can have their minds renewed in a discipling process that allows them to be restored to their created purpose and to live it out by spreading the image of God through the earth (and maybe Mars someday).
- You see, the **purpose** of FBC is so much bigger than just opening the doors for religious services, some happy fellowshiping and some Bible, fact-passing.
- AND, FBC is bigger in purpose like this for **all** who are part of it not just those who have titles, are paid, or receive special attention.
- The **Imago Dei purpose** of us together as a church—us imaging God for the Gloria Deo—the glory of God—Is so much bigger than what so many people think of as church.
- That is why FBC is not really about buildings or programs or staff or numbers or amounts or any of those things. FBC's purpose is for all of us all of the time to image God in all of the world we touch. This is why we sometimes say, "We can't **go** to church—We **are** the church!"
- I would always like to take with us, wherever we are as a church, the **value of imago dei**—the value of a big, driving purpose for our existence together coming from God not from anything we can concoct.
- I believe Satan will try to get us to shift that vector just enough so that God doesn't get the glory for our purpose.
- **The 3rd value** I would like always to take with us in its Latin form is **Missio Dei—the mission of God**. When Jesus was about to go to the cross and eventually leave the physical presence of his disciples on earth, he prayed a prayer to the Father about the mission upon

which he was sending them. Let me read a part of John's record of that prayer in the 17th chapter of his Gospel. **READ John 17: 13-19**

- Does God employ humans on the mission to which Jesus' sent his followers in John's Gospel? I'll speak of this mission as the refined *Missio Dei* for Jesus' church. It sure seems like he does.
- Does Jesus understand his followers will be in a world that most naturally works by humans making choices and plans? Seems like he knows this. However, do humans made with the purpose of being the imago dei—image of God in order to Gloria deo—glorify God do this by inventing their own missio dei—their own private mission of God that they want for their own reasons? In other words, is it up to humans to create the mission for the church? No, it is not!
- It is God's mission—Jesus' mission—to which we—FBC—are invited as a church. We don't make it up. We join God. Discerning the missio dei is a different process than discerning what we personally like in a church—what we expect to receive from a church.
- In fact, discerning this begins with the often-neglected truth that the church doesn't exist for my sake but for the sake of the world God loves and is redeeming. What should I get from the church is not the right question. What should I give as part of the church, is. Missio dei means opposite starting points for deciding questions in a church.
- The Apostle Paul was always careful to tie the mission of the church back to what God was doing through the Israelites as his people in their day. He was careful to say that the mission of the church of Jesus was not invented by the apostles—by him (Paul) or even by the various churches.
- The Israelites, as the People of God, most often made the mistake of thinking being God's chosen people was about them getting what

they wanted. What it was always about was them being sacrificed for the sake of the mission to redeem the world.

- In the NT, Paul knew that the mission they were on TOGETHER—joined by the Spirit in true *koinonia*, was God's continuing redemptive mission of God that began, in a different form, back in Genesis when God called out to the fallen, hiding Adam and Eve—"where are you guys?"
- Sometimes pastors, deacons, elders, and just bossy people in the church forget this and create their own mission for the church. It is usually a mission that gets them something they want even if they don't realize their selfish focus. Sometimes this can as obvious as chopping off heads to save people.
- Most of the time however, I think it appears in the form of what we call "our own agendas." These agendas are then backed up with claims of God's approval based on pragmatism. It works!
- Our own missio-ME church design also shows up easily when we voice our failed expectations of what the church ought to do for *me*!
- Can you see how Satan might then slant things just 2% while the 98% looks good, feels good, seems good but is not truly God's mission? Instead, it is then my mission that will be for my purposes that will then not glorify God but be an attempt to glorify me.
- ***Is the church of Jesus meant to serve me or me the church of Jesus? How one sees this—deep down in their values—is where Satan plays with the 2% and can trick us.***
- That's more than enough additional confusion for some of us. Wherever we are being church, I want us to have with us values built around ***Gloria Deo, Imago Dei*** and ***Missio Dei***.
- If Latin is still confusing, we need only keep in mind one negative truth: ***I am not the center of universe—not even in the church!***