

## **Sermon Outline**

Topic: First Mark: Energized by faith  
Sunday: Advent Sunday 27/11/11

### **Introduction:**

Last week Sunday, Richard introduced the sermon series looking at "7 marks of a healthy church" referring to Robert Warren he said "healthy church isn't solely a matter of numerical growth, but it is the sense of nurturing the life of the church, as one would speak of growing rose bush"

Looking at the marks of a healthy church is like when a child is taken to the pediatrics doctor/nurse, they will look at the child's normal signs of growth. If the child is overweight, underweight, or signs of abnormality, measures will be taken.

As we use this advent season to search and look at the marks of a healthy church; nothing could be further from the truth. Let us remember that advent is about letting God come to us. We do the letting and God does the coming.

Today, we will be looking at one of the first marks of a healthy church. **Energized by faith.**

These seven marks are not graded as in matters of priority, but it comes as a package; as a way of living and a way of being, in which we are able to recognize our strengths and weaknesses.

**Energized by faith.** In his book Robert Warren mentioned different ways that churches can be energized; for instance their energy may come from a desire to keeping a medieval building in good condition, from having best bell-ringers for miles or from wanting to boast the finest choral tradition in the town. Equally, he said, energy may come from simply from a desire to keep things they way they are.

Robert Warren did not condemn all these because as he said "survival is a powerful motivator" but they are not sufficient as the foundational basis for the life of a church, which is a community of disciples of Jesus.

When a church is energized by external things they miss the mark, we are called to have eternal energy. Paul's letter the Corinthians and the Romans he said "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. 11 Corinthians 4:18; For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? Romans 8:24.

The things which are seen are temporal - The most splendid palace will decay; the most magnificent city will fall to ruins; the most exquisite earthly pleasures will soon come to an end.

The things which are not seen are eternal - Everything which pertains to that state beyond the grave:

(1) God is eternal; not to leave us as our earthly friends do.

(2) the Saviour is eternal - to be our everlasting friend.

So the "the first mark of a healthy church should be focused on a fundamental relationship with God and with the world".

Where does our energy come from if we are to take a poll?

Of course without a shadow of doubt we can boast of different aspects of our church life. Don't forget we can boast of our;

1. hospitality
2. We encourage people to take part in different activities of the Church.
3. We have a beautiful church.
  
4. Without any shadow of doubt we have the most amazing choir.
5. We love our liturgy,
6. We have a wonderful and rich worship and sacramental life.

Looking at the seven marks of a healthy church is being able to celebrate what we have and what we are good at. And look for improvement.

However, first things come first and that is our ability to testify publically and privately our relationship with God and the world.

### **Main Point:**

How do we build this fundamental relationship with God and the world?

1. Engage with scripture: in creative ways that connect with life.

Begin the day with Him. Psalm 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path".

**2 Peter 1:19** And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

### Wrestling with the Scripture

Studying and reading the Bible in our personal life or in home groups, preaching on the pulpit is not the main issue, rather it is about how Scripture is handled both in the pulpit and personal and

group reflection. He went further to say "such churches are not afraid to wrestle with how the text of the Scripture relates to life today and how it can affect our values, choices and lifestyle.

Testimony: **"Healthy Church nurtures faith in Christ: helping people to grow in and share, their faith. Get the Word of God deeply into your innermost being.**

Robert Warren said, " In such churches faith is not assumed, but spoken and seen as central to the task of the Church.

I doubt if Warren is British or Church of England. I doubt because in Britain my impression is you should be very, very careful and cautiously talk about your faith, in fact apologise for being a Christian!

At one of our clergy gatherings, Dr. Julie Rood, wife to the former curate of Christchurch, reminded us how the Gospel was spread by the word of mouth. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month in one of our chapter meetings, Mrs Jully Robb, some of you may know her, because she was the wife of a former curate at Christ Church. We topic was on how reliable are Synoptic. She reminded us the gospel spread by words of mouth.

Imagine the people Jesus healed, going about on their daily business without talking about what had happened to their lives? Imagine Jesus feeding the 5000 and they all went home without telling anybody about what happened.

I say this emphatically, we would not have had a Church if, if those people had gone on their normal business without talking out it. There was no shadow of doubt on my mind that it was the talk of the town.

Prayer 'Connection to the Holy Spirit'

Prayer plays important role in the life of a healthy church, both personal and corporate. Going on retreats. This resonates with me because I would recommend retreat to the different committees in our church. I don't mean individuals but as a whole. It enables cooperate spiritual growth.

**Question** Are we energised by faith through the testimony of others, through reading God's Word and in prayer, and finally by going away together for mutual sharing and encouragement?