

The State of the Church
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Opening

You have probably heard the story of the man who was stranded on a deserted island. One day rescuers came to him and discovered 3 buildings. They asked him what they were for:

- That one is where I live**
- That one is my church**

Rescuers: “What is the other building for?”

Man: “That is the church where I used to go.”

Moral of the story? There is no perfect church. I will say that again, there is no perfect church, no perfect pastors, not perfect people to lead, no perfect culture to save, even if you were the only one attending. You and I would no doubt find something to divide and split a church over.

Thankfully, we do serve a perfect God-Perfect Father, Perfect Son, Perfect Holy Spirit, Perfect and eternal Kingdom to Come, Perfect New Resurrected bodies!

In the opening pages of the Book of Revelation Jesus commends, admonishes and rebukes the 7 churches. Jesus speaks of what they have done well -what He can resonate with in their life and ministry and Jesus speaks of the dissonance - what they need to correct and work toward.

He presents them with 2 options, just as God presented to the Israelites in the Book of Deuteronomy. A blessing for obedience and a curse for disobedience. As believers we know that in Christ there is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. But here in Revelation we find that if the churches will follow Jesus they will be blessed and have great influence.

If they do not walk in a spirit of obedience and repentance, then their influence will be diminished and in some cases lost.

To the church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7)

Jesus commends them for:

- Active works**
- Labor for Christ**
- Patience**
- They cannot bear those who are evil**
- Discernment**
- Perseverance**
- Have not grown weary**

Jesus had these things against them:

- You have left your first love (Rev. 2:4)**

What did Jesus want them to do to correct this? (Rev. 2:5)

- Remember from where you have fallen**
- Repent and do the first works**

If they do not listen to Jesus what will happen? (Rev. 2:5)

- Jesus will remove their influence as a church and as a people for Him**

The church of Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11)

Jesus commends them for:

- Their works**
- Their tribulation**
- Their poverty because of the faith**
- The great tribulation that was about to come on them (Rev. 2:10)**

Jesus has nothing against them!

The church of Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17)

Jesus commends them for:

- I know your works**

-Jesus knows where they dwell where Satan has his throne

-They have held fast to Jesus' Name

-They did not deny Jesus before men

-The church produced such martyrs as Antipas

[Just a side note-do you think that the American feel good, seeker driven, Opera Winfree watching, Dr. Phil psychologizing culture could produce a martyr?] The church in Pergamos did.

Jesus had these things against them

-They had a mix a heretical teaching in their midst

It involved eating meat sacrificed to animals and sexual immorality as spiritual worship- which would have been a product of pagan worship.

-Some held to the beliefs of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans “were one of the heretical sects that plagued the churches at Ephesus and at Pergamum, according to Revelation 2:6,15. [Irenaeus](#) identifies them as followers of Nicolas, one of the seven chosen in Acts 6, and as men who "lead lives of unrestrained indulgence"^[The doctrine of the Nicolaitans appears to have been a form of [antinomianism](#), which makes the fatal mistake that man can freely partake in sin because the Law of God is no longer binding. It held the truth on the gratuitous reckoning of righteousness; but supposed that a mere intellectual "belief" in this truth had a saving power.

Nicolaitans of the 2nd century seem to have continued and extended the views of the 1st century adherents, holding to the freedom of the flesh and sin, and teaching that the deeds of the flesh had no effect upon the health of the soul and consequently no relation to salvation.

Today, the doctrine is now largely taught that the gospel of Christ has made God's law of no effect: that by "believing" we are released from the necessity of being doers of the Word. But this is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Christ so unsparingly condemned in the book of Revelation.” (Theopedia-Online Theological Dictionary)

What does Jesus call them to do?

-Repent

What would happen if they did not repent?

-He would come and fight against them with the Sword of His mouth (Rev. 2: 16)

So Jesus both commends and corrects His church.

It is almost humorous that we call our culture a Post Christian culture, in actuality as it relates to God He is still sovereign over the world. God has not drifted into the past, He is eternal.

Jesus said in Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

If Jesus were to come to America today in 2013, what might He say. Well we know what He said through Paul about life in the church in the last days.

2 Tim. 4:1-3 “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at^[a] His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

Question What might Jesus have against us here at FBC?

1. Being Lukewarm in our faith
2. Deliberately living a double life and not practicing repentance
3. Gossiping about one another
4. Independent spirit
5. Skipping out on worship and other opportunities to grow and contribute to the body
6. Clanishness, cliques, selfishness
7. Church hopping
8. Not recognizing what unbelievable blessings God has already given to us

9. Complaining about your leadership instead of praying for them not realizing that when people step into leadership they put a great big bulls Eye on their back for the devil.

10. Wearing masks and not sharing your own weaknesses.

Conveys to others that we have it all together and works against creating a spirit of belonging one to another. Hiding your own needs because you are too proud to let others know that you don't have it all together.

11. One former staff member wrote that he was not sure this was a church that wanted to be shepherded. That is a tough critique that we must consider. What other things do we place above growing in our relationship with Christ, His people, building up His Church where He has placed us.

12. Seeing the church as a business. Some people see the church as a place that they come to be served. JFK said: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

13. One day after meeting with someone from the church they said: "Okay I will let you get back to work." I said "Brother you are my work." Part of being here as staff is to minister to you. Call us!

14. Not walking by faith. Martin Luther said: "God has made everything depend on faith, so that those who have faith will have everything and those who lack it will have nothing." We cannot as a church rest on our laurels, on past accomplishments. Yes we can praise God for what He has done, but we must trust Him today and tomorrow for new things. We cannot live our Christian lives by looking in the rearview mirror, just at what God did 10 years ago; we must ask Him to show us what He wants us to trust Him for now.

15. I realize that many of us have children, and as Fathers we should be the first ones to disciple our wives and children. But we have to be careful in this culture that sports and drama and all the activities do not keep us so busy that we remove ourselves from Christian community.

16. God has called us into a Body of Christians. If we are not here, how are we a body? How will we be connected to each

other in Christ? If we do not know each other how are we a body? If the eyes, just hang out with other eyes what kind of body will that be? It will be like the large green eye named Mike Wazowski in Monsters Inc.

17. I believe if people are regularly attending worship and are committed to a weekly community groups, we will accomplish much. We are not talking about a huge time commitment. We are talking about weekly public worship and a weekly community group. I so look forward to our group each week. We meet from 6-8:30 every Sunday night. In our group we have a meal, talk for about 45 minutes on the Sunday A.m. sermon text and then we pray. We are able to get to know each other, because we have committed to each other. There is no Body of Christ without commitment, it just will not happen. It will be like a movie theatre where you go and watch a show and then leave. You can do that with Netflix at home. Romans 12:5 says: “⁵so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

18. If we belong one to another, we have to open up and be real with each other.

Question What resonance might Jesus offer to us here at FBC?

Resonance

1. This church has a long history of walking with God. Established in Waldoboro village in 1824. We are not newcomers to this community. Being here for so long builds trust in a community; and that has already been established.
2. This church has leaders who are all born again and are seeking to walk empowered by the Holy Spirit.

3. God has given us a great facility that was obtained by a congregation that trusted God by faith and moved from the old village church to this new location.
4. Most importantly, we are a church that seeks to love God and help others find Hope and Life in Jesus Christ.
5. We do this by focusing on fellowship, discipleship, equipping and missions, with worship and pray at the center.
6. God has blessed us with over 20 ministries from Celebrate Recovery, to Heart Reach-Mentoring for Women, to the Men's ministry, to Awana, to Sunday School, to our faithful prayer warriors on Wed. night, etc...etc...
7. We are a church that is driven by The Missionary God who "Gave His One and Only Son..." We are a Great Commission Church. Jesus said in Mt. 28: 18-20 "¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.
8. We want everyone to be involved in missions. Why? Because the King of the Universe had called us to be. Whether that be going, praying, giving, learning about, etc...The Great Commission is not an option. It is why people from this church have gone out to China, Hungary, Czech Republic, Providence RI. It is why we support Coastal Christian, it is why we pray for our teachers and students in the public schools, it is why we started the Gathering in Rockland, it is why you sent your pastor to France for 3 months, it is why we are here. Jesus wants His church to fulfill the Great Commission.
9. God has given us a strong budget. He has given us a facility that is completely paid for. He has given us a pastor and administrative pastor/youth, 2 interns and families, an administrative assistant, a Christian preschool, etc...etc...
10. God has given us a building fund with over 200,000 in it. On Sunday December 15 we will have a congregational meeting after

the 11 a.m. service to discuss how God might lead us to build a sanctuary and to get your input on this as a congregation.

11. God has put us in a country that was build upon the Judeo-Christian worldview now caught in the grips of socialist/Marxists. We can see this as a negative and we often do. It is also a positive, because now our faith will cost us something. Amazing that the most successful point in Jesus' ministry was when He was being nailed to a cross.
12. Another point of resonance and a ministry to celebrate is the church in Erd, Budapest, Hungary. The former communist government has handed over the keys to some of the public educational institutions and said-"Here, we simply do not have the financial resources or the energy to manage this anymore, will you help?"
13. George Barna's survey suggests that we are in a state and region of the country that is a mission field in and of itself.
14. People in Maine seem to stay put, which can be a very positive thing. There is a very faithful core of people that have been here for a longtime.
15. This is a friendly congregation that is not overly legalistic or liberal. We do not put up unnecessary barriers as the Scribes and Pharisees did to keep people out of the Kingdom of God.
16. I believe we have a good blend of casual worship, hymns, and Biblically based teaching.
17. Our church has been blessed with many gifted teachers/preachers/ helpers, mercy givers, administrators, musicians, artists, leaders, missionaries, visionaries, etc... We need to pray about how to best utilize and deploy our people to advance Christ's work on this earth.
18. We have opportunities for you to serve and use your God given spiritual gifts.
19. Church gives back to the community through the benevolence ministry and facility use.
20. We are a relatively large church for a northern New England state. Let us continue to fix our eyes on Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith.

21. So the next blessing will be our congregational meeting on December 15 following the 11 a.m. service where we will have a luncheon and then we will discuss potential plans for a sanctuary as we get your feedback.