

Our Vision at St Marks

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[0 : 0 0] Helen Keller, I don't know if you know who she was. She was a famous American social reformer in the first quarter of the 20th century.

And she was a writer and lecturer. And she did amazing things for her society, for her country, such as her campaigning for the rights of marginalized and her work in politics, even though it wasn't a woman's realm.

She did some amazing things, amongst other things, many things that she did for her country. But what made Helen Keller really remarkable is that she did all this while being completely blind and deaf, as the result of an illness that she got when she was only 19 months old.

But despite that handicap, quite a debilitating handicap, that didn't stop her from making the most of her time on earth, using every hour, every minute to the best that she could, and working hard to achieve great things, which she did.

Now, you've got to ask her, you've got to ask, what motivated her to doing all that? You know, she didn't have to. She could have just said, well, I'm deaf and blind, so I'll just get charity and live as best I can and just wheedle away my time on earth.

[1 : 1 8] But she didn't. She was driven. What drove her? We've got to ask. And the answer to that can be found in what was probably one of her most famous quotes, where she was, in fact, commenting on what it was like to live life blind.

And she said this, The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision. That's interesting, isn't it, for a blind person to say? The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.

You see, Helen Keller was a person who overcame the obstacles of her life because she was driven by a vision. She couldn't physically see the world around her, but in her mind's eye she saw a better world.

And that's the world she lived and worked towards. You see, Helen Keller is someone who shows us the importance of having vision in our lives, the importance of having a goal for the future that we can't yet see, something concrete to strive towards, to work for, to get up out of bed in the morning, instead of just living day by day and hoping that today is going to be okay.

That's no way to live. People like Helen Keller show us we need to live with a vision. And she's not the only one. Corporations, businesses in our world realize the need for a clear vision statement.

[2 : 3 7] All the successful businesses out there have a vision statement so that everyone in the company is working towards the same goal and they know what they're about. Personally, we often have our own vision or goal that we strive towards, that we aim to, whether it's, I don't know, to lose 10 kilos in a month or however long that takes, or to run a marathon in under four hours, or just to run a marathon full stop.

You know, we have goals that we set and those things are the things that we strive towards and that we work towards more than we would have worked if we didn't have a vision. They drive us to work hard.

And when people share a common vision, when a group of people all share the same vision, they're able to do things together that they would never have done by themselves.

And that's why it's just as important for a church like us at St. Mark's to have a clear vision of who we are and where we're going, instead of just take it a day at a time, a month at a time.

You know, I'm honest to say that there are thousands of churches out there right now that are just stagnating. They're going nowhere. They've got a, you know, maybe they're a quarter full or a half full.

[3 : 58] They've got their stalwarts who come every Sunday, but they're not really doing anything in their community. They're not going anywhere. They're not growing. With the congregation members, they do have all really wanting slightly different things from their church.

They want their church maybe to go different places so that in the end it really goes nowhere. There's many, many churches out there just like that. And we don't want St. Mark's to be one of those churches. And that's why we've devoted this whole service to being our vision Sunday, where we all, I hope, my goal for us is that when we walk out of, not those doors because you're going to come have coffee and fellowship, out of those doors after the service, that you will know what St. Mark's is here to do and what you, what your role to play in it is.

That's what I hope. Of course, the difference between a church's vision and say a corporate vision or a personal vision is, as Alan said earlier, a church's vision is not what we want our church to be, right?

So much as what we understand what God wants our church to be. And therefore, it needs to be based totally in Scripture. And that's why I hope you have your Bibles with you or the Pew Bibles that you open them and look at what we're doing.

I'll also put the verses that we talk about up on the screen, but I suggest you turn to Matthew 28. Because that's what we're going to meditate on mostly. And because of the importance of a vision, another thing that Alan mentioned is that our church leadership, our council, a few weeks ago got together on a Saturday morning.

[5 : 33] And what we did is we didn't come around the table and go, well, what do we want our church to be and come up with ideas? We opened the Bible. We split into groups and we opened the Bible and we looked everywhere where God is talking about the church's mission, the church's role on earth.

And we studied what God has said He wants us to be. And He wants us to be busy with. What He wants you as a member of a church to be busy with. And so we took that, we took all of that, we collated it and we summarized it into our own unique vision statement specifically for St. Mark's Plumstead in the community, in the context that we're in.

And we're going to look at that together now. And our vision statement, it really comes in two parts. The first part describes, based on God's word, what we want to be as a church, following what God wants us to be, of course.

While the second part describes what we want to be doing as a church. So that's the difference. The first part is who we want to be. Second part is what we want to do. So let's look at each in turn.

Firstly, who we want to be as a church, St. Mark's Plumstead. Now, of course, who we want to be is who God wants us to be, which we've summed up as follows.

[6 : 51] We want to be a growing family of Christ's disciples. Now, each of those words, each of those words have had a lot of discussion and a lot of meaning behind them.

So we're going to take each word and unpack it more. Let's start with Christ. And there's a reason we start with Christ. Because our identity as a church centers on Jesus Christ, who he is and what he's done.

And the word Christ itself is important. You know, we could have said we want to be a growing family of Jesus' disciples, which would have been fine. But Christ has another meaning to it.

I wonder if you knew that that's not Jesus' surname. People often think that's kind of surname of Jesus on his ID document. But no, rather, Christ is his title.

It means king, lord, ruler. And God tells us. You see, prophecies for thousands of years in the Old Testament had spoken of a Christ, a Messiah to come, this mysterious figure who would come and rule God's people and establish God's kingdom.

[7 : 53] Nobody knew who it was. But then Jesus came. And God showed us that Jesus is this Christ. He is the king of God's kingdom. A kingdom that is even now breaking into our fallen world.

It's not a kingdom that's just to come in the future. It'll be culminated in the future. But right now, the kingdom is breaking in. God's rule is breaking into people's lives. It's breaking into homes.

It's bringing light where there was darkness all around the world. An eternal kingdom that one day will put a complete end to all sin and all suffering and all death and restore this world to what God originally intended it to be.

And that kingdom is coming. Jesus is right now, this morning, all over the world. Jesus is working through his church, through his people. He's working on bringing people into his kingdom, bringing his rule into their lives.

And that's the kingdom. That's our hope. That's what we've got to look forward to. Not just a pie in the sky, life after death, but true, real life in a new, restored creation.

[8 : 59] That is what we're working towards. That's what we're looking towards. But, you know, if we shared this with our work colleagues and people outside who aren't Christians, they might say, oh, that's nice, pie in the sky.

You know, everybody's got to have some kind of belief. How do we know that what we believe is actually true? And it's not just wishful thinking. How do we know that Jesus is truly the king?

Well, the reason is simple. The reason is because Jesus rose from the dead. Okay? Jesus is alive. And that, beyond the shadow of a doubt, proves to us that he is not just another pretender.

Jesus is the king that God had sent to us, has sent to us. He's risen from the dead. It's a historically recorded, verifiable historical fact.

And that is the defining world-changing moment in human history. And after that happened, after Jesus rose from the dead, he told his disciples these amazing words from Matthew 28. He says, You see, that's the significance of the resurrection of Jesus.

[10 : 13] That's what his resurrection proved. That, as Philippians tells us, And that means, This is a truth that the Bible affirms throughout.

Jesus is Christ. And that means that Jesus is right now the rightful king over every human being, whether or not they recognize that kingship.

Those ISIS extremists in Syria, Jesus is their king, even though they don't realize it. You know, that skeptical professor in Oxford who has nothing to do with religion, Jesus is his king, and he will have to bow the knee to Jesus one day.

Everybody is under the rule of Jesus. That's what he means when all authority has been given to me. There's nobody that's outside of the rule and accountability of God's king, God's son, Jesus Christ.

But those who do bow the knee in this life, before it's too late, those people, you know what they're called? They're called his disciples. Disciples. And that's the second word I want us to look at in our vision statement.

[11 : 38] We want to be disciples. We don't just want to be people who believe Jesus. We want to be disciples. Now, the word disciple is an interesting one. It actually comes from the same Latin word as the word discipline.

They're the same word, essentially, in two different ways. And that sums up, that word discipline sums up really what a disciple is. It's someone who disciplines their life under the guidance of someone else.

In this case, Jesus Christ. And a disciple is someone who lives a disciplined life. Like, let's just take, for example, if you had a personal goal, let's say to lose weight.

Now, to achieve that goal for yourself, to achieve that vision, you've got to be disciplined, don't you? You've got to resist the chocolate pudding when it comes to you because you have a goal, a vision, which is directing what you're going to eat and what you're not.

You've got to exercise when you don't feel like it. Before work, at six in the morning, you've got to get out and it's maybe cold and you've got to go for a run. You've got to put those things into place.

[12 : 43] You've got to be disciplined to achieve a goal, right? If you've got goals in life, you must be disciplined to achieve them. The same is true of the vision that Christ gives us for our lives. You see, to live towards that vision that He's called us to, of His coming kingdom and us being part of that amazing kingdom, we need to be disciplined now.

We need to forsake certain things and we need to do other things that we might not feel like, which means being a disciple. That's what it means to be a disciple.

It means being disciplined. Here's an example. Jesus' original disciples, we've just got to look at them to see what disciples are like. And what I love about the original disciples is they were just humans, the same as us.

They were dumb. They made mistakes. They were dull. They didn't understand. Jesus called them as much. But you know what they did? They dropped everything for Him.

They dropped everything to follow Him, even if that meant leaving all their comforts behind. And so yes, they fell. Yes, they were sinners. Yes, they had issues. But they were disciplined to follow Jesus.

[13 : 54] They sacrificed things. They lined up their lives to Him. And He calls His church to do the same, to be disciples. Another thing He calls us to do, the next word I want us to look at, is to grow.

To grow. To grow. Just before Jesus ascends to His throne in heaven, He gives His disciples one last mission, which is a mission that will last the rest of their lives.

And that is to make more disciples. That's their mission. It's pretty simple, and yet very difficult. Very challenging. In other words, their mission was to replicate.

To replicate, which they went on to do as they planted churches around the Mediterranean, which were full of more disciples who then went on to plant churches in Europe and North Africa, which were full of more disciples who went on to plant churches further and further, until eventually a group of them in the 1960s planted St. Mark's Plumstead with exactly the same mission as those original disciples, which was to make more disciples, to carry on growing.

Which means that just as Christ never expected His original disciples to stay at 11, we at St. Mark's are not meant to stay at 80 or so people. We're meant to be growing.

[15 : 19] We're meant to be replicating. You know, Jesus describes the church as His body. And you know one mark of a healthy body is that it's growing, that its cells keep replicating, and it keeps getting stronger.

That's a healthy body. And if we're going to be a healthy body of Christ, we need to do the same. If we're not growing, something's wrong. And so our vision, our goal, something we should all desire for this church is to be seeing new people come through those doors, to have new and unknown people sit next to us.

For us, horror of horrors, even to shift over and let the new people sit down in the seat that we normally sit in. We should be new people oriented. We should be visitor oriented. We want people to come from outside and be exposed to God's Word.

We want light to break into their lives of darkness. And we should be jumping from the ceilings whenever we see a new person come into our church.

We should make them feel welcome. We should make them want to come back. We should pray for them that they're hearing God speak to them. We should want to be seeing our church full.

[16 : 32] So much so that it's uncomfortably full that we have to start new services to accommodate more people and that we have to get more staff to minister to more people and that we'll need to plant more churches to reach more people from this moment.

I mean, we've got 27,000 people in Plumstead Southfield. We can't afford just to sit around and keep the gospel to ourselves. ourselves. We want to grow.

We want to grow. And we want to, of course, growth is numerically as well as personally. We want to grow in our own understanding of Christ, our own understanding of the gospel. We want to grow in our obedience to Christ.

We want to help each other to discipline each other to be disciples. And you know, one of the best places to do that is Bible study. That's why Alan made a point of Bible studies earlier. Because that's where we grow, where we hold each other accountable.

Where we train to be disciples of Christ. So we want to be growing. There's one more aspect to who we want to be before we move on to what we want to be doing. And that is, have a look at the vision statement again on the screen.

[17 : 38] It's to be a family. A family. Because you see, we're not a corporation and we're not a club. The primary way Scripture describes the church is in terms of a family.

which it really is. On one occasion when Jesus was teaching in a house, his mother and his brothers came, they were looking for him, they wanted to speak to him, but there were so many people in the house that they couldn't get in, and so they asked someone to call him.

And you know what he did? He didn't stop his teaching and say, oh, sorry, my family's here, I better go, you know, obligations. No. In fact, he did something quite the opposite.

Listen to what he said. He said, who is my mother and who are my brothers? Pointing to his disciples, he said, here are my mother and my brothers.

You see, his real family were his disciples. That's what Jesus said. Not that he neglected his blood family, his blood brothers and mother, and neither should we neglect ours.

[18 : 45] We have a role and a responsibility, but Jesus prioritized his disciples as his primary family because they were going to be his family in eternity, while his blood family were only going to be for a short time on earth.

They were only a temporary family. Your blood brothers and sisters are only your temporary family on earth. And while they're important, our real family, if you're a disciple of Jesus, your real family is right here in this room this morning.

your fellow disciples are your true brothers and sisters who are your eternal family, your lasting, your solid family.

And that's quite a mind shift for us, isn't it? Because in our daily life we spend a lot of time communicating with our family family, with our blood family. We prioritize them.

And what about our church family? We might only see them once a week. There's something wrong. If Jesus' priorities are the other way around. And so, we need to get this mind shift.

[19 : 48] We need to start seeing these people right here this morning as your family, your real family. And what that means is we need to start living as a family. Spending more time together instead of having a three minute conversation after church.

You know, working through issues with each other instead of just avoiding each other and sitting on the other side of the church. Exposing each other to our real lives. Here's an example. Invite your fellow Christian around to your house and don't tidy it up.

Alright? Try that. It's quite challenging. Just be yourself. I mean, I hope you have a fairly tidy house. But just be yourself. It doesn't matter if things are lying around. You don't mind if your family sees that.

You shouldn't mind if your Christian brothers and sisters see that. You know, let's take down these kind of facades that we have. These veneers that we put up on Sundays. Let's show each other our real lives.

Let's share with each other our challenges. Let's share the sins that we're falling into and ask for prayer. Again, in Bible studies that's a great place to do that. Let's be real with each other.

[20 : 53] As a family is. Because that's what we are. And do you know what? We're going to be a family in eternity. So we can't avoid each other forever. Let's start being that family now.

And not just any family. but a growing family of Christ's disciples. Which then leads on to the second part of our vision which is what we want to do.

So that's who we want to be. A growing family of Christ's disciples. So what do we want to be doing? What do we want to see ourselves doing in the months and years to come? Well again, based on scripture we've summarized it into two main activities that should mark out our church.

And that is to faithfully live out the gospel every day and to joyfully share the gospel everywhere. And you'll notice that both of these activities they center around the gospel.

The gospel is central to everything we do. Now the gospel literally means good news. It's news because it's actual events like news you read in the newspaper.

[21 : 59] It's actual events that have happened in our world in our history. They're not just myths and legends. They're not just good teachings for life. They're not just moral stories. It's real historical fact that's happened.

It's news and it's good news because it reveals the one way to have our sins forgiven before a holy God. The only way to have our biggest problem solved which is our sin against God and His wrath for our sin.

The gospel, the good news reveals the one way to have our sins forgiven, wiped away and to find life, real life now. The gospel changes how we live now.

Jesus said, I have come to bring you life and life to the full but also primarily eternal life to come. All because of what Jesus did when He gave Himself on the cross.

It's the greatest news the world has ever heard and if you believe it, it will change your life. And we want to be a church full of people who don't just believe the gospel but whose lives have been changed by the gospel.

[23 : 06] Firstly, by faithfully living out that gospel every day. Faithfully. What do we mean by faithfully? Well, in the Bible that word faithful doesn't just mean consistently or without giving up.

You know, we might refer to our dog. He's a very faithful dog. He's a fighter. So faithful. But that's not in the Bible. Faithful means much more than that. It means what faithful means is living your life in line with what you believe to be true.

Even if you can't see it, that's what faith is. Faith is being certain of what we can't see. God has given us this amazing gift of faith which is the ability to know something for sure about our future.

I mean, think about that. Nobody else other than those in Christ actually has that amazing gift of knowing something for certain and having that knowledge implanted and then they know it. You know, you don't need to show me scientific evidence.

I know what's to come because Jesus has come and given me faith. And we have that certainty. And so, Paul says that disciples of Christ are to live by faith and not by sight.

[24 : 11] We are now to start living our daily lives according to that certainty. We are to focus on where we're going, not where we are basically. That's what we mean by faithful. So what does that look like in everyday life?

Faithful living. How does that come out tomorrow when you go to work or when you go home? You know, what does it look like in our day-to-day lives? Well, it's seen, for example, in how we spend our time and our money.

For one, are we using our resources for a better life on earth or are we spending our resources on the things that will last for eternity, the proclamation of the gospel and the expansion of God's kingdom?

You know, one of the best ways to discover what a person is living for and what they prioritize in their life is to look at their bank statement, to look at their expenses, to see what they're spending their money on.

Jesus said, do not store up for yourself treasures on earth that will last only a short time, but store up treasures in heaven. Put your money and your effort and your time and your resources into things that are going to come rather than things that are here now.

[25 : 19] Because we know they're going to come because we have faith, we can live by faith and it'll look ridiculous to people who don't have that faith, that we're spending our money on something that they think is just a waste of money.

Gospel proclamation, new churches. But because we have faith, we know we can invest our money in something to come. Now that's one way. Another way of living by faith is seen in how we handle trials and suffering and sickness and pain in life.

It's knowing that no matter how bad they are, they will not last. It's their only temporary which changes the way we handle suffering. It's still hard. It's still difficult. It's still painful but we know if we have that faith that God has given us that it is only ever temporary.

Eternity is close at hand and we need not fear because we know who's in control. And that perspective, that eternal perspective, that faithful perspective of the world to come, it changes everything.

As Paul said in Romans of disciples, he said our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. And if we've got our eyes fixed on that glory, it will change the way we live and that is faithful living, that is disciple living.

[26 : 36] Living by faith is also seen in how we love. Christians love, disciples love very differently to people who aren't following Christ.

You see, because our faith tells us that Christ loves us immensely, so much that he gave his life willingly in place of ours.

He suffered the penalty for our sins in our place. He gave all of that. He didn't have to, and yet he did because of love. And I mean already, just knowing that the king of the universe loves you, loves you intensely every day, that's just life changing.

That's mind boggling. But that should also lead us to then love others in the same way, sacrificially. Jesus said to his disciples the night before he died, he said, a new command I give to you, love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Jesus is trying to make a point. He repeated it three times. He only gave two major commands to his disciples before he ascended to heaven.

[27 : 49] And that was the great commission that we read earlier, and this, love one another. And you can only do that. You can only love with the love of Christ if you first experience that love yourself through the gospel.

That's why he says, as I have loved you, so you must love one another. Not just go and love each other, but look at how much I've loved you, and when you experience that love, when you really experience it, then that will overflow into your relationships with other people.

And your network of relationships, if you're a disciple, is completely different to the relationships that someone has if they're not a disciple, because we have Christ's love in us.

We've experienced his love for us, which is revealed in the gospel, and it's confirmed by the spirit who dwells in us. Or do you maybe still need to experience that?

Have you experienced that love? love? Or not yet? Well, if you know that you haven't, if you know that something is missing, if you know that you're not one of these disciples that I'm talking about, then come talk to me.

[29 : 02] You know, I'd love to pray with you. I'd love to help you to make that decision to be a disciple of Christ. I'd love to show you and expound for you the gospel that proves God's love for you.

Please come speak to me. If you haven't yet experienced that, you don't want to miss out on that amazing truth of Christ's love for you.

It will change you completely. And you see, we want to be a church of disciples who faithfully live out the gospel every day of our lives, in our homes. We want our priorities and our time and our resources to be changed in what we do at home.

We want our network of relationships, the way we relate to our children, our parents, our brothers and sisters, our work colleagues, our neighbors. We want that to be changed. We want this church to be a church full of people who are faithfully living out the gospel every day.

We want the gospel to shine out of all we do because if the gospel shines out there in the workplace and at home, then it'll draw people here when we gather together to hear the gospel and themselves to become disciples of Christ.

[30 : 12] Christ. And that leads us to the second thing that we want to be doing, which is we want to be joyfully sharing the gospel with others everywhere, which is just as important as faithfully living it out in our own lives.

And so if you like, what we are doing as a church focuses on our discipleship, our inward life together as a church in the first line of what we're doing, faithfully living out the gospel.

And then the second line is focusing on our outward life, our relationship with the people around us. We read earlier from Psalm 96, which describes God's people coming together for worship, not unlike what we're doing this morning, which of course is just another outworking of faith.

If you truly believe the gospel, you will joyfully respond to it. And as we sing on a Sunday morning, that is a great opportunity for you to joyfully respond with your brothers and sisters to the gospel.

But notice what Psalm 96 says. It's very interesting. It says, sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Sing to the Lord. Praise his name. Proclaim his salvation day after day.

[31 : 24] Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deed among all peoples. Now there's a very subtle but vital transition in these verses. I wonder if you've noticed it.

You see, it starts with God's people gathered together, praise God. And you read a few lines and suddenly, all of a sudden, they're proclaiming his gospel to the nations, to people who haven't heard about Christ yet.

And so we're not just to praise God, to talk about God to each other. We're also to talk about God to the world. We're to proclaim his salvation among the nations.

You know, the idea is that sharing the gospel with others should just be a natural outflow of our praises to God. And so you know what? I can tell how active your personal evangelism is by looking at how loudly you're singing on a Sunday morning.

Because they come from the same source. Your joy at salvation that you sing out on a Sunday morning will translate to your joy out in the world where you share it with others. The more excited we are about God on Sunday, the more we'll want to share what he's done Monday to Saturday.

[32 : 36] And we'll do that not because we have to, but because we want to. Isn't that what you want? Don't you want evangelism to be a joy, not a burden?

Don't you not want to be petrified when you hear the E word from the pulpit and you think, oh no, here we go again. I've got to share my faith. No, don't you want it to be something that naturally happens that you want to do, of course.

Something that you're excited about and not fearful of. Well, you know what? It can be. It can be. And that's what we want it to be at St. Mark's for every person who comes here. We want to be so taken by the gospel truth, so excited by it that we can't keep quiet about it.

And so much so that we don't just want to reach Plumstead with that gospel, but we want to be involved and partner with other disciples. George Whitfield College who is sending people out into Africa.

Our brothers and sisters who are working on the Cape Flats elsewhere in South Africa with all the challenges they face. And the rest of Africa and the world, we want to be partnering with other disciples.

[33 : 42] In other words, we want to have no limits to what we do, to our proclamation of the gospel. No limits. It reminds me, in fact, of a reality adventure show that I once watched called Expedition Impossible, where certain teams of extreme athletes, it was a very interesting show to watch.

There was only one season though, so I don't know if you can get it still. Anyway, there were three of these people per team, women and men, and these teams would race each other over weeks through all kinds of terrain, up mountains, down rivers, scale mountains, and rapid, you know, they would do all these crazy adventure type things, and they would be racing each other, each leg.

Anyway, each of the teams had names that they gave themselves, and one of the teams, this team behind me, was called No Limits. And there was something different about this team to all the other teams that competed, and that is one of its members was blind, completely blind.

The guy on the left there, his name was Eric, he was completely blind. He did the whole thing, he did these crazy bungee jumping and scaling cliffs blind, because he had his brothers with him, helping him, and like Helen Keller, he had a vision.

He had a vision to do well, to succeed, to win this thing. And they didn't end up winning, but they did end up coming second place, runners up, in, of all the 13 teams who competed, the team with the blind guy came second, which is amazing, but it shows you, doesn't it, the power of vision, and the power of working together.

[35 : 19] And we want St. Mark's to be a team of brothers and sisters with no limits. Because even though we might not see a whole lot now, we've got vision. The vision that God's given us in his word for who he wants us to be, and where he wants us to go, and that is to be a growing family of Christ's disciples, who faithfully live out the gospel every day, and joyfully share the gospel everywhere.

Now, as I close, all that's left to ask is, is this a vision that you want to be part of? Do you see yourself faithfully living out the gospel every day?

Not just being a church goer, but being a person who has decided to follow Christ and live for him every new day, no matter where that takes you. Do you see yourself joyfully sharing the gospel everywhere, looking for every opportunity you can to tell people about Christ?

Not because you have to, but because you want to, because you're so excited about the gospel. Because, you see, if you can't see yourself there, then we can hardly hope that our church is going to get there.

It needs to start with each one of us. Each one of us needs to take this vision to memorize it, to make it part of who we are, and to help you to do that.

[36 : 37] I have a gift for you. I feel a little bit like Oprah Winfrey, but it's not the case. In your prayer books, in front of the yellow slips, you will find a bookmark that we've created, especially for you to take home, to put in your Bibles, or to stick up on the fridge, or whatever.

But it's, just keep it, don't throw it away. Okay, it's laminated. Do you know how much money that costs? Don't throw it away. All right. And this is so that you can have the vision in your Bible, so that when you read your Bible and you pray, you can bring out this bookmark and you can pray for this vision.

Pray over this vision for your own life. Pray over this vision for St. Mark's Plumstead. And then, when we get into a habit of all pointing the same direction, all praying for the same thing, all working towards the same thing, looking forward to the same great vision, then we can get ready for God to do great things here.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word, for the great commission that you've given us to make disciples of all nations.

Lord, we thank you for explaining in your word just what that entails, the making of disciples, to live out the gospel, to share the gospel. And Lord, we pray for this church, this group of disciples of Christ.

[38 : 00] I pray for all of those here this morning who know they are not disciples yet. I pray, Lord, that you would cause them to take a step, to make a decision, to follow you, to give their lives to you.

And Lord, I pray for all the brothers and sisters here, our disciples. Lord, help us to be a family. Help us to spur one another on to love and good deeds.

And help us to be so joyful, so excited by the gospel in these coming months and years that we will want to share it and that this church will grow and that many people will come to salvation through what you are doing here.

Lord, help us. Help us to make this vision our own and give us your Holy Spirit to give us all that we need to carry it out in Jesus' name. Amen.