

# GREATER THAN OUR CULTURE

MAY 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2011

## INTRODUCTION

### GREETING

Welcome to Sunday, my name is Brent.

If this is your second Sunday I would especially like to welcome you to Gateway Fellowship.

We had an excellent weekend where we...

- Gave over 10,000 eggs to 100's of kids
- Hosted our first Gateway 5K with lots of food and live music
- Had our first Good Friday service in years
- Enjoyed an original production from Chad and the music team

... and I wanted to thank you all for helping out.

You made me proud to be a part of this church family and I hope that we did the same for you.

### OVERVIEW

Today we are going to talk about the relationship between the greatness of God and culture.

We are going to take a look through scripture and answer the following questions

What is our culture?

How is God greater than our culture?

What is our role in God's greatness?

What does God's greatness look like?

I have been praying that God would open our hearts and see this broken world with compassion.

That you and I would be compelled to engage the culture that surrounds us.

That we would be a part of Christ's redemption of this sinful and fallen world.

(pray)

## WHAT IS OUR CULTURE?

### CULTURE IS THE WAY WE LIVE AND GROW.

The word *culture* is connected to the idea organic creation or *cultivation*

Think of growing things in a garden and all that it requires: soil, water, temperature, sunlight

All of these things are critical for the types of plants that will grow

They will determine whether or not they will survive and how healthy they can become

The word also is used to describe the way in which people live

These often are not stated or written down anywhere... they just are

We share values, attitudes and goals

It determines the way in which we view the world and how we chose to act accordingly

### CULTURE IS EVERYWHERE.

It is impossible to escape *culture* because it is everywhere

Even the most isolated among us are heavily influenced by the culture in which we live

Culture can be good or bad

It is a complex thing and can be difficult to pin down because it is always in motion

You have been shaped by your culture

What does culture look like? (pictures of culture)

It is entirely possible to examine culture with a microscope and separate people into extremely small groups.

All of these are a part of American culture but few of us would fully identify with one of them

Your perspective on culture can be great or small (picture of perspective on culture)

### GOD IS GREATER THAN OUR CULTURE

God is greater than the cultures of our world

God is greater than the culture of this church

## HOW IS GOD GREATER?

### JESUS CAME TO REDEEM THE WORLD

God created everything and it was perfect.

“in the beginning God created...” –Genesis 1.1

Humans were given free will and chose to reject God.

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” –Romans 3.23

Our fall set in motion God’s plan for redemption... it is the very story that we told last week!

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” - John 3.16

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” –Romans 10.13

This is the good news: that we have been redeemed through Jesus Christ!

### THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS ARE HIS BODY ON EARTH

Paul was a Christian leader who wrote letters of instruction to the newly formed groups of Christ followers.

In a letter to the group in Colossi he summarizes what we are saying,

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

<sup>21</sup> Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup> But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— <sup>23</sup> if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

## HOW IS GOD GREATER?

### THE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S BODY ON EARTH

God is the head of the church. We are in Him.

This metaphor of the body of Christ is used again in a letter to a group of Christians in Ephesus.

“...speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” –Ephesians 4.15-16

Each and every one of those who believe in Jesus are in His body and serve a crucial role in His plan for redemption.

## WHAT IS OUR ROLE IN HIS GREATNESS?

### WE LIVE IN TENSION

Jesus has conquered sin and death but many people still chose to sin

God's kingdom is available to everyone but many reject His truth

We find ourselves in between two worlds

We are a part of God's kingdom longing for the fullness of His Kingdom on earth

We are living in a sinful world and separate ourselves from all godlessness

But you are more than an alien waiting for things to come

You are an ambassador from God's kingdom to every part of this world

### OUR TASK IS RECONCILIATION

Our mission is clearly laid out in 2 Corinthians 5

"<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

God would have us be agents of His reconciliation.

Jesus gave us a clear mission before he left earth to go into heaven.

"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." –Matthew 28.19-20

## OUR TASK IS NOT REJECTION

The ministry of reconciliation stands in stark contrast with many people's view of Christianity.

They see Jesus-following as world-rejecting

To follow Jesus does not mean that we reject the world; it means that we reject ourselves.

God's creation is good, it is we who bring sin into the mix.

Deny yourself to follow Christ

God loved the world and sent Christ to redeem it

We are an instrument of Christ's redemption

Become salt and light in the places that need it most.

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

A pastor named Erwin McManus once described our culture as a flowing river

He imagined us trying to influence the water by capturing buckets full from the shore

No matter how large, or smart or attractive our buckets became we could not influence the river

Only when we decided to get into the water could we begin to shape the currents around us

Our culture cannot be influenced from the shore; we must be willing to wade in the current to begin a real change.

Jesus Christ did not minister from the shore

Political traitors, prostitutes, the infected, the poor, and the rejected:

He loved them in the places that they were from.

## ABANDONED TO CHRIST

It looks like total abandonment to Christ.

Engaging our culture may cost us everything.

<sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple... <sup>34</sup> Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? <sup>35</sup> It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out." Luke 14.26-27, 34-35

Being a Jesus follower is not safe.

## WE MUST ENGAGE OUR CULTURE

There is nothing to fear because God is greater.

It looks like loving the women who visit the abortion clinic

It looks like supporting your community during Halloween

It looks like walking for AIDS research on Capitol Hill

It looks like feeding people who cannot provide for their family

Engaging the culture looks like our church is out on a limb

Living out God's plan for redemption in the places that people are from