



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau
Nov 4, 2018
Ambition of the Vine (Hope Restored Series)
Pastor Dan Chun

Mark 10:32 *They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again He took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to Him.*

Mark 10:33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," He said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles,

Mark 10:34 who will mock Him and spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. Three days later He will rise."

Mark 10:35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

Mark 10:36 "What do you want me to do for you?" He asked.

Mark 10:37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

Mark 10:38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

Mark 10:39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,

Mark 10:40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

Mark 10:41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.

Mark 10:42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.

Mark 10:43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Mark 10:44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Once again, the disciples just don't get it! James and John, what are you thinking? In a previous chapter, two things happened. First, the disciples didn't get it about how Jesus children must always have access to Him. Second, incredibly the disciples were arguing who of them would be the greatest. And now again, in this chapter, the disciples James and John ask Jesus if they could please sit on His right and left – the positions of prominence when Jesus goes to Heaven since He just told them He was going to die.

No empathy from them even after Jesus told them that He was going to be scourged, beaten, and killed on a cross. They only wanted to know that after He was tortured and killed could they pretty please be in the highest seats of prominence and be seen as the greatest!

The Bible says that James and John's nickname was the "Sons of Thunder." Why were they called that? Probably because they would speak before thinking. Probably because they were loud and boisterous and obnoxious, so much so that people would say, "Oh no, here come James and John, the Sons of Thunder!"

We can certainly see that John especially is struggling with his lack of humility. Why? It was this John that was extremely competitive. First, four times he referred to himself in the Gospel that he wrote – the Gospel of John as the "one whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20). Really John, you had to set yourself apart from the others as the one whom Jesus really loved.

Then get this: John had to put in his Gospel that he was a faster runner than Peter. Read this verse about what happened right after the death of Jesus. In the Gospel of John, John refers to himself also as "the other disciple."

John 20:2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple [who is John], the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

John 20:3 Then Peter and the other disciple [who is John] set out and went toward the tomb.

John 20:4 The two were running together, but the other disciple [who is John] outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

Really, John did you have to put that in that you were faster? What makes this verse even more incredible is when we read the very last chapter and verse of the Gospel that John wrote:

John 21:24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true.

John 21:25 But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Wait a minute! John is telling us that there were so many things, far too numerous, to mention everything that JESUS DID that he could not write them down, but he somehow made room in his gospel to tell us that he was a faster sprinter than Peter! John's ambition was to make himself look good and it seeped into his historical writing.

But then as he got older and was reportedly banished to the island of Patmos, he got wiser. He saw that competition is not the best way, but rather cooperation and love and to serve God for His sake and not John's. We shouldn't use Jesus to make us look good.

In a letter he wrote to the churches, John's tone of it being all about him changed to being all about God's love and loving others:

1John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1John 4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

John finally seemed to get it as he got older. His ambition changed from himself towards the things of Christ.

Here's a spiritual truth: The more we know God, the more we know Jesus, the more our heart expands with His love. It becomes less about us. We will love people, animals, and the God's creation of nature more.

The older I get in the faith, the more my heart enlarges. I have a greater desire to share the love of Jesus with people. I see the precious role and life of animals. I see our responsibility for creation care. I have a greater heart for the utterly poor, homeless and the incarcerated, and for evangelism.

As our church and faith matures, our ambitions transform and we see how we must expand and reach out more to those in need spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Hopefully our heart enlarges.

This is part of the reason, as you heard last week, of why we are going to start a satellite campus in Kaka'ako, where we will have more opportunity for worship services, reaching the unchurched, the young families flocking to live in the new condominiums and apartments there, the elderly in the senior citizen homes there, those in transitional housing, those without homes, and other folks in need in the area.

As we get to know Jesus more, our hearts expand. It becomes more about God, and less about us. Meanwhile, here at the Ko'olau campus, worship and discipleship will remain strong and dynamic. But there comes a time when we extend our borders and be more involved in helping to renew the city.

As you heard last Sunday, the site we have chosen is at 547 Halekauwila Street, a block Diamond Head of Punchbowl Street. It needs to be

remodeled before our church can move in and use it. It will cost 547-thousand dollars for the construction, furnishing of a simple café, the worship and ministry areas, the sound and light equipment, and the first year's expenses of ministry. Hence, we started *The 547 Project*, which is an appeal to raise 547-thousand dollars, which is the cost to move into 547 Halekauwila. Aren't you glad the address wasn't 999 Halekauwila or else we would be raising \$999,000.



We are hoping all of us in the church can contribute toward this amount by Nov 22, Thanksgiving Day, before the construction begins in December. The goal is to give out of thanksgiving to God with the hope of reaching others for Him.

Hopefully by now you have received an email or a packet in the mail with an FAQ sheet and an envelope for this cause and mission. We are asking you to pray for *The 547 Project* at 547 Halekauwila and hopefully contribute that we might have 547-thousand to expand our hearts in the city of Honolulu.



Last Sunday I gave a sermon giving more details about the vision for this campus. If you missed it, please go and watch it on our website or church app.

If you didn't get the information packet or email, please drop by *The 547 Project* table in the Fellowship Hall, the hospitality table, or the front desk.

In fact, we have 2 informational meetings every Sunday morning until Nov 18. Check the bulletin for the time.

We also have walking tours of the satellite campus and the area for those who are interested to see it before we start renovations.

The site is just three blocks away from *Logos Christian Bookstore*. I neglected to say last week that while First Prez will have all the downstairs of one entire wing and two rooms upstairs, right next to our two rooms upstairs would be the new Hawaiian Islands Office. HIM is moving out of Manoa because the rent is cheaper in Kaka'ako.

Kaka'ako is an area that is rich in Hawaiian Christian History as Kawaiha'o Church and the Mission Houses are nearby, as well as Iolani Palace, former home of our Christian Queen Liliuokalani.

One thing I did not share last week, nor the FAQ's explain in great detail, is what the new name will be of our church satellite. What are we going to call this church? The name will actually give the depth of meaning of our vision and our love for Jesus. It will be biblical, Christ-centered, and relevant.

Some have recommended that we call it "First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu in Kaneohe and Ko'olau and now in Kaka'ako." No. That would be soooo confusing! Remember, a big goal of this satellite is that we want to reach the unchurched and not take people from other churches.

Unchurched people don't care about denominations and would never choose a church because of a denomination. The unchurched don't care if we are Presbyterian. They don't know what it

means and, like many, they may not even know how to spell it.

I once was walking near the waterfall in the other wing the same time a wedding reception was happening, and a young couple was looking at our church exhibits in the glass cases and noticed the name of our church. I was right behind them when they turned to each other and said, "This place is Presbyterian. Do you think they are Christian?"

Most people have no idea what Presbyterians are – especially Hawaii people in a state where there are only six Presbyterian churches.

Look at the word "Presbyterian." It comes from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which means elder. Did you know that? What many of you may not know is that if you scramble the letters of the word "Presbyterians" it actually spells "Britney Spears." Yes, St. Britney.

But if you scramble again the letters of the word Presbyterian it also spells "Best in Prayer!" But since we are so humble like James and John, we don't like to talk about that.

In the gospel of John we read the words of Jesus: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. (John 15:1)

So what name will be biblical, Christ-centered, contemporary, forward-looking but not faddish, and would be all about Jesus? We want the name to have symbolic metaphor possibilities. So, the Elders and I and the staff have chosen this name. The new satellite campus will be known as The Vine

Why the name The Vine? First of all, it is really hard to choose a name that will last over the years and not be trendy or faddish just a few years. We wanted it to be biblical. We wanted it to be centered on Jesus. It has to be about Jesus.

So early on we thought of the seven "I Am" statements of Jesus" in, guess

where, the Gospel of the disciple John, where Jesus described Himself saying:

- I am the Gate
- I am the Resurrection
- I am the Good Shepherd
- I am the Bread
- I am the Light
- I am The Way
- the Truth and the Life, etc.

But then we came to this passage written, in the gospel written by one of the sons of thunder, John. These were not John's words but Jesus':

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.

John 15:2 "He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit He prunes to make it bear more fruit.

John 15:3 "You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

John 15:4 "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:6 "Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned."

John 15:7 "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

John 15:8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

There it is – a strong name, a Jesus-centered name. It's a name that calls us to live for Him, be near to Him, and abide in Him. "I am The Vine, you are the branches."

The new campus will be called The Vine. Our going to Kaka'ako is like a vine reaching out to downtown. But it will be centered on the true Vine – our Lord Jesus. We are the branches.

We are setting up another branch of our church, not a separate church. This is not a church plant but a satellite campus that is still part of us here at Ko'olau. It's a branch, so it's connected. Ko'olau and Kaka'ako will always be connected to give great strength to one another.

David Chang tells me that "early in American wine making, vintners realized that to get high quality wine they needed to use European varietals. However, the foreign vines were vulnerable to adverse soil conditions in the local soil. So, they grafted the European vines onto American rootstock. This made American vineyards competitive.

"Later on in history, European vineyards were hit with a devastating blight. The only thing that saved them was to import American rootstock and graft the European vines onto them. This saved the European vine industry. Virtually every vineyard in Europe has hybrid vines i.e. American Rootstock."

So what is the point? We are going to take what we have at Ko'olau and create a new hybrid in Kaka'ako. It will combine the strength and DNA of Ko'olau but it will have the rootstock of Halekauwila. And both campuses will be strong, thriving, and sturdy for the storms to come, and will be giving life to each other.

Do we hope to have small groups emanating out of there? Yes. Like cluster groups, and Rooted groups. Heck, our senior adults ministry is already called Vintage, those who have matured like fine wine and their best taste is yet to come.

The Biblical significance of the Vine is deep and rich. And it points to the vision of this satellite. The sign of the Promised Land in the Old Testament was a branch with a single cluster of grapes so big that

two men had to carry it on a pole. The sign of the first miracle of Jesus was changing water into wine. The sign of the sacrament of Communion is that the wine represents the blood of Jesus. The sign of the Kingdom of God is a vineyard. The sign of the Messiah is that He is the son of the Vineyard Owner, meaning God the Father.

Is it not interesting that all throughout the gospels Jesus refers to the Kingdom of God as a vineyard? Locally, is it not interesting that this satellite campus is about four blocks from a street called Vineyard Boulevard, where there was once a vineyard during the time of our monarchy in the early 19th century planted by a Spaniard Don Francisco de Paula Marin.

Locally, we have such beautiful images of the vine that represent Hawaii, like the vine of the maile, which we often wear as lei for special occasions.

547 Halekauwila will be like a trellis where the Vine of Christ will be supported and thrive. People can cling to us for support to give them health, direction, and stability, and then later be equipped to go out to serve others.

And I can hear my local friends saying about our church, "Eh brah, tonight, you like go da Vine?" "Oh yeah, man, I hear it is simply da-vine." And they will say about our new church that they heard it through the grapevine.

Like good wine from grapes on The Vine, we hope as we mature in Christ that we get better and fuller in taste. Through the Holy Spirit we can receive the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

The Lord wants us to bear much fruit. But by abiding in Him, being connected like a vine to The Vine, we will be strong and have the fruit of the Holy Spirit. For, as Jesus says, then our joy will be complete.

Abide(or remain) is the key word. Can we all be grafted into our Lord? Can we abide (or remain) in Him and He in us? Hopefully First Prez has been good for our spiritually growth.

In our last January survey of our congregation, 82 percent said this church really helps them abide or engage with God. That's great! But now we come home to the crux of the sermon. As we engage with God and get to know Him, what do we do with that?

For John and James, their relationship with Jesus was initially to promote themselves. They wanted glory and fame for themselves. They wanted to be seated at the right and left of Jesus. They were using Jesus for themselves. That was their ambition.

But for us at First Prez, our AMBITION is to give the glory to Christ; to reflect His greatness and worship Him; to spread His love and help to others in His name. Our AMBITION should be to do whatever He asks. Our ambition is to follow His Great Commission that He told us just before He left:

Matt. 28:19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 28:20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (NLB)

Or as it says in *The Message* paraphrase written by the late Eugene Peterson:

Matt. 28:19 Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Matt. 28:20 Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you.

I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

That should always be our ambition. Not glory for ourselves. We live for Him who is with us day after day after day.

In Shakespeare you hear the famous battle cry in Henry V of "Cry God for Harry, England and Saint George!" Or in *The Chronicles of Narnia* – "For Aslan!" Or more recently in *Black Panther* – "Wakanda forever!" What about us? What is our battle cry?

For Ko'olau and for when we start 547 Halekauwila it is for a deep, deep loyalty and love for Jesus that we want to introduce and train new followers loyal to Him. So our ambitious cry is: "For Jesus forever!" Or maybe, as we said, last week– "Go for broke!"

When we ask you to contribute to *The 547 Project*, you give to Christ Himself who sacrificed greatly for you and me. Our ambition is to honor Him and do what He commanded us to do in The Great Commission because He is the Vine and we are the branches.

As the elders and deacons now prepare Communion for us, in our Bibles today, we are reminded in this sacrament of what the disciples were told by Jesus about His sacrificial love for us:

Mark 10:33 Jesus said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles,

Mark 10:34 who will mock Him and spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. Three days later He will rise."

James and John at first didn't get it. But then they realized after the resurrection that Jesus was the Son of God. Now their ambition was turned from their own selfish desire for power and status, and

instead they went for broke giving their all for Jesus.

Today is a gut check for us. What is our ambition? Knowing that Jesus was saturated with pain for our sake, is our ambition to use Jesus for our benefit, or is our ambition to live for and abide in Him?

James was reportedly martyred for his faith. John was supposedly banished to an island for his allegiance to Jesus. For the two of them, their ambition had been transformed to an ambition for Jesus Christ, the one and true Vine.

Jesus is God who came to earth in the form of a man. And while here, He stood with us. His favorite name for Himself was actually the Son of Man to show His humanity even though He was fully God.

He wants to be our best friend. And as He told the disciples He would go to a cross for our sake. He was beaten, scourged, spat upon, mocked, pierced by thorns and then by nails. When we hear that the Lord was crucified for our sake, we can just dismiss it as "Oh, He was crucified." But the reality was, He was screaming at the top of His lungs in pain and despair. He was drenched with sweat. His cries were horrible as nails were being hammered into His wrists and ankles.

Don't lose that picture for it is in that context, when we know He died for us, that we need to determine what our ambition is. Is it for His cause or just for us?