**Coming Home**

A theme verse for the year:

Psalm 68:6 God sets the lonely in families; he leads forth the prisoners with joyful singing.

My goal here is not to convict you or even to challenge you, but to inspire you with a vision of what God will be doing through our church this year.

This is not our mission. Well… OK… It is our mission, but more fundamentally it is God’s mission.

2020 has been a tough year and, to be honest, 2021 has not started out super awesome, but God is working. God’s kingdom is about to break out in Bakersfield, and I want us to get on that train.

Coming Home: 4 aspects

I. Sheep who have strayed coming home. Restoring those who have left.

II. Those who have never had a real spiritual family coming home. Saving the lost.

III. Us coming home. Drawing the sheep who have been on the periphery of the flock during Covid-19 back closer.

IV. We need to be a home for the Bakersfield community more broadly, even if they do not actually make us their home. This is going to be a kairos-a special moment in time.

Psalm 68:6 God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with joyous music.

I. Sheep who have strayed coming home. Restoring those who have left.

Jesus said to leave the 99 and go get the 1 (Matthew 18:12)

Psalm 107:1-9

Let the redeemed of the Lord say this!!! The Lord is Good. (Jack Walker)

Let’s say this together. I say Let the redeemed of the Lord say this!!!

You say: The Lord is good.

v. 3 Those he brought home from East, West, North and South…

v. 4-5 This is the great majority of those in our world today.

-wandering in wastelands. A sense of a wasted life.

-no way to a place of safety they could settle

-hungry, thirsty, lives “ebbing away” in frivolous, meaningless activities.

v. 6a Some time in 2021 they will cry out.

v. 6b God will deliver them from their distress, but he will do it through Sean Macias, through Jeanette Carravales, through Pam Monroe, through Karen Hadnot, through Egypt Thomas, through Alan Lakin, through Andrew Caldera.

v. 7 YOU will lead them to a city and a home where they can settle.

That city, that home is God’s kingdom, it is the Bakersfield Church of Christ.

We have our weaknesses, but we are a family. When we came here almost two years ago, it was already a family. Sal and Lourdes, Eve and Blaine.

We take care of one another. It is real.

v. 8 And in December, 2021 we will have a Christmas party and they will be thanking you. Thanks to you and to God, their wandering, their hunger, their thirst their feeling that their life has been wasted will give over to a sense of satisfaction and being filled.

II. Those who have never had a real spiritual family coming home. Saving the lost.

Psalm 107:10-16

v. 10 Some sat in darkness and gloom. This has been amplified by Covid!!!

Prisoners in the iron chain of sins.

v. 11a Why? Rebellion against the words of God.

v. 11b They had not received God’s plan for their lives up to noe.

v. 12 They are feeling bitter at their lives. Hopeless.

v. 13 But, in 2021 they will cry to the Lord in their trouble.

Through Heidi Villanueva or Ana Maria Gomez or Angelo Johnson or Joseph Parker, God will save them from their distress.

v. 14 He will break their chains of sin and take them out of gloomy darkness into the light.

v. 15-16 When we have our Christmas banquet/party they will be thanking the Lord, but also you for helping them, for with you God cut through the bars of iron.

Plans:

We will have a face-to-face welcome home banquet—hopefully in April, with great food. We will send out personal invitation packets to those on our list. We will invite former members who are still faithful but who worship at other churches.

After this event we will send a packet to those who do not make it, if we have their address.

In the next week or so we will be developing a list of names, including addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of former members.

We are also planning a New Christian party as soon as Covid allows

Breakout groups:

A. Create a list of those who have strayed from the body, names, phone #s and emails if possible, collect them and have someone in the group send them to me.

B. Create a list of 3-5 non-Christians you will be praying for and sharing with to come home in 2021

Part II

III. Us coming home. Drawing the sheep who have been on the periphery of the flock during Covid-19 back closer. This is happening across our fellowship. Not to judge…

Psalm 107:17-22

v. 17 Some became fools through rebellion.

They suffered affliction.

v. 18 They lost their appetite.

They even considered leaving the church.

v. 19 But in 2021 the cried to the Lord, and he sent Maria Wright or Eve Lyons or Josh Fatherree or Vanessa Newfield or Oscar Perez or Bella George or Rosa Santiago to bring them back in.

v. 20 He healed them and rescued them from possible spiritual death. They became spiritually vibrant again.

And in Dec, 2021 when we have our Christmas party they will give thanks to the Lord!

IV. We need to be a home for the Bakersfield community more broadly, even if they do not actually make us their home.

Psalm 107:23-32

v. 23 Others idolized their work and gave their lives to their jobs.

v. 24 They began to see the way life really works.

v. 25-26 They discovered that the real world is not as safe as they thought.

v. 27 They reeled and staggered under the load or life as it is. They decided relying on God was the only way to safety.

v. 28-29 But then in 2021 God got them to stop for a moment and think about their life and they cried out to God. (like my atheist doctor friend in Boulder)

v. 30-32 And then God used Joelle Douge or Will Morris or Angelica Phillips or Sarah Chevarria to reach out to them and they gave thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love.

And at the Christmas banquet in 2021 they exalted both God and the one who reached out to them and saved them from their idolatry to work and the business of life.

Finish: Psalm 107:33-38

This is what will happen in 2021 for the Bakersfield CoC

v. 35 Desert will turn into pools of water for people.

v. 36 the spiritually hungry will find a home to settle in.

v. 37 They will have a fruitful harvest.

v. 38 God will bless us and our numbers will grow.

Plans

We will be doing prayer times regularly.

Trulywed game 2/13

Bringing singles and campus across Central Valley together.

Campus conference

Singles conference

Midweeks on one another relationships

Having fun together. I want to hear proposals like the trulywed game.

Breakout groups:

What is your vision for 2021. What can you see God doing through you specifically. Please share ideas with me.