

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Vision Sunday

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Reach

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Romans 10:1-15



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If you have a Bible in your hand, turn with me to Romans chapter 10. If you're a guest with us, we are thrilled that you have joined us and pray this time will be encouraging to you and to all of us. If you're at home watching, we're glad that you've also joined us. We should all be very careful in this world when a man stands up and says, "I have a vision from God." Now, there's been all kinds of dictators and false teachers, false prophets, cult leaders who have said such things.

The fact is, is when a vision is baked in the basement of a dirty fallen heart, it's packaged for believability and then it's promised to other people as though it has been given from heaven itself, from God himself. What happens is that that vision can become and people who hear it, an unassailable, unquestionable fuel for evil and greed and power. That said, I have a vision from God that I want to share with you today, but it's not baked in my heart, it's baked from Romans 10.

And what I want to ask you to do is to hold tightly in belief to only those things that I can show you clearly from the scriptures that are pertinent and applicable to all believers at all times, and that you would hold loosely and humbly, assuming corrections over time to the different ways and applications that have been considered of how to take these truths and principles in our own context after recognizing as a congregation, our strengths and weaknesses, and even the city in which we live.

And so I ask you to... with an open heart and also being fierce in your desire to lean in towards the Lord. So let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we confess to you again, as we gather, the world is broken. We see it in our own personal life and responses this week to other people. We see it in our families, we see it in our friendships and we see it in the world, Afghanistan and Haiti and the Southern part of our nation now. There's so many stories that are taking place, families of the troops who were killed as well as so many Afghan citizens.

Lord, there's just so much brokenness around the world and everybody's crying out, everyone's crying they need help. We believe, we believe Jesus that not only does the word confess it, but our experience confesses it as well, and that is we believe you are the only rescuer, the only savior and the only hope of this world. And so we ask that you would pour out your spirit upon us, that you would display power of your Holy Spirit to give us the gift of belief and courage to be able to take this gospel and to reach, to extend ourselves to the point of discomfort in order to be able to help people to understand what you have made available.

And so I ask that you would speak through weakness, that you would glorify your son. And we pray this in Jesus' name, amen. Anytime I think about future planning for my own life or my family or for the church family, I always think of Psalm 90. In Psalm 90, Moses has probably finished his last funeral, not his last one, but the most recent one. And as all the people were dying in the wilderness and they were simply waiting for the next generation to be able to go into the promised land and he's looking around and he sees just remarkable death and he begins talking about how our life is like a vapor and yet God, he is eternal.

And what that does is it leads to a particular kind of prayer that you need to pray when you're considering the course of your life. I know there's a lot of college students, there's a lot of young people in the room right now. And when you're thinking about future direction, whether it's career, whether it's marriage, whether it's how you're going to spend your time, you should think about, you should think about these prayers. When you think about hobbies, when you think about social media, when you think about fantasy football, when you think about giving portions of your life to other things, whatever it is, you should think about this.

He says, "God, would you teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom?" And then he prays, "And let your work, what you're doing in the world be shown to your servants." And the reason this is so significant is this. What Moses is saying is that if you and I could see the totality of the remainder of our days, we could number each and every one of them say, "This is how many I have left." And we can see those days against the backdrop of God's glory and his eternal nature.

We would pause what we were doing, we would ask and say, "God, what are you doing in the world?" And then we would begin to align our steps with his so that our work would be established in the world. This is the path that you find within the scriptures of looking for what he's doing and then aligning yourself to that. And so we have to ask the question, "Well, what is he doing?" And the Bible has one central story, but that one central story is made up of literally thousands of other stories.

And every one of those stories has one central thing that God is doing in that story, and it is this, he desires to be known, he desires to be loved and he desires to be worshiped because it is in our best interest when he is. It's all encapsulated in one verse Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 14, God says, "Let me tell you what I'm doing and what's going to be the result of what I'm doing." He says, "One day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord just as the waters cover the sea."

Every single person is going to bow their knee. Every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all, but for many people, it would be too late. It will be only after they see him in judgment and in glory when they look and they say, "I am totally unprepared for this moment." He uses all kinds of means. He uses sunsets and sunrises, which is why you go to any place in the world.

I've been to like 48 different countries and every single place what you find is there's this natural, longing, yearning, and recognition in the heart that says, "There is someone bigger than us who created and who knows me, but how do I know him? How do I please him? What do I do?" Some people it's the law of God that's written on our heart. There's a category within you for justice, beauty, and truth. It doesn't matter where you go in the world, people have those categories of justice, truth and beauty.

And so what people do is they say, “God, what is the standard by which we all think about the same things, the same way?” Well, Christ came to this earth. He came to this earth and he died on a cross. He rose from the dead and yet God who’s on a mission to show his glory to all the different peoples of the world, the peoples of the world when they saw Christ, they rejected him. And Paul is absolutely, he’s the author of Romans 10, he’s the human author inspired by God. He’s tore up over the fact that Jesus Christ came, he was the revelation of God, he was God.

He came and he says, “This is who I am. This is justice. This is mercy. This is love. This is the standard.” You want a standard of truth and beauty, justice? Here he is, is Jesus. He’s the point and the world has missed the point. And Paul is overwhelmed with sorrow and anguish and grief over this. And so notice what he says starting in verse 1, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them,” that’s unbelievers, “is that they be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

For being ignorant of the righteousness of God and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, who will ascend into heaven?” That is to bring Christ down. Or, “Who will descend into the abyss?” That is to bring Christ up from the dead.”

But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. That is the word of faith that we proclaim. Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For what the heart one believes and is justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the scripture says everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls in the name of the Lord will be saved.

How then will they call on him in who they’ve not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they’ve never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching and how are they to preach unless they are sent? Paul is emotionally stirred. He begins confessing how he stirred all the way back in chapter 9, verse 2 where he says, “I have sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for these people.” And then you get to chapter 10, verse 1 and he says, “My desire, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.”

Listen to me, Providence, one way that you will know that this vision takes root in your heart and in ours is if Paul’s sorrow, anguish, desire and prayer for the lost becomes ours. And Paul recognized a particular kind of zeal that people have for religion, for God, for thinking about these things and wanting to please God. And he recognized it even in the Jews who he’s referring to here who had rejected Christ. And so in verse 2, notice what he says, “I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” Let me tell

you something, zeal, even religious zeal will not get you home.

It won't get you home. You see, if I invited you over for lunch today and I didn't give you the knowledge of where I live, it doesn't matter how fast you would leave this place, how fast you would drive, you would not get to my home. Same with religion. It doesn't matter how much jet fuel is literally unleashed and burned in making prayers and in going to church and in even afflicting yourself with pain which so many people do in the world thinking that God's going to notice the affliction and reward it with heaven.

Zeal will not get you home, there must be knowledge. And they didn't have the knowledge. And that's what verse 3 is about. He says that they were ignorant of the righteousness of God. You know what that means? It means this, is that even for you, even for those of you who are believers like myself, there is nobody in this room or in the world who has a high enough view of the holiness and righteousness of God. We think he's like one or two rungs morally above us. We think that he's so close that if we could simply do a little bit better, that it would literally absolve us from everything we've ever done sinfully in rebellion against him.

Jesus said this, "You therefore must be perfect to get to heaven for he is perfect." Do you know who goes to heaven? Morally perfect people go to heaven. That's it. You say, "Well, that was bad news." And because people don't recognize what God has done in order to make them perfect, they seek to establish their own set of righteousness by their own good works and they fail to submit to God's righteousness, which is his provision of how we can become morally stainless, morally pure before God.

And so what does he do? What he does for us is he highlights two dominant principles through what we read starting in verse 4 all the way to verse 15. And these principles are not only the principles that give him hope, that show people the hope that they have, but by applying these principles to our very life, it is the only hope to extinct the anguish in our soul towards people who do not know God. So what does he say?

The first thing is that Christ saves every believer. Think of the good news about this. There is a holy standard that requires perfection. We all want to go to heaven. We all want to be with God and none of us can because we've all sinned against him, and yet there is a way. He saves every believer. The foundation work for salvation is complete, which is what verse 4 says. Christ is the end of the law of righteousness to everyone who believes. For those people who believe in Christ, the thought of obeying enough laws in order to be righteous enough is over because we have been given a righteousness.

And what does he do next? What he does is he wants to talk about Moses and he wants to talk about how the gospel literally fulfills and shows us what Christ does in order to make us perfect, morally in God's eyes so that we can go to heaven. So in verse 5, he says, "Moses writes about the righteousness based on the law, that the person who does the command shall live by them." You know what that means? Moses said, "Look, if you can live absolutely perfect in obedience and have no sin whatsoever, you'll get to go to heaven."

Problem is nobody ever has. And not only that, but God has actually even given the law, all these laws after we sinned and didn't know we were sinning and so God says, "I need to tell them that they're actually sinning against my holy character." And so he gave us laws in order to open our eyes that we've already fallen short of his glory so that we would then go, "We need a savior who could possibly save us." This is what he does. And so you notice that he says to us that all of us have sinned and fallen short of his glory, but what's remarkable and what you're going to find next is the explanation of this illustration.

Many of us, we sadly, we look at the laws of God that's given by God as a railroad track. So if you think about a railroad track, right? You have two beams basically and they lay upon all of these wooden beams. And each one of these wooden beams, we start thinking about them as, "Oh, these are... in the law, these are all the things we must do. And as we do these things, we make progress." And then God comes to us and he says, "Actually you're not making any progress at all."

In fact, the further you obey the law on the earth, or try to, the more guilt and shame for your failure and the less satisfaction you have for your success because you're still not home. You think, "Well, what else then can I do?" And so what does God do? In his grace, in his love, he sends Christ to the earth and in the illustration, just imagine a big locomotive coming by. And he, Matthew 5 says, "Look, I have given perfect obedience to the law," which means that every single one of these laws, every instruction, he fulfilled it perfectly.

He's this locomotive running down and he's calling and he says, "Everyone who believes in me, you will not be put to shame. I'll give you my righteousness. I'll take away your sin." And yet you know what we do? It's amazing what we'll do. We look at this and go, "You know what? If that was tilted up to heaven, it would kind of be like a ladder." And so we rip it out of the earth, tilt it up, imaginatively against heaven and we see these as rungs on the ladder towards progress to get ourselves home. The ladder won't get home.

And so what does he do? Here in the gospel, in Romans he says, "Look, let's..." He says, "Let me give you an illustration from the words of Moses himself and what people have said in response to the law of the old testament and show you how Jesus has already fulfilled it for those who believe." And so Moses speaks, Deuteronomy chapter 30, and this is what he says. He says, "Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us?" That is the law. Meaning, who can scale that ladder to get to heaven and say, "This is what we're supposed to do in order to bring it back down to us to say, "Okay, everyone just do this and you'll get home.""

What does the gospel say? He says, "Look, do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven." And then he throws in, "Look, that is to bring Christ down." Do you know what he's doing here? This is what he's doing. He's saying... he's taking the incarnation of Christ when Jesus Christ took on flesh, came from heaven to the earth as the replacement for you need to do it. He did it, he came. And then he goes on, next verse, verse 13, "And who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear and do it?"

We've got to scale all these mountains, we got to across these oceans and we're to please God, what does he do? He says, "Look, don't say who'll descend into the abyss. That is to bring Christ up from the dead." You see what he does? He says, "Look, it is the resurrection of Christ that replaces your need to do it and your inability to do it." And then he goes one step further, verse 14, he says, "The word is very near you, it's in your mouth, it's in your heart so that you can do it." In chapter 10 verse 8 it says, "Look, the word is near you in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith that we proclaim."

What's he saying? He's saying that Jesus Christ lived without any sin whatsoever and therefore earned God, the father's reward. Then he went to the cross and there he took the father's wrath that was directed towards you and to me. And if we will believe in Christ, put our faith in Christ, then all that we deserve in terms of wrath is absorbed by Jesus and all that he deserved, it comes to us in reward. That's why it's called the good news, is that God actually looks at you, those of you who have trusted in his son and he says "Like my son, I take pleasure in you." It's innocence. It's justification. It's literally you're like, "The Bible is it really about..." This is what the whole Bible's about. You can't, but he can and he did.

And you trust him. And what does he do? He takes his perfect righteousness, fills your heart and you know what happens then? Now you're ready for heaven. Now you're ready to stand before him and say, "Look, it's not in myself but Christ almighty has given me his perfect righteousness." And God, the father goes, "I'm looking at perfection, at the righteousness of Christ upon you. Heaven is your home." Have you trusted Christ? Have you put your faith in Christ? You can do that right now. You just pray to him right now, right where you're at, "God, I believe. I know I can't, but I know your son can." And my gosh, I got to move on so fast.

Listen, listen, Christians. Some of you, you walked in here and you're all beat down because you've sinned all week long and you think your righteousness before Christ has been affected. But don't you understand how deeply you can rest, rest in the gospel? And this is why, it's because you have a righteousness who is sitting next to the father who's the same yesterday, today, and forever more in Jesus Christ who is now your righteousness.

And what that means is your best day does not contribute an iota to your account before God and your worst day does not take a single penny out. Your righteousness is established forever. He saves. He saves everyone who believes. But that doesn't necessarily extinguish the problem in the world. And this is where we get to the second point, and that is that Christ sends every believer. He sends every believer. If you are a Christian, you are a sent one, which means if you're not going, you're disobeying. That's what send means.

He may send you to the store. He may send you to a neighbor. He may send you to a friend. He may send you to a child. He may send you overseas. If you are a Christian, you have been sent. Billions of people in the world have never heard that news and they're still trying to climb the ladder. So what does he say? Verse 13, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they

have not believed and how are they to believe in him of whom they've never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching and how are they to preach unless they are sent?"

Sometimes you see all those words and you think... With my mind, my brain works like, "I need to see them in a different way for me to feel them." And so this is the same kind of words in a different way. This is the sequence of events. He says, "Look, Christ commissions his church." He says, "Go therefore and make disciples." You got to baptize people once they get saved, once they trust Christ, and then you continue to teach them to a place to where they can then go and tell other people about Christ and what Christ has done.

And then the church sends Christians and then Christians speak the gospel because we're really happy about being forgiven of our sin. And what happens when people speak the gospel is people hear it. And not everyone will believe once they hear, but some will believe. And the reason we know that is because you believed, I believed, someone will believe. And everyone who believes, you believe in Christ and what you do instinctually, is you look up and you go, "God, help," you call.

And you know what Christ does to every single people who call on him? Verse 13 says he saves them. This is the sequence of events and you go, "Oh, that's really good news." But here's the problem. There are two parts to this sequence that can be interrupted by Christian unfaithfulness. It's not the first one, he's already done it. He's commissioned the church, that stands. Let's work from the back. Everybody who calls on the Lord, he will save. Everyone who believes will call.

Some people who hear will believe. Everyone, well at least here, if someone's speaking, but this is where we get to the problem, is that there are many churches in the world who get very confused about what a church is supposed to be and do, including our own. And we start thinking, "Hey, it's all about us," and we stop sending Christians. And there's another problem that can take place. A church can have everything together and we can send all the Christians out when we leave this place and we can all go and we can all go to restaurants, we can go to our neighbors and none of us can say a word about Christ.

And when we don't say a word, people won't hear. If they won't hear, they won't believe. If they won't believe, they won't call. If they don't call, they won't get saved. People need to hear the gospel. They have to hear the gospel. That's why if you look at verse 17, so faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. Now listen, Christ can, he can save people. It's simply because he wants to at a moment in time in ways... I'm not limiting God, I'm just simply saying this is the pattern that we find within the scriptures where he says, "This is how I'm going to get it done."

For 43 years, we have a church has sought to introduce people to Jesus Christ and to grow them up to love and worship him, 43 years. We have done so many amazing things with each other, funerals together, weddings together, hospitals together, we've connected together, grown together, served together. We've gone to places with the gospel together. So much just grace upon grace upon grace.

And so it's important for us every now and then just simply to pause and to go just get a reality check, where are we in the world? And this is where we're at. Jesus is the only worthy king and is the only savior for man and he is not known, trusted and worshiped around the world. That's a problem. 70% of our community of 1.1 million people do not know Jesus. 75% of the 7.9 billion people in the world do not know Jesus and 100% of everyone who doesn't know Jesus is an eternal peril. This Jesus has given us a clear commission to go and make disciples of all nations and yet so many within the church, even our own are distracted. There will be people this week who will become more passionate about fantasy football than the people in their dorm next door who are going to go to hell if no one tells them about Christ.

Now, what are we going to do about that? Some of you are literally, you can't wait for football because it's the best thing in your life. It's a game, it's a game. And then we stand before Jesus. What are you going to do about that? What are we going to do about that? You see, we can't stay where we're at. And the reason is because people matter to God. It's because Jesus extended himself to the point of discomfort to reach us and he told us to follow. It's because unbelievers are filling our city at the rate of 64 people a day.

And some of us, we look at the growth of our city and how many unbelievers are coming and we think, "Man, they're going to ruin the collective moral average of our city. They're going to hurt our kids in schools." But what if we saw it a little bit different and we had a vision from God that says what an opportunity, I'm entrusting all these people to you, all these people to tell, who need to hear, they're coming right into our backyard. What are we going to do about it? So what is the vision?

The vision is called Reach, over five years. I can't lay it all out for you obviously, but this is what we want to see. And just so it's really clear. You hear the word vision and we normally think like fundraiser, right? Like there's probably some card that's going to be filled out. No card, no fundraiser, right? Just faithfulness. We think, "Oh, this is like corporate objectives." Nope, it's not even that. Let me tell you what a vision is.

A vision is where you close your eyes and you see something in your soul that you can't see if you open up your eyes. And it's so beautiful and compelling that you have to move in such a way in order to see what you see in your soul with your eyes. It happens like with a garden. You look at your backyard, it's like a wasteland and you think, "You know what? What if I close my eyes and I can see this beautiful garden?" And all of a sudden, that vision propels your motion.

What do we want to see? We want to see everyone at Providence intentionally extending themselves to the point of discomfort. That's what reaching is it? It hurts to reach. It's uncomfortable to reach, to bless and to help others become disciples of Jesus. You know what that means? It means that what we want to see is this, is that in five years from now, you and I, we would each individually look in our mirror at home and we would see someone five years from now who occasionally prays over the people in their city or on their street who don't know Christ, that currently we don't cry, we don't pray.

It means that five years from now, our life groups, when we go to life groups, instead of just like, “Hey, what about us?” We’re constantly, we’re seeing, “You know what? It’s just seems like every time we’re gathering, we’re always talking about the people that we’re praying about who don’t know Christ.” Intentionally extending ourselves to the point of discomfort. To do this, let me just give you some of these things that I said earlier, like for the applications, hold loosely, hold all these a little bit loosely. Maybe not the first one, the first one is really important to me. But it is an application.

So we want to reach our four, we want to reach our city, we want to reach the world. Let me just give you a few things for each one of them, reach our four. We want to start by praying that God would expand our heart for people. In other words, the people out there are not target, our heart is the target and they will be the recipients of a changed heart. It’s a really big difference to say, “God, would you just create in me a heart that breaks over people that don’t know you?”

You remember the story, if you don’t in second Kings chapter 7, it’s this remarkable story where there’s God’s people in some area they’re in a wall and they’re under siege, which means that the Assyrians are actually surrounding the city and they’ve cut off all the supply lines of food and water. There’s four lepers though who happened to be outside the city, they’re outside the gate like, “Man, we got no place. There’s a foreign army out there and they don’t want us in there and we’re starving and they’re starving. What should we do?”

So they say, “Hey, we’re going to die right here. If we knock over here, they don’t have any food so we’re going to die for you in there. And so how about we do this? Let’s just go out to the army who’s invading us. They may have mercy. Worst thing is they kill us, but we’re going to die anyway.” So they go out there and during the night, God had moved in such a way that the army actually heard the sound of another army that wasn’t there and they literally get up and flee and run away. God delivered the people.

And so these four lepers, they go out there and they’re like, “Wow, look at all the stuff. It’s all ours and nobody even knows it’s here.” And so they start going house to house, taking it and hiding the stuff. And all of a sudden, their heart opens up and are like, “What are we doing? God has provided deliverance for a people and the people don’t know.” So they run back to the city and they said, “They’re not there anymore, but all their stuff is there. Come and eat.”

Do you pray for our soul? God, I can’t keep it to myself. I cannot be a puddle forever, I must become a river. It must move out from me. And then we want to identify for unbelievers to intentionally bless, to pray for, to listen to, to eat with, to serve, to share. Identify four, what does that mean? To just identify four people maybe your gym, your school, your dorm, or just say, “That person doesn’t know the Lord. I’m going to begin to pray for them by name.” Maybe the Lord will open up an opportunity for you to share with them.

And then to pray that each one of us would enjoy leading one person to Christ and then to disciple them to make disciples. Then you get to reach our city. In reaching our city, it's more collective things that we do together. We want to invest 10,000 hours a year serving our city with a thousand of us giving 10 hours a year. We do this thing called CityServe two times a year. It's three hours each time, that's six. Four more hours serving your PTA, your neighborhood, or just to identify ways to say, "I want to pour into the good of my city."

We want to pray that we become as diverse as our city. We want to continue to do this because we have for several years. But the fact is that if we're going to reach our city, it has to reach people who don't look like us because there's people out there who don't look like us. We want to develop ministries to families, young adults and senior adults. And the reason is because if you look at the maps that people who are coming into our city, it's these populations that are just an expansive numbers, young people, young people with kids, single people and senior adults.

And then the last one needs a little explanation, launch additional worship services sites, and church plants in our city. Let's start with services. You're in a service, the 11:00 o'clock service. We have three on Sunday morning. And I don't know if you know this, but 30% of our city works on the weekend. So we say, "What could we do to be able to provide an opportunity for people who can't come on a Sunday to be able to come?" So in two weeks, we're going to start a Monday night service that'll start with a little meal and a little fellowship, and then we'll have a service.

It's simply our fourth service. There's about 50 people already who said, "I can help, I can come." And what we're really looking for is perhaps another 30 or 40 people who can simply be there for a couple of months in order to get it off the ground in a hope that God would use that. But I know it's a little odd, Monday, that's kind of a weird day. It's a good day though, right? It happens to be one of the seven so we can worship on it, right?

And so Monday, and we would love for you to pray about even being a participant, to come to that for a few months. When we get to sites and church plants, you're like, "All right, let's check his aspirations," right? And so let me just simply say what we're... let me show you something and then let me talk to it. This is a map. This is a heat map of Wake County of new construction permits. The orange simply means that's where a lot of people are moving. That's where new things are being built, new homes are being built. And so you can see Zebulon, RTP, Holly Springs, right? We're here currently.

And although there's people in this room who live all over this map, the fact is that most people in this room live in this blue blob right here. And as the city continues to expand, it takes a lot longer to drive here. And some of you know that. You're like, "Yeah, I get it, 30 miles." And so what we look at is we say, "Okay, God, what can we do in order to identify churches that simply need help that are already existing, who may need help or revitalization, or what can we do in some of these places where maybe those churches don't exist

where we can plant a church?”

One of the ways you can plant a church is to send an individual, say, “Hey, here’s the leader who wants to go,” and all of a sudden they go. The fact is, what we do on is years from now, we don’t necessarily want, in fact, we do not want for us to have five or six services where it’s simply a live stream experience where they just simply hear... I believe it’s best, I believe it’s best that they hear a pastor right in front of them saying... and they know who that person is and they’re talking to them.

But if it means that for three, six months, that we begin in a place when live stream while we’re seeking to help somebody grow as the leader, and then all of a sudden it begins to transition towards autonomy, then we would be open. We would be open to saying, “Hey, for the sake of the gospel, let’s move.” But the goal irrevocably is that we would want to plant churches in places that need a lighthouse, in a city that continues to sprawl.

And then the last is we want to reach our world. This is the nations. We want to mobilize 400 people on mission trips every year. I realize right now we can’t do that because of COVID, but let me just remind us all of something. People are not waiting to die, they’re dying during COVID whether we’re going or not. Some people simply can’t go and some places won’t let us come in, I get it. But I do know this, that there are some people, there are some people who could become uncomfortable enough to extend themselves to be able to go to tell people who don’t know the gospel even during this season.

We want to also pray that people from our own church family, maybe even from those who go on a short-term mission trip to say, “You know what? I feel like the Lord is calling me to give my summer, or maybe a year or two years, or maybe even to become career missionaries.” We also want to take everything that comes to us as a church family in terms of resources and take 20% of all of it at a minimum and set it out from this place in order to help our missionaries and church planters that are currently numbering about 15 church planters, international church planters, all around the world.

Now, one easy mistake, we’re almost done, one easy mistake to make as you hear all this, is something we do is we pit friends against friends? What do I mean by that? We start saying things like this, “Look, if we’re going to focus on reaching then what that means is we don’t care about helping people become whole. If we’re going to focus on reaching, then we’re not going to focus on children and students.” Some will say, “Man, I’m just trying to survive my addiction. Let me just get by that.”

So let me tell you, our ability to reach will be in proportion to the health of our roots, it always will be. And so we cannot reach if we don’t grow whole as individuals, we don’t grow deep as a people in the scriptures and prayer and worship. We will not be able to reach if we’re not discipling our own children or students. And so we must give ongoing attention to everything that is currently Providence, in terms of Bible study and growth and prayer and small groups and support groups because that’s the part of the church.

But make no mistake, he told us to go make disciples. Over the next three months, we're going to walk through three different series. Starting next week will be one called disciple. We're going to provide illustration, explanation training, next steps on a number of these things. And the reason we start here is for this reason, we cannot make one if we're not one. We cannot make disciples if we don't know what we're seeking to make. And so we want to look at what the scriptures have to say when it says, "This is what a disciple of Jesus is."

But we also want to do one more thing today, and that is I want to give you time to pray. I want to ask you to make a specific commitment this morning. I'm going to ask you to make different commitments over the next three months, all very, very... Well, it'll change your life, right? But it will only take a few moments in the time that we are gathered. And this morning, what I would simply ask you to do is to make a commitment to begin praying that God would expand your heart to people who are far from him.

Our faithfulness to his commission is largely influenced by our burden for people. So what I want to ask you to do, if you're physically able, in a moment, I'm going to ask you to take a knee. It's not because God hears prayers when we're on our knees, it's because we remember prayers when we're on our knees. All right?

You make a commitment to say, "You know what? I remember that day that I got on my knee and I prayed because I don't normally do that." And what I want to ask you to do right now is if you're physically able, if you're not, it's okay, and if you don't want to make this commitment, don't do it because the people around you may. But if you want to pray and say, "God, I commit to begin praying for my heart," I'm asking that you would expand my heart for people who are far from you.

And what I want to ask you to do right now is to join me by simply taking a knee. I know it can be uncomfortable and it won't be too long and begin that prayer now. (Silence). Father in heaven, we come before you and we bow our hearts and we ask that you would begin to address our heart. We ask God that you would be gracious to us. God, when we think about the fact that we've been forgiven of our sin, been justified, been given righteousness, it makes our heart so happy.

We don't deserve it, we know it's grace. We're amazed, we're amazed at that grace. God, we do not want to hoard that grace. We want to keep it for ourselves, we want to give it away. We want to pass it to others so that they can enjoy the peace of a clear conscience. So we pray God that you would begin to address our hearts, that you would see our hearts, that you would take the apathy and indifference, and you would take the fear and the shame of associating publicly with Christ and you would lead us to repent and that you would lead us to grow in our sensitivity towards other people, our compassion towards other people.

Help us to see people, even people that we may even have a hard time with or people that we envy because of what they have or what they've accomplished. Would you help us to see those people as ultimately a soul, someone you love deeply, someone that's so important to you and important to us and that you would give

us compassion in our heart to see them as somebody who's in need of Christ. And so would you break down the apathy and the fear that's within us and cause us father to change? So we look to you in faith. Now we sing to you because you're worthy, we know you're worthy. We love you and we pray this in Jesus' name, amen.



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