

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

November 20, 2022

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Make Known

PART

3

TITLE

His Deeds In The City

SCRIPTURE

Acts 17:16-34



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Well, good morning to you, Providence. It's great to see you. My name's Dave, one of the pastors and have the joy of teaching you today. And we are excited about what God has done over the last month in our city. Many of you, hundreds upon hundreds, have been engaging our city with particular specific outreaches. And we're just rejoicing and wanted to celebrate that this morning. And as we conclude our three week series on making God known, the last two weeks, we looked at the urgency of the world, and the reality of getting this good news of Christ and who he is to all people. And to today, I want to conclude this series by simply encouraging all of us. I know last week many stood as a commitment to say, "Jesus is leading, I'll go anywhere." And then many stayed seated. And yet all of us are on mission, in a sense, to make Jesus known in this city.

And when we looked at this map last week, the urgency and the lostness in the red, this is where there's no voice of the gospel. They're unreached. They're unengaged. The green are reach places in the world where Christians are and churches are. And we're right around in here in this little green. And here's what I want to point out for all of us today, this is a burden. It is. And we want people to go. But the reality is most all of us live here. And so how do we live here in such a way that could actually impact that red? And I believe wholeheartedly that the more we reach here, the more we sin there. They're not at odds with each other. And I'm going to try, this morning, to help us sort of reverse the mindset of most evangelicals when it comes to missions and evangelism.

So this is what the way it usually works, folks will be moved by the Spirit of God. They'll go on a mission trip and I wholeheartedly endorse going. And then they come back. And over 25 plus years of ministry, this is the number one line that is always... When they come back, they come back and they go, "Man, I saw God move. I shared my story. I shared the gospel, the good news of Christ, and I saw God work in a mighty way. Why don't I do that at home?" And what I want to suggest to you is that you can. You can do that right where you live. You can leverage your workplace, your homes, your hobbies for the sake of the gospel. I'm convinced that the light that shines the brightest at home shines the farthest away. And so we want to reach neighbors so that we can reach nations.

And think with me for just a moment about the city that God has placed you and I in. And this church where we gather. Raleigh, North Carolina, it's the fourth fastest growing city in the United States. Wake County, that includes areas surrounding Raleigh as well as Raleigh, is the third fastest growing county. 62 people a day move to Wake County, 17 people a day move to Raleigh, North Carolina. That's 6,200 people a year. We can't plant enough churches fast enough to minister to those needs. One study showed and ranked Raleigh, North Carolina as the fourth best city for quality of life to live in, in the world. Not the US, in the world. Out of 248 cities that were ranked Raleigh, North Carolina was number four. 11 internationals move to this city a day. And last few weeks, on the news, it was a celebration of the completion of the largest Hindu temple in North America. Built in Cary, North Carolina. Last week I had the joy and privilege of meeting with six college students. Four of them had never heard John 3:16. They didn't know what it was. They've never read it. They never heard it. So I read it out loud to them, over them, and inserting their name where it says, for God so loved the world. I just inserted each of their name. They'd never had heard a verse that many, maybe even in

this room, are familiar with.

And so we have a passion at Providence to introduce all peoples to Jesus, and grow them up to love and worship him, and to send many out. And so when you think about Jesus, think with me for just a moment, some of his first words and some of his last words. Some of his first words when he started his ministry, he says in Matthew 4, he says, "Come follow me." He says, "Come follow me." He's walking beside a sea where men are fishing. That's their livelihood and they're fishing. They're out with boats and nets and casting. And he comes, and he meets them where they are, and he uses language that they would understand. And he says, "Come follow me and I'm going to send you out to fish for people."

And then he closes his journey on earth, before he ascends, after the resurrection, in Acts 1. Where he says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and Samaria to the ends of the earth." You're going to wait. As you wait, you're going to receive, see praying churches grow in power. So they're praying for 10 days, in essence, and this power comes on them. And they're going to be these witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. And Jerusalem, they don't neglect the ends of the earth and the ends of the earth doesn't neglect the reality of reaching Jerusalem. No, it's both and, not either or. And our Jerusalem, in our context, would be Raleigh, North Carolina. And what Jesus is saying in these first words and these last words, is that followers fish and witnesses witness. It's called evangelism.

It's a word that's not extremely popular in many churches, but I want you to think about it in these terms. It's simply informing others and inviting others to follow Jesus. It's a summons to repent and turn from sin, and to trust Christ. It's the good news. It's sharing the good news. It's a message. It's news. It's good news. That's why it's called gospel. The word gospel means good news of God who made us. And yet in our sin we rebelled against him and we have been separated from him. And the wages of sin, the Bible says, in Romans, is death. Both physical death and spiritual eternity apart from him in hell. And God makes a promise in Genesis 3:15, in Genesis Chapter 3, the first, you see the fall of humanity. You see sin entering into the world. And yet very quickly, God, in His grace and in His mercy, in His kindness, He makes a promise that there's going to be someone who comes who's going to make things right.

And in His mercy and in His grace, He sends Christ. He comes. He's born of a virgin. He lives in the Middle East. He walks and lives for 30 years on earth without any sin. And then starts his ministry for the last three years of his life doing miracle after miracle with no sin in his own life. And then he took upon himself the sins of the world, and was crucified on a cross, and was buried and rose from the dead to validate he was the Son of God. He was the promised one that was going to come to reverse the curse and make everything right. This is the news that we share in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, it says like this, it says, "Listen, some plant a seed. Some water the seed. But God brings the increase."

I grew up on a farm in Southern Virginia. I loved those days on the farm. And we would watch, I would help.

I would participate in planting things in the ground. I would plant seeds in the ground and then we would hook up these large pipes that would run down to the pond. And then we would irrigate those seeds over time. And then we would wait and wait. And before long seeds turned to plants and they grew. And this is the language, this farming language that Paul uses in Corinthians. This is the way the gospel is. This is the gospel. The gospel is good news. This message is like a seed where you plant it in someone's heart. You meet with them, and you pray with them, and you do life with them. And you're planting seeds of the gospel, you're planting these seeds. And then you meet with them again. You have coffee with them or a meal with them, and you do life with them. And you're watering the seed that's already been planted. And you're watering the seed, and you're watering it.

Sometimes it's weeks. And sometimes it's months. And sometimes it's years before that seed comes to life, fruit. And this is what Paul says, this is what evangelism is. And let me just say a word. Let me say a word to those in this room right now and listening online. If you're not a Christian, if you're not a Christian and you're here this morning, know I'm going to be teaching the Christians in the room how to reach you with the gospel. It's a little awkward. But I want to say this to you, non-Christians, exploring Christianity maybe, in the room, I want to say this to you. We have failed in our ways of reaching you by being arrogant, more concerned with winning arguments with you than winning your heart. And our desire, our passion, would be to introduce you to Christ. And so bear with us as we try to learn how to do that in a way that's winsome, and humble, and yet full of truth. So that's our desire this morning.

So let me pray for us, God, heaven, would you would, Jude, would you lead us this morning? And would you guide us through this Word. And help us, God, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Acts 17 in the Bible, the book of Acts 17 is where we're going to be. So I'd invite you to turn there. Turn your Bible on, open your Bible up. If you don't have a Bible, there's one under the chair you can have. And I want to set the context for Acts 17. In Acts 1, he says, "Wait and power will come." And they begin to preach in Acts 2. And Acts 2 is remarkable. And the book of Acts literally means the mighty Acts of God. And in Acts 2, what happens is you have Peter who is a follower of Jesus, who stands in the power of the Spirit of God and begins to speak about Jesus.

It's a festival, it's a Pentecost festival. It's a huge festival where Jews from all over the Middle East would come to Jerusalem. And as they came to Jerusalem, it was an opportune time to speak to them about Jesus. And so what he does is, when he stands to preach, he stands and preaches and he uses the Old Testament. He uses the book of Joel to preach from, to reach all of those that are gathered. So when he stood and said, Joel says, they would know who Joel was, and so there was a connecting point. And thousands came to Christ in repentance and faith and trust that day. And then you see Christianity start to spread out from that circle. It was remarkable what happened, how God moved through might acts of persecution. And spreading, they tried to stop it, it would spread. They tried to stop it, it would spread.

And then God radically saved this guy named Saul whose name is Paul. He changed his name because he changed his heart. And he ends up, he was persecuting Christians, and he began to plant churches, and he's

moving. And this is his second missionary journey where he's made his way up through northern Greece, up through Philippi, where he was in jail and God worked in the jail. They were singing and praising God. And the people that were working the jail came to Christ. And then he moved into Thessalia, Nicea, and there was a riot that broke out because they didn't like what he said. And so he had to escape through the night. And he comes all the way down to Athens. As he gets down to Athens, he's waiting on some of his buddies from the mission, second missionary journey, that are still in Thessalia, Nicea. And then they're going to end up coming and joining him.

But this is the scene we find. He makes his way into Athens. And as he's in Athens, in Acts 17:16, this is what we see. This is what we see. He says, "Now, while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. And so he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, 'What does this babblor wish to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities.' Because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.' Now all the Athenians and foreigners who live there would spend their time in nothing except telling and hearing something new."

So how in the world, we're going to reach our city? I think we can learn three things from Paul. We're going to work our way through each portion of this passage to the end of the chapter. But first I want you to see this, is that I think we're going to reach our city and make Jesus known when we have to. To do that, we have to embrace concerns for our city and compassion for the people. We have to embrace concerns for our city and compassion for the people. Notice what Paul does. He's waiting, right? He saw them. He saw the city. He felt something. He sees the idols in the city and he's provoked. Athens, seemingly, you could find more gods than people at times, right?

One of the places that housed one of the goddesses that was worshiped there, Athena, the goddess of wisdom was in the Parthenon. This incredible temple that was up on the top of this mountain. When I was in school years ago, I went there and studied at this place, and saw these places. It's remarkable of how some of these temples are still, they're tourist sites, but there's other idols that have popped up that aren't necessarily in a temple. There are other places. But this is what he sees. This is what he finds.

It's a melting pot of ideas from legal to arts to even athletics, from Mt. Olympus just up the road to philosophy. The home of Socrates and Aristotle and Plato. I mean it's all there. It's full on. And notice Paul, he's not provoked at the people. He's provoked at the idols that push people away from God. He sees this happening. This is the same word provoked that was used in the Old Testament of God, when He saw His people, the Israelites, worshiping false gods worshiping a golden calf. He was provoked. He was moved to jealousy for his people. He loved his people. See God loved his people and his people were loving other things. And this

is what Paul feels. Do you feel this way when you see our city? When you realize we don't have temples with gods carved out a rock in them, but we have idols everywhere.

Are you provoked by these idols that beckon people's attention and allegiance away from God? Are you apathetic toward the lostness in our city? Listen, aren't you, aren't you glad this morning that God was not apathetic towards you when you were a mess with your idols? No. He came. He sent someone to speak to you. Oh listen, our culture, they have them. They're everywhere. Power, possession, position. Idols are anything that you and I love more than God. It's what consumes our attention. It's what we spend our money on. It's what we spend our time on. And what idols do, right? They don't fulfill you and they don't forgive you. Ever. You make an idol out of a certain thing, out of a certain possession. You say, "I have to have it." And you do everything you can to get it and then you get it. It doesn't satisfy you weren't created for some thing to satisfy. You were created for God to satisfy you. And then if you make an idol something, you work hard to get it, and you don't ever attain, it'll never forgive you for not attaining it. It'll always whisper lies to your head that you're not good enough. It never forgives you. Listen, only the person of Christ will fully satisfy your heart. And when you fail Him, He'll forgive you. This is the hope we have in the gospel. See, he was concerned, but not only was he concerned, but he had compassion. Notice in verse 17, what does he do? He reasons with them. This is not a word that means he's arguing with them. He's not starting a riot. He's reasoning. It's a word that we get our English word dialogue from. It's specific to a type of listening.

He's listening. He's learning where they're at. And he begins to speak. He speaks in the synagogue, which would be small probably by populace in this particular part of the world. And then he moves quickly into the marketplace. And let me just say this about the Christian worldview. The Christian worldview, it is the relationship with Christ is personal, but it's not private. It's personal, but it's not private. It's personal relationship with God. But it moves you into the marketplace to speak hope into the marketplace. I mean the hub of [inaudible 00:20:04], the Epicurean. These pleasure seekers. This is the only life we live. Let's live it up. This is what they believe. These Stoics. These discipline, robust people who are numb to any emotion at all, very stoic, tight, stiff, neck and lip, and just would engage and argue at any cost.

And notice the thrust of his message. He's not trying to get them to come to a concert or a church or a Bible study. He goes right after Jesus and the resurrection. This is the essence of what Christianity is about. It's about a man, about a person named Jesus Christ. And he speaks to them and they're somewhat intrigued. They've never heard this. It says their ears wanted to hear more. And so they bring him into the of center of the Areopagus, of this melting pot, to where he is going to engage them. So think about Paul for a second. He's come from jail to another place. They've kicked him out. He had to escape by night. And he's down in the city and he still has compassion for lostness ever... I'm thinking, "I'm going to get to Athens, I'm going to retreat and rest a little bit." Not Paul. He sees the, he's immediately impacted by what he sees.

And here's the thing, listen, the fuel to ignite your compassion for the lostness found in our city is the gospel itself. Listen, when you contemplate, and you meditate, and you reflect on the compassion and concern God

had for you and your state of lostness, this is the fuel and the resource that moves you, mobilizes you into the marketplace. Like listen, we could do some things, rah rah, and motivate, and that'll last to like the parking lot. What's going to sustain you on Wednesday of this week when you wake up and you're remembering. You're remembering this Wednesday that God loved you, that He had compassion on you, He had concerns for you, and He has sent someone in your path to share the gospel with you. And He's opened your eyes. He's removed the blinders. He's engaged your heart. When you remember that on this Wednesday, you're going to forget what I've said today by this afternoon.

But when you get to Wednesday and you reflect on what Christ has done in your life, it's going to move you to the marketplace, to think about the concerns of the city, and to speak life into the city. The gospel is the resource and the fuel for sharing the gospel. Because the gospel saves sinners and it strengthens those that He has saved. So listen, Paul, he has a concern and a compassion, but then he moves. He moves into this incredible dialogue and stating tremendous thing. So let's listen to what happens when he gets into the heart of the marketplace. Verse 22.

“So Paul, standing in the mist of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I pass along and observe the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown God.’ And what therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He himself gives to all mankind life, breath, everything. And He made from every one man, every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually not far off from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are indeed His offspring.’ Being then God’s offspring. We ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and or imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

So listen, how will we make Jesus known in our city? We have to enter conversations where people are anchored in convictions of who God is. We have to be a people who would meet them where they are. Jesus does this. Paul does this. Listen, we have to enter conversations where people are anchored in convictions of who God is. Notice what he does. Notice the respect he has. He says, “O men of Athens. I see you're very religious.” And what does he do? He's going to quote inscriptions on a rock, and then he is going to quote two poets from the sixth century and the third century BC, to connect with them.

He's compassionately conversing. He is going to do this. He is going to out narrate their narrative. He's going to tell a more compelling story. One that's true and beautiful and good. He's going to unpack the meta-nar-

rative of the Bible without quoting verses. Unlike Acts 2, where he began with Joel, Paul begins with creation and the creator. And he's going to tell the most glorious drama the world has ever heard.

Notice just a few things. We can't unpack it all, but he's going to start with creation and he's going to go to final judgment. He starts with creation and he's going to go to final judgment. Notice quickly Verse 24, he's made everything. He starts with God is the creator. He's the creator God. He's the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in temples. I mean Paul's saying that in a temple, saturated city. He goes, listen, your gods are in temples. This God, he's made everything.

And Paul is slowly reducing the size and scope of their gods and pointing them to the sovereign glorious creator God. In verse 25, he says, "He's the sustainer of life. He doesn't need anything." Matter of fact, he sustains humanity. He gives life and breath every single day. He's the ruler of nations. Verse 26, He made the nations. Diversity was God's idea. And he determines very places and boundaries in which you are to live and where you are to live. And He is the ruler of all nations. Verse 27, He's desiring all to know Him. And yet humanity has been blinded by sin. And yet the word there, reaching out, it's the picture of this blind man reaching out, trying to find the next step. And this is the way folks are that are apart from Christ. The Bible says they're spiritually blind. They're reaching. They're trying everything and anything.

And this is what's happening in the marketplace. They're reaching for anything and everything. Oh, you've got something to say. Let's hear what you have to say. And Paul says, "Oh no, what I have to say is the true story of the world. He is God. He is the one who has etched eternity on our heart. He is the one who has given a conscience that morality has been written on your heart." Morality is not written on my dog's heart. He doesn't care. Just he'll turn the trash can over every single day to get stuff out, even when I tell him not to. That's why we walk him with a leash when we walk around, because he's going to attack the squirrel, and attack people, and attack. He has no sense of right or wrong. He wants his food. He wants his bones. And he's happy.

No, no. Even the atheist, made in the image of God, the imago Dei on the atheist, knows it's wrong to rob him. He knows it is. Listen, he's showing in verse 28 that God is Father. He quotes these sixth and third century poets saying that, that God, we're the offspring. We have been made in the image of God. People have. Humanity has. And yet those who he redeems and adopts, we call him Father. He's the divine one in verse 29. He's not created from things, from the art and imagination of man, not some gold or silver or rock. No, listen, listen, listen, listen. Those things, created by the artist, are gifts. And gifts make bad Gods. Gifts from God make bad gods. And he's pointing this out. I mean to see the facial expressions when he spoke like this, to say, winsomely, respectfully, conversing. This God, that I have encountered in the person of Jesus Christ, is not one that you make with silver or gold.

No, I don't know. In the totality of this reasoning that could have gone on for hours, and Luke's only recorded a portion of it. Did he mention things like Psalm 50 that says, if I were hungry, God says, if I were hungry, I

would not tell you for the world, and the fullness of it is mine. Would he say something like Psalm 1:15 that specifically says, “Listen, our God is in heaven and He does whatever He pleases. And the gods of this world, the idols of this world, they’re gold and silver. They have eyes, they can’t see. They have ears, they can’t hear. They have mouths, they can’t speak. And they’ll never satisfy you.” Listen, John Stott, pastor in London, says, back in the day, “All idolatry is an attempt to localize God, confine him with limits, and have him dependent on us.” Verse 30, look at verse 30, magnificent verse reminding us that God is a patient God.

Times of ignorance, He was patient with us. But He now commands all to repent, to turn from sin and trust Christ, for a day is coming, a fixed day. Verse 31. Verse 31 says, “He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and is given assurance by that this man will be the one who will judge the world in righteousness by raising him from the dead.” This is namely Jesus the Christ. It’s a fixed day. And I’m convinced if you’re ready for the fixed day that’s coming, then you could live each day now with purpose, glorifying Him, for the good of others and the gospel to go forth. And listen, in our conversations, the command to repent can land like a blow until they see the joy of your glow.

The command of to repent could land like a blow. You tell them to forsake all things and follow Him. But when you lean in to say those things, you say it humbly and winsomely, but you say it with a sense of conviction that He has not left us in a state of chaos and sin. He has redeemed us> he has opened our eyes to see and behold the son of God. And you lean in and you say, with great joy and with expression, that I pray you mean it from the depth of your heart, that repentance in Christ brings life because the resurrection of Christ conquered death. And this is the best news. This is why we, as a church, will sing lyrics in our songs on Sunday, week after week after week. Like this lyric, “And the morning that you rose all heaven held its breath, ‘til that stone was moved for good, for the Lamb had conquered death.” The Lamb had conquered death.

This is glorious news, this is hopeful news. And Tim Keller says this about the Bible, and the way we understand this meta-narrative. He says, “Many people think of the Bible as a book of moral teaching with stories sprinkle through to illustrate the teachings. But it’s a lot better than that. The Bible is a single true story with teaching sprinkled through to illustrate the story.” The greatest story on the planet. And so listen, how are we going to make Jesus known? We’ve have got to be compassionate. God only can do that as we remember how compassionate He has been to us. And we have to enter and meet them with conversations where they’re at, and yet with convictions that hold and anchor our soul. Not that you have to have every answer to every question. But there’s still questions I don’t have answers to, but I’m leaning into that which I do know. And my heart apart from Christ’s, wretched.

And He is a great, kind savior. So how will we make Him known [inaudible 00:34:26]? Notice how we close this portion of this passage, Reading verses 32 to 34. What happens after he has walked through this story from creation to final judgment? He says in verse 32, “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead,” that gets your attention when you’re in the middle of a city with idols that don’t breathe. It says, “When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. Others said, ‘We will hear you again about this.’ And so

Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined and believed.” And notice what he does in the closing of this passage. He names two people. One from the Areopagus that was there in the philosophical debates probably, and going back and forth reasoning, Dionysius, and Damaris.

Two, he starts in verse 16 where he sees the city, it’s full of idols. He sees losses. He sees the impact of it. And then what does he do? What does he do as he lands this part? As Luke records it. He gets real specific with two people’s names that have believed. See, listen, listen, we have to endure conflict while our confidence rest in Christ. Our third point this morning is that we have to endure conflict while our confidence rest in Christ. Because there’s going to always be three responses. You can sum it up in these three responses. Look, they’re going to mock you. They’ve mocked Paul. They beat him. They put him in jail. They may mock us as we try to share, winsomely, humbly, but yet with conviction.

And then he says, some said I’ll hear you again. Some, they have questions. And we want to enter and create space and opportunities for people to come in with their questions, with their objections. We want to be a church that welcomes those. And then, last, as some believed. Notice, some believed. And we are not, as a church, listen, we are not trying to reform a city. We’re trying to reach people in the city. Changed hearts change cities. And so as a people, listen, let’s look at a few things of application. Let’s trust Christ. This morning, if you are here and you’ve never placed your trust in Him, I want to encourage you to consider the good news of the gospel this morning as Christ in your place. Oh, what marvelous grace. He has died for your sins, was buried, and rose from the dead to validate it. So trust Him. Trust Him this morning. He will grant you forgiveness of sins and hope for eternal life.

Let’s ask God, let’s ask God to give us compassion for our city. Let’s ask God to work this in us to see the compassion that we’ve been shown, so we can distribute and demonstrate compassion that we’ve been shown to this city. And let’s be a part. Let’s join. Let’s lock arms as a church family. Let’s lock arms, and as a part of our vision, five year vision, that we’re walking through. We’re in our second year of it where we want to reach our four, and reach our city, and reach our world.

And to reach our four, we’ve created a tool, a simple tool. It’s helpful. And thousand, almost a thousand of you have participated with us in this. But it’s a simple tool in the seat back in front of you. It’s a QR code. It looks like this. It says Reach, and reach your four, at the top. And basically you take this card. And what I want to encourage you with is as you hover your phone over the QR code, it’ll pop up, and you hit send, and it’ll connect you to our office where basically all we’re going to do is pray for you like crazy. And we’re going to send you a few texts a week. We’re not going to bombard you. They’re going to be within a certain amount of characters so you don’t have to read a lot. And so we’re going to walk with you.

But we’re going to encourage you to identify at least one, if not four people, that you know that a far from God, that in your heart you could extend yourself to the point of discomfort to bless them, to encourage them, to come alongside them, and be the hands and feet of Jesus in meeting physical needs, and, hope,

maybe even spiritual need of the gospel to them. And so what we need each other. This study shows some 20% of those who claim to be followers of Jesus, share the gospel, share their faith. And Jesus says, He said, listen to me. You follow me. I'm going to make you into fish as a man. And I want you to be the witnesses to the ends of the earth. Starting with the city you live in, the nation you live in, to the ends of the earth. This is not an option for the Christian. This is the way that God has ordained for His message of the hope of gospel to get to all people. He makes His appeal through people.

And so sign up for that, and we'll walk with you through that process. Next is I want to encourage you to reach our city by engaging with ministry partners that love our city well. Our local outreach team would love to connect with you. You can connect with us. And connect you with some of these partners in our city. After our service today, as you leave, there are multiple ministry partners in our city that we partner with, that we lock arms with, where they have specific ways that they are reaching our city. And we come alongside them and support them and partner with them. I just want you to hear a few of things that God is doing through our local partners this morning.

Think about the area of sanctity of life, from abortion to adoption and foster care. We oftentimes say it from the womb to the tomb. Think about what God's doing. He's using a ministry called Love Life that are out in the lobby. Love Life just comes alongside folks that are thinking and considering abortion. And through 4,000 people participating in their ministry outreach to our city, of prayer walking at our city and in our city, 30%, they've seen a 30% decrease in moms and dads coming to the center. And they've seen 88 babies saved this year. It's remarkable.

Think about Lifeline. Lifeline's a ministry in our city that helps with foster care and trying to place people in gospel centered homes where they would see the love of Christ through those homes. And of this year in North Carolina, there's 9,000 children in foster care. And in Wake County alone, there's 735 children. How would we partner with them as they are on the front lines helping lead this?

We're partnering with a ministry called Safe Families, where they're helping multiple families to keep kids out of the foster system that would move from place to place, maybe home to home, in hopes of connecting them with gospel centered homes. Where they would get into a home and then they could work with the family, oftentimes a single mom, to get on her feet. And then they reunite the child with the parent. And they have seen this year, a 95% return rate to the family. God moving in the sanctity of life from the womb to the tomb.

We've seen many people that are in the last chapter of their life that are in assisted living homes. They can't build them fast enough in our city. And what God's doing, He's raising up folks that live, that are part of our church, that live in these assisted living homes to preach the gospel, to share the gospel. One man has started Bible studies in one that he lives in and one that he doesn't live in. And God's opened the door where 40 some

people are listening to the Bible and trusting Christ. He told me the other day, he goes, “Man, I’m so excited. I had to add another person to my list to be praying for, to bless, because one just died. The ambulance comes every week to take dead people away. And I’m just trying to share the gospel, get the gospel to everyone before they take their last breath.”

They’re calling us. This week we got a call from one of the assistant living homes in the city. They called us and said, “Could you bring people for Christmas. And sing whatever you want to sing and say whatever you want to say.” And we’re like, “Yes, we can do that.” To be able to share the hope.

Think about homelessness and abuse and recovery in our city. We partnered with ministries in our city, one called Raleigh Rescue Mission, where they have identified 6,400 homeless people in Wake County. They provided 86,000 meals this year. 23,000 bed nights for people who had no place to lay their head. They’re partnering with Jobs for Life to help them train and get certified, to get on their feet, and come out of the bondage and cycles of poverty.

Think about the Raleigh Dream Center, a recovery ministry that’s helping homelessness and abuse. Where over 125 folks come on Tuesday night, where they care for them, give them a meal, and help them get and walk out of these trenches where chains of addiction hold them. And they’re sharing the gospel, the good news with them. And we partner with them.

Think about the prison ministry that we partnered with, Christian Library International. Started by two God couple in our church many years ago. Think about on Spring Forest Road, there’s a warehouse where thousands upon thousands of books and Bibles are being sent to chaplains in 1400 prisons in the US. And of those 1400 prisons in the US, 10,000 inmates are enrolled in a Bible study where they’re sending material for them to be disciplined. They’ve expanded to 12 countries. And next year they’re adding another 12 countries where they’re sending all of these Bibles. God’s word that will not return void. This year, listen to this, you ready for this? Listen, listen. Over 30,000 inmates worldwide have followed Christ as a result of their sending the word of God. This is unbelievable.

Think about the internationals and the refugees that are landing in our city. We partner with a ministry called Refugee Hope Partners, over a thousand refugees in our city. They’re partnering with 345 families to serve them. From 43 different countries. ESL classes and Bible studies. They’ve accomplished this year, 653 medical appointments. Think about this. Think about if our city was devastated by Taliban, a famine, a war. We had to leave and just land in another country. Couldn’t speak the language. Didn’t know where the dentist was. Didn’t know where the doctor was. They come alongside and they’ve helped [inaudible 00:44:30] these 650 medical appointments for these refugees, that you saw on the back of planes leaving Afghanistan when the Taliban took over. They’ve landed hundreds of Afghan refugees, and other from other countries, but they’ve landed in our city and they are serving them.

Think about God's sovereignty now. He's orchestrating all things for the glory of His name and for the gospel to go forward to all people. Think about, for just a moment, that two weeks ago we had 10 college students, on this stage, praying over 10 countries that it's the hardest place in the world to be a Christian. And the number one country that we prayed over, that's the hardest place to be a Christian in our day, in our time, is Afghanistan. And God, in His unique sovereign ways, doing what God does, has allowed hundreds from Afghanistan to land in our city. And when they first landed, they were half a mile from this church at an extended stay. This is... Are you kidding?

And Monday nights we partner with them. And there's 50 Afghans that come. And we're reasoning with them. We're not dropping a tract. We're loving. Little pizza. Reasoning. Who is your God? And we start with creation. And we walk to a cross. And then with hope, we share about the resurrection. This is what He's doing in our city. Let's join Him in what He's doing in this city.

Let me pray. God. God, we love you. Thank you for your kindness, oh God. Thank you for your kindness that you have reached us. You have shown us so much compassion. And God, we pray now. We pray now that you would awaken us to the reality and the brokenness that's found in our city. That God, you would send a revival. God, you are the God, a revival that revives hearts, redeems hearts. And God, we know if we could reach more people here, we could send more people there. And so God, we want to be what you're about. We want to be able to share this good news with all people, introduce all people to Jesus, and grow them up to love and worship him. So God, would you move in our hearts? Would you remind us of all that you've done for us this week? Would you open our mouth and move our feet? Awaken us, God. Please do it, God. Jesus name. Amen.



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