

The question that I want to begin to answer tonight is: What is life supposed to look like after Easter? Last week was obviously Easter and we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ every Sunday. We come and we celebrate and remind ourselves of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But specifically on the heels of last week, the question that has been on my mind has been, "So what? So Jesus was raised from the dead. So what? Is it supposed to change life? And if so, how is it supposed to change life?" In fact, I remember years ago I was at a church and the pastor Mickey Eckles was preaching a sermon the week after Easter. The week after Easter is usually the week where the lead pastor leaves and lets the other person speak. So Mickey was preaching and he asked a question, and I've never forgotten it. The question was, "What does life for the follower of Jesus Christ look after Easter?"

There are two stories in the Bible that are very similar, yet at the same time very different. One of them is at the very beginning of Jesus Christ's ministry where He goes down to the Sea of Galilee where these men are fishing. He comes and says, "Hey, I realize everybody in Galilee fishes and you guys are out here and haven't caught anything all night. Why don't you throw your net over, catch some fish, be amazed and then I want you to come follow Me. I'm going actually call you away from being fishermen and teach you how to not just fish for fish but to fish for people." So He calls them, they drop their nets and they follow Him. For three years they walk with Him, they learn from Him, they watch Him in love, power and truth operate in His ministry. And then they are there when He is crucified and then raised from the dead. But interestingly enough, Jesus is crucified and raised from the dead, but where do we find the disciples? What do we find them doing? In John 21, we find them doing something very similar to what we found them doing the first time Jesus came to them. They're at the same lake, maybe in the same boat, all together and they're out fishing again. Now I think they were probably just waiting on Jesus to show up like He told them He would earlier. But they're there fishing again and Jesus shows up on the shore. It's almost like He wants to communicate, "Hey, remember when I told you at the beginning that I was going to call you to be fishers of men? I really did mean that. So cast the net out, bring some fish in again and I'll cook you breakfast. And then here's what I want you to do. I know that you just caught a lot of fish, but I don't want you to be fishermen anymore. I want you to be shepherds." And in saying this, Jesus is again recommissioning these men and He's telling them, "Life after My resurrection, life in light of My resurrection is going to look drastically different than life as you have known if forever. I'm going to call you to be very different than what you have been and really what the culture around you is."

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is more than just an odd miracle that is supposed to give you and me a confidence boost that will see our loved ones who have died one day when we die because He has conquered death. Now it is that, but the thesis I'm working with tonight is that one of the main implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that it leads you and me out to be witnesses in light of who He is. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is meant to send us and thrust us into the world to summon men and women to a believing obedience of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

This is all over the Bible. So I want to just look at a few passages with you that say this. The first one is in Matthew 28. If you want to go back and read the accounts after the resurrection of Jesus and see how people responded to the risen Lord, it really is remarkable how many of them responded by going and telling somebody else about Him and calling them to believing in Him and in what He said He was going to do. Matthew 28, starting in verse 16, "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to

me." So get this picture in your mind. Jesus Christ raised from the dead after He had been crucified, He meets with His disciples in Galilee and He says, "Hey listen, I'm the Lord of the world. I am who I told you that I was. My resurrection has validated and vindicated this. It has vindicated and validated My ministry. I am the Jewish Messiah, I am the King of the universe and all authority has been given to Me by the Father." 1 Corinthians 15 and Colossians 1 talk about this, that the Father has given all things to the Son and the Son is in the process of subjecting all of His enemies underneath His feet. And Jesus is saying, "I'm the Lord. I'm the Lord of everything."

And it's remarkable what He says next. He says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." So Jesus' response in His command to the disciples once He's been raised from the dead and has presented Himself to them is not just to believe in Him. Of course they believe in Him. He is who He said He is. "Believe in Me. Be strengthened in your faith. But in light of that, turn around and go and make disciples. Go into the nations and witness to people about who I am, what I've done, what I've said. When they believe, baptize them, and I'm going to be with you as you do this. I'm going to clothe you with My Spirit as you do this."

You see it again in Luke 24. We'll pick it up where Jesus has met these two men on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection. These men didn't know who He was, so they were really sad because Jesus had died. And they knew as well as anybody knew that a dead Messiah is really no Messiah at all. So they thought that their hopes were over and that Jesus was just another zealot, a martyr who had been killed. So they were really sad about that and Jesus meets them on the road and begins to tell them that the Scriptures talked about how the Messiah must die and rise again. And then He reveals that He is Jesus, and these guys realize who they're talking to. And so they're really excited and are running back to Jerusalem to tell the rest of the disciples. So that's where we pick up the story. In verse 33, it says, "And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!'" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit." They thought He was a ghost. They weren't expecting this. They thought He was dead, and so the risen Lord comes among them and they think He's a ghost and freak out. "And he said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.'" And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" He's saying, "Okay, you still don't believe Me. Have you any fish? Just so you can believe I have a real physical body, I'm going to eat for you. Ghosts don't eat food." So Jesus asked them for a fish, they gave him a fish and He starts to eat.

Then verse 44, "Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, . . ." In other words, He's saying, "The whole Old Testament talked about this." That's the same thing He said to the men on the road to Emmaus. He's saying, "All the Old Testament talked about that. The Christ should suffer and die and that He was going to rise again. And here I am. It has happened. I am the Messiah. The story that you have been reading in the Old Testament, it has found its fulfillment in Me. I am the One that this nation has been waiting for. I am the Messiah. I am the Lord." So He tells them this and continues, ". . .and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." And then in Acts 1, you see Him saying, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." So again, Jesus the

resurrected Lord is there, He presents Himself, they believe and then His response is not just, "Great. Believe and now just wait for Me to beam you out and then things will be great. Just gather together on Sunday, pray together, stay away from the world as much as you can and believe in Me. And then one day I'll beam you out and all will be good." No, He says, "Great! You believe in Me. This is who I am. Now I want you to go clothed by the Holy Spirit to be My witnesses in all of the earth." So once again, the resurrection leads to Him sending these men and women who were with Him out.

Turn to John 20. I just want to put a little bit of theological footing under us before we get real practical here in a moment. Starting in verse 19, "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." Again, the risen Lord shows up to the disciples, the early church, His response and His commission to them is, "I'm sending you. Just as the Father sent Me into the world, I'm sending you now into the world."

So what we find from these Scriptures and many others is that a grand symptom of the resurrection, a marvelous implication of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, one way to answer the question of, "So what?" is that the resurrection is supposed to send us out into the world to proclaim that He has been risen from the dead and to summon men and women to a believing in Him. This is one of the implications of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we can read through Acts and see what this looked like for the New Testament church, but what I want to talk about tonight is what in the world does it look like to live as witnesses and to live in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a church family here in Denton? So 2010, Denton, Texas, 1106 West Oak Street, here we are. We meet every Sunday. Jesus is risen from the dead. We're going to sing about it in a little bit, and we're going to sing this song that says, "Shout it out, shout it loud. Jesus is victorious. He's the King." So we sing that, but what does it mean and what does it look like to live as a family of His people as witnesses to our city?

One of the things we've said since day one is that we really believe that God strategically and in His sovereignty put our church family right here in the middle of the city of Denton, Texas. We love the city of Denton, and I hope you do too. We really do believe that the city of Denton is one of the most strategic, influential places that we as a church family could possibly be. Here's why I believe that. Because within a five mile radius of here, there are 50,000 college students. And here's what I know. Most of these college students that are here getting a degree are not going to stay in Denton because there aren't many jobs. So most of you are going to get a great degree at UNT and you're going to go to a city, whether it's Dallas, New York, San Francisco, Tokyo, Mumbai or Hong Kong, and you and your generation are going to influence our entire state, nation and world through your jobs, through your vocations, through the culture that you create. The college students are the ones that are going to the vocations and creating culture. And as these cities that you'll go to will go, so goes the culture. So we really do believe that if, in these four years that we have with you, God would be gracious to reveal Himself to you in such a powerful way that He would help you to see your life as witnesses wherever you go, if you have that happen here and then we're able to send you out, then we're going to affect the entire world. We just believe that and we see it all the time. We're just so grateful that God has put us here. Our hope and prayer from day one has been that God would make us as a church family a city of His people. That language even comes from Jesus' sermon on the Mount when Jesus looked at His followers and said, "Hey, you are a city on a hill, and I want you to let your good works shine brightly so that those around you would see them and glorify your Father in heaven." So our prayer has been that Jesus would make us a city of His people here in the city of Denton that loves our city. We pray that with everything we have we would share the gospel with our city, through our words, through our deeds, through everything. We pray that, as we partner and lock arms with other churches here in our city, He might

transform our city through the gospel of Jesus Christ. So that's the vision. That is one of the many reasons we are here, one of the primary reasons we are here. We're not just here to meet on Sundays, to try to keep away from the sinners, to sing songs and to go back out and try to keep away from the sinners. We're here to influence and to see our city transformed as Jesus does His work by His Spirit here.

In fact, a great quote that really epitomizes this is from a guy named Ray Baake. Tim Keller, who is a pastor in New York City, was at a conference and was asked, "What is the best piece of advice you ever received as a church planter?" So of course everybody scoots to the edge of their seats to hear what he answers. This is what he answered. He said, "Ray Baake told me this before we planted in New York City. He said, 'Don't try to create a great church. Try to create a great city and then you'll have a great church. So as you're gathering these men and women who feel the call to be in the city and to be faithful group of people who love each other and love the city, don't be so inward focused as you go. Instead lock arms and be about loving and serving your neighbors. And as you do that, your church will be strengthened.'"

And so we have really tried to do that from day one here. In fact, John Knox, who is a famous preacher in Scotland, his attitude towards Scotland was this, "Give me Scotland, or I'll die." That was his mindset. "Just give me Scotland or I die." And that's been our hope and our heart and our prayer since we've come to Denton. Our heart is, "Father, transform our city. I know that You're going to work on our lives individually, I know that You're going to build our faith as a church family, but transform our city." Right now within a stone's throw of where we are, there are thousands of people in this neighborhood who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. They're home right now and don't care about Him. Not only do they not know Him, they're hostile toward Him. They are enslaved to sin and the evil one is dominating and reigning over their lives and they don't even know it. So heart has been, "God change our city."

So the way in which we have attempted to be witnesses here in our city is simply by sharing the gospel with our words and with our deeds. Evangelism is something that we want to be about. In Colossians 4, the apostle Paul says, "Listen, I want to do everything you can to be wise around those who are not Christians, and I want you to make the most of every single opportunity that you have with them. So we want to be a family who have the on the tip of our tongue the gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news about who Jesus is and what He's done. In order to have the gospel on the tip of your tongue, you actually have to know the gospel. I know for many of you that's a scary thought because if somebody were to ask you what the gospel is, many of you wouldn't be able to share that. I say that not to discourage you, but I just know that to be true. In fact, our international student ministry that we have here where we provide English conversation partners to the international students at UNT, their ministry leaders, in order to be a part of that ministry, sit you down and ask you, "Okay, you're going to be sitting with this person from Saudi Arabia, from some other closed country in the world, who has never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, knows nothing about Christianity and they're going to ask you to tell them about Christianity. So why don't you tell me the gospel?" They say it's really amazing that many of the volunteers who want to be a part of the ministry don't know how to answer that question. So if that's you tonight, I would just encourage you to take your friend, take a home group leader, take somebody you know who may be more mature in the faith and ask them to help you learn to share the gospel. Because one of the primary ways that we love our city is by offering the good news of Jesus Christ to them through our words. Every opportunity we have, we make the most of it to share the gospel. Now every time it's not the whole story. Sometimes it's this piece of the story and some times it's this bit of the story. But you have to have a grasp on the story to be able to share it. So we share the gospel with our words. That's what we do. That's one of the primary ways we're witnesses.

And then we share the gospel through our deeds. So I want to spend the rest of our time talking and thinking about what it looks like to really share the gospel of Jesus Christ with our deeds as we're here in our city. So I wrote three things down. One is by loving the poor, the second thing is by doing justice and the third thing is by redeeming our vocations. There are more than that, but those were three things that I wanted to touch on tonight.

So the first one is loving the poor. A grand symptom of saving faith, true faith is that you and I would have a sensitive social conscience and a love for the poor. When Jesus Christ transforms our heart, one of the things He transforms is the way that we look at the poor in our city. And if our heart towards the poor is not transformed, the New Testament writers would be pretty harsh in saying that maybe you're not a Christian at all. If you still despise the poor, if you still lift up your nose at the poor, if you still look down upon them and you don't love them, that's not good. And so we have tried to love the poor. I'll give you a few examples of how we do that. One of the things we do here to try to love the poor is that we give away hundreds of dollars a month. That's not very much at all. I'm not bragging about that, but every week and sometimes every day, there are the poor and marginalized of our city who come into our church offices here and they just need help. So we have this money that we give them. We give them \$25 gift cards to different places and we just try to love our poor in our city that way. But even more encouraging than that, is some of the things that individual members in our body have done. There is a guy who, with a couple of his friends, has started a bicycle shop. It's called Bull's Eye. They sell bikes and it's great, but behind selling the bikes is what's really happening. One of the many things they do to minister to our city and love the poor is take used bikes and they'll refurbish them and give them away. So if you've got a bike and want to give it away, take it to the Bull's Eye bicycle shop. This Christmas, there were over a dozen kids at schools in our neighborhood who got bikes from this bicycle shop. They gave bicycles away to these children and families who otherwise wouldn't get presents. Just motivated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who He is and what He's done, they just gave away bicycles.

There are local businesses here in the city, there are a couple of people here in our church family who own local businesses. One of the things we saw early on here was down in Calhoun Middle School, they have to wear uniforms. So the problem was they have to wear collared shirts and khaki's, but a lot of these kids couldn't afford them. So gracious people that we are, a lot of people would just bring their used clothes that they don't want to wear anymore and said, "Hey, why don't you wear this? Because we know that ever junior high kid wants to look great at school, so why don't you wear what we think is trash?" So a local business owner here in our church family found out about that and they just went and bought hundreds and hundreds of uniforms for them. They just gave them to them. And if they're going to wear uniforms, at least they'd have cool shirts, they should have cool uniforms.

Over the three years I've been here, consistently there has been men and women in our church family who have opened their homes to the homeless and poor in our city, the people who don't have a place to stay, don't have a place to lay their head, like Jesus Christ. I don't know if you knew that, but Jesus Christ was homeless. They have opened their homes to the homeless in our city. It has been a beautiful thing. And they haven't done it just in a way that enables the homeless, but in a way that really tries to empower them. Some of them have opened their home and have tried to help them get a job, and when some of them have said they don't want to get a job, they have kicked them out. They just loved them and gave them a year. And when it was just obvious that these people were just using them, they turned them out. So we hope to have a heart to have an open home to those who are poor and don't have a home.

Dozens of our college students have moved into the poorest of apartment complexes in our city to minister to the people there. Even in the poorest areas of our neighborhood right across on the other side of campus in Cement City, we've had college students who have moved into that neighborhood and have started after school programs for kids and have done all sorts of things.

There's a group of brothers at our campus who have started a non-profit organization that's called I Love Denton. You may have seen the bumper stickers around. What they do is take air conditioning units, fix them up and then go and install them in peoples houses that don't have air conditioning. This is what's happening. God has been gracious that our church family wants to love the poor of our city and serve them, not out of condescension, not out of pity but out of the

reality that Jesus Christ, though He was rich, for our sake became poor so that you and I might be rich. That's why. So we love the poor.

Another thing we do is we try to do justice. Far too many Christians just run their mouths. I don't know if you've picked up on this. And again, I think speaking about the gospel is important, but far too many Christians and far too many churches come into places and just talk. It's crazy because unless you have really paid your dues by loving people and serving them, more often than not they don't want to hear from you. So what we've tried to do is go, "Okay, we want to talk, we want to open our mouths, but we want to spend years paying dues by just serving our city." If we move, we want people to miss us because of the work we're doing with our hands. So we've come into our city and have gone, "Okay, where is injustice happening in our neighborhood?" One of the primary places we saw injustice happening was in the school systems. Despite the best efforts of some of the best teachers on the planet here in our neighborhood, upwards of 60-65% of the students in these schools were at risk of not graduating. Some people may look at that and go, "Well, they just need to be smarter and study harder like I did. They just need to pull themselves up by the bootstraps." It's not just pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. It really is an injustice that these students, regardless of how hard they try, have been born into these situations, raised in these families where their chances of graduating are slim to none without someone from the outside helping. So they need someone to step in and be an advocate. So there is an organization called Communities in Schools. They take the hundred most at-risk students in each of these schools and pair them with mentors. So we have taken men and women from our church and we pair them up with students that are at risk of not graduating from these schools. And for an hour a week, you sit and you encourage and serve and just befriend and help these students who are at risk of not graduating. 99.3% of the students who have been paired with a mentor from the Village have either passed that year or have gone on to graduate. That tells me a couple of things. It's very simple, and we're really smart. I'm just kidding. In fact, the first kid I had dumped me. But I got picked up on the rebound, so it was good.

Another way that help fight injustice in our city is by partnering with the Nelson Center. The Nelson Center is a home that serves more than a hundred severely emotionally disturbed children each year. Many of these children have been removed from their homes because of extreme physical, emotional and sexual abuse. These are the kids who have experienced the worst horrors of sin imaginable. And they are a two-minute drive from here. So we've paired mentors up with these kids over there and we've just loved them and served them. We can't really talk about a whole lot with them, but we're able to just go over there and hang out with them. In fact a lot of the men from our men's Bible study went over there a couple of weeks ago and just played basketball with them and helped them plan a garden with these kids who have just experienced the most horrific injustices, sins and atrocities that you could imagine. That's a way that we've said, "We can't do a lot, but we can do something there. We can help there. We can be a part of loving our city and the kids in our city that way."

And then another way we try to do justice is through our foster and adoption ministry that we've started here. We look around and see the plight of the orphans all over the world. If you read the Scriptures, you just can't miss how much God cares about the fatherless. You can't miss how much He cares about His church caring about the fatherless. In fact, He's pretty hard on churches who just want to sing songs but not do anything about injustice and caring for those who don't have any fathers, the orphans and the widows. He basically says, "Listen, quit singing your songs. I want you to do this. I want you to go love this person. That's what I desire for you, to walk humbly, to do justice and to love mercy. That's what I want from you as My children, as My people." So we have created this foster and adoption ministry to equip you to speak into and address this issue. There are 145 million orphans in the world. Some of you are going, "Listen, I'm 18. I'm just in my first semester. I'm not adopting anybody." You're right. You don't need to, but to be a part of this ministry, you don't have to foster or adopt yourself. In fact, did you know that in order to have a babysitter for the kids you have gotten through the foster system, you can't just call up somebody in your home group that is willing to babysit? You

actually have to have somebody who has been checked off by the state as being okay to babysit foster kids. So we've got all these couples in our family who have not been able to go on a date for months or years because there is nobody who has gone through the necessary steps in order to be a babysitter for foster children. That's one of the things this ministry equips you to do. So some of you in this room who are single and who have a heart to serve and do justice in this way, go through the foster training where you can become a licensed babysitter so some of these couples in our church family can call you up to babysit and they can go on a date. It's something unbelievable that you can do even though you're in your first semester of college. We'll talk about you adopting later as well. So we do justice.

And then lastly we redeem our vocations. Vocation is an old school word for job. It's a cooler word for job. But we redeem our jobs. We're not just mercenaries. We're not just people who work so we can make money, although that is a definite result of working. We don't just work so that we can make money. In fact, we work for the glory of God and for the benefit of the common good. Let me read you this quote from Dorothy Sayers. And those of you who are in your vocation, I hope this will encourage you, but for those of you who are college students, I know that most of you are not here to actually learn. I know that you're here to go to class to get a degree. Now if you learn some stuff in the process, that's a good thing, but that's not really what you're going to school for. You're going to school to get a degree, and you're getting a degree because you want to get a job. And you're getting a job because you want to make money, and you want to make money so that you can have a comfortable life. So at the end of the day, the bottom line is having a house and a family. And those things aren't bad, but what if you looked at why you were getting a degree differently? What if you looked at the degree choice and the degree trajectory that you're on differently and you got a job not based on what would make you the most money but what would actually be for the common good of whatever city you end up in? And this is what Dorothy Sayers says, "The habit of thinking of work as something one does to make money and to get a position in society is so ingrained in us that we can scarcely imagine what a revolutionary change it would be to think otherwise. So often people become doctors not primarily to relieve suffering but because they want to bring themselves and their families up in the world. People become lawyers not because they have a passion for justice but just to bring themselves and their families up in the world. During WWII, one the great surprises many had in the army was that they found themselves for the very first time in their lives happy. Why? For the first time in their lives they found themselves doing something not for the pay, because it was miserable, and not for the social standing, because everyone was thrown in together, but for the sake of getting something done that needed doing."

In light of who Jesus is and what He's done, we try to work at our jobs, not to just make money, not just so we can have comfortable lives, but so that we can benefit the common good, so that we can benefit our city. So men and women all through our church family are redeeming their vocations. We've got people across the board. We've got bankers, janitors, teachers, coaches, librarians, administrators, stay at home moms and barbers/stylists. Elizabeth Elliot said this about stylists, "Every time I see somebody comb hair, I can't help but think of Genesis 1:1 – order out of chaos." You can laugh about that, but what she's saying that even in doing that, you're imaging our great God, that He took chaos and made order out of it. In the same way, that's what people who are cutting hair and styling hair are doing. We've got financial advisers here in our church. One of the things they do, one of the ways they have redeemed their vocation is by meeting with people who are poor and having trouble financially, and they just counsel them for free. Because they know that the last thing people in financial trouble can do is afford to pay somebody to teach them about their financial trouble. So they just meet with them and counsel them for free. That's the way they have redeemed their vocation. We've got home builders and contractors here who go into people's houses and they image God and show the way that He can restore things by restoring their homes for free. Can you imagine anything more detrimental than having a home that is just a disaster. That's supposed to be a place of safety, peace and rest. So they go in and they fix this, they restore it and image God in that way and redeem their vocation. We've got gas station clerks, doctors, event planners, musicians, hip hop artists (yes, we have a hip hop artist in our body) and photographers. Let me read you this. This is a glaring, beautiful example of what it looks like to redeem your vocation. This is a photographer who is here in our church body.

She wrote this on her website. She was taking Spring sessions for infants and she said, "100% of the session fees for the Spring mini sessions will be donated to Cumberland Presbyterian Children's Home," which is another place like the Nelson Center here in our city. "How did this come about?" she said, "Well, a couple of weeks ago, I was thinking about how I'm not only looking forward to getting out and playing in the Spring weather with kiddos, but I was trying to think of a way that I could use what I love to do to benefit our city that we love so much." She's not a mercenary. She's working and thinking through ways to benefit our city and to glorify God through what she does.

So this is what we're trying to do here. We're trying to be God's people who live in light of His death and resurrection. And a big part of that is by being witnesses to our city and sharing the gospel with our city through our word and our deeds. And I want to invite you into that. Those of you who come and just listen to the sermon and you go home, I'm so glad that you're here. There is so much more to Christianity than what you're experiencing. I just hope you know that and I pray that you feel compelled to join us. We're not doing everything perfect, but we're just trying to be a drink offering to our city. We're trying to lose our lives for the sake of other people. And I want to invite you into that, specifically those of you who are empty nesters. 50% of our neighborhood are under the age of 24 years old. So empty nesters, those of you who are looking for a legacy, here it is. Pour your lives into the young men and women in our city who are going to go into the world and influence the world. Take these men and women aside and mentor them. And those of you who are college students, can I just invite you for these years to not have a commuter mindset? Can I just invite you, for however long you're here, not to use this city to build up yourself, but to build up this city through your life? So many of you are here and I love you. I love the diversity that you bring to this city, but you're here for yourself. You're here to get a degree, you're here to enjoy some of the music and that's about it. Your mindset is, "What can this city do for me?" instead of a Christian mindset that goes, "While I'm here, as I'm getting a degree and enjoying the music, what can I do to build up and serve my city?" Because some of the habits that you're forming now in the way that you think about your neighbors and the way you think about your neighborhoods, you're going to take with you wherever you go. So however long you're here, just join us in loving this city and using your life to build it up instead of using it to build up your life.

If we ever, as a church family, want to have a sustainable witness here in our city, the only what we're going to do that is if the gospel of Jesus Christ is constantly transforming us. We don't just run out and do these activities in our own strength and motivated by our own zeal. This is a response to being transformed from the inside out by the good news of Jesus Christ. If the gospel of Jesus Christ isn't transforming you, how in the world do you have confidence that it will transform anything else? You can't. You can't have confidence it's going to transform your roommate, that it's going to transform your campus, that it's going to transform your spouse. So the gospel of Jesus Christ has to constantly be transforming us.

And as we think back to John 21, this is what we see happening when Jesus takes Peter aside. He's recommissioning him to go out and be a shepherd, and from what we know, the apostle Peter became a really good shepherd. He laid his life down for the sheep and was crucified upside down. He turned into who Jesus Christ commissioned him to be in this passage. But before Jesus sent him out, what did He do? He took him aside and went right to the heart of his shame and guilt and those things that were going to keep him from being a witness. And the reason many of you are not a witness is because you continue to struggle with the same sins over and over again and you're so ashamed that you can't quit having sex with your boyfriend or girlfriend that there's no way that you're going to go out and be a witness. You're so ashamed that you continue to look at pornography, you're so ashamed that you continue to vomit after you eat, you're so ashamed that you continue to \_\_\_\_\_, that you're afraid and you will never go out and be a witness to our community because of your sin. What you need to hear tonight is that the grace of Jesus Christ covers that. You can see that in the way Jesus Christ deals with Peter. John 21:15 says, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?'" At first glance you might say, "Wow, that's kind of a general question." But it's really not. If you remember the story, on the night that He was betrayed, Jesus said, "You're all going

to betray me in a few hours." Peter stood up among the disciples and said, "Not me. I love You more than all these people. My love for You is greater than all these people." And Jesus said, "Okay Peter, you're going to deny Me three times." Peter said, "Even if I have to die, these people will all betray You, but I love You more than these and I'll stand with you to the end." And as you know how the story goes, Peter denied Jesus three times. So in this conversation with Peter as He commissions him, what's he doing? He's going to the heart of Peter's shame and guilt and He's restoring Peter. Three times He asks him the question, "Do you love Me? . . .do you love Me? . . .Do you love Me?" And in doing so, He breaks the shame over Peter's life and Peter is restored and forgiven. What's amazing about this interchange is that, when Jesus restores him, He doesn't just say to Peter's response, "Well that's great. You're sorry. I get it." He actually gives him a job to do. He covers his shame and guilt and then says, "Go shepherd people, brother."

"So Father, I thank You for this opportunity we have tonight. I pray for my brothers and sisters, my friends here in this room that You would do a work in our hearts. I pray for those who are not witnessing through their words and deeds because of shame and guilt who have for years been shackled and enslaved by the same struggles. I pray that You would convince them that You love them through Jesus Christ. I pray that that would transform them in such powerful way that we would, as the early church, be sent out to tell people about this remarkable grace for even wretched sinners like us. I thank You, oh God, for sending us to this neighborhood, for sending us to this city. We love the men and women of this city. We want them to know You like we know You. We want them to understand that Jesus is the Christ, the risen Lord that all authority on heaven and earth have been given to Him. So we pray right now for the men and women in our neighborhood who don't know You and don't love You. We pray that You would open their eyes and use us, our words, our deeds to open their eyes. And I do pray for the men and women who just attend here every week but aren't involved at all. I thank You for them. I love them, but I pray tonight that You might provoke them to want to do more than just worship on Sundays with us, but to really lose their lives in loving our neighbors. So bless this time in Jesus' name. Amen."