

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Acts, chapter 1, is where we're going to be. In fact, we're just going to camp out there all day. Not literally all day, but in our time together, that's where we're going to be. If you're here today and aren't a believer, or don't have a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. Grab that, and you can utilize that.

While you're turning there, I want us to do something a bit different for us. It hasn't historically been different for us, in that we used to do it all the time, but we haven't for a while. But I felt really compelled last night in light of what I was teaching on today, and seeing a good friend in the crowd on Saturday night.

Through my battle with brain cancer, I actually connected with a lot of people who actually were fighting the same thing. There are actually several of them at the church, and so I had the opportunity to kind of get to know them and even kind of swap war stories. You know, you can be like, "Oh, they put you on Temodar? What are you on, Decadron?" You have this kind of weird community that forms around that suffering. Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about. There are several, five or six people here with whom I've been able to swap those war stories. I've been able to see their scar. They've seen mine.

That's kind of a cool piece, but one young woman in particular named Jennifer, who has been battling for the last two years, a type of brain cancer very similar to the type I was diagnosed with, finished up her treatments and wasn't recovering very quickly. She started to ache, and it didn't make a lot of sense, and so the doctors were like, "Okay, this is abnormal. We're going to run some tests."

Come to find out, just a month after finishing treatment for brain cancer, she has come down with a lymphoma, another type of cancer. Then I saw another woman here last night who has, for the last 20 years, just battled pain in her body. They've thought they'd nailed down a diagnosis on multiple occasions, only to find out the treatment for that diagnosis wasn't really working.

I just felt compelled last night, before we got into the message and before we got into the Word, to just kind of stop and pray for those two women in particular, but then I just kind of expanded it and said, "Hey man, if you would like to be prayed for, if you have a similar scenario where you are sick or hurt, or you would like to see God do a miraculous work of healing in your life, I want us to pray for you tonight. I want us to ask the Holy Spirit to do that."

In our five o'clock service, dozens of people stood up in Flower Mound. After that, I was just like, *Okay, man. We have to keep doing this. You can't just do it for one. "Okay, lucky five o'clockers! Everybody else is on their own."* So what we've tried to do this weekend, at the beginning of our services at all campuses, is just kind of take a minute and go, *Man, this is something we want to pray about, and this is something we want to ask God to do because God is able to do it.*

So I wanted us this morning to take just a couple of minutes in our time together to just stop, before we get into the Word, before we start to unpack what I believe God wants to say to us today, and start by just asking God to heal our infirmities, because he says he will. This will require an act of faith on your behalf. This will require you to step out at some level in faith.

What I want to do is... If you're here today and you would say, *Man, I'm in that line. I am battling some disease. I am battling some illness. I am battling some sort of pain that maybe there is an end to, but maybe there isn't, and man, I'd like for people to just pray that God would remove that.* Honestly, maybe we'll see who stands in here. Maybe you're a super-healthy group, but if that's you, would you stand and let us pray for you?

If you're not a believer and this is weird, I'd just like to point out that you came to church. Surely, you would think something like this was going to happen. If this is you, would you just stand up? This is the faith on your part required for us to be able to pray for you, because if we don't know, we can't pray. Okay? If this is you and you would say, *Man, I have an illness. I have some sickness. I have some pain I'm dealing with right now that just doesn't seem to go away,* man, we just want to ask God to work in you.

Here's what we're going to do. There are a ton of people standing up in Flower Mound. I can't see Denton and Dallas, but my guess would be there are people standing there also, but there are also a ton of people who aren't here today who are in our covenant community of faith, and who are believers in Christ, a part of this body who, really, that illness and that sickness has kept them from coming, and so man, we're just going to ask the Holy Spirit to work and do some things here.

Here's what I want us to do. If you're sitting around some of these men and women, will you just lay a hand on them? This isn't spooky. It's not odd. It's not weird. It's not magical. All right? You're not a wizard. You don't have any intrinsic power. We're just obeying the Word of God to lay hands on our brothers and sisters and believe.

So if there's someone standing up around you, let's get a hand on them, and then I'm going to give you just a few minutes here to pray for these men and women, for you to ask God to heal, ask the Holy Spirit to move, and then I'll close us out in prayer near the end. Don't get all weird Baptist-y on me. All right? You

can pray out loud together, and God can make sense of all of that. So let's pray. Let's ask. You go. I'll close us here in a few minutes.

Father, we just ask you, for your own glory, and for the name of Christ, to heal our brothers and sisters. We ask that whatever it is, whatever line it falls in, whatever the prognosis is, God, that you would just work on behalf of those in whom you delight and whom you love. We acknowledge that suffering and pain play a role in our maturity and in our growth, and that it is not beyond your sovereign will and command, but we also know you can grow us, not just in suffering, but you can grow us in joy.

So I pray that you would release my brothers and sisters from the pain they walk in, that they might walk in the fullness of health and healing, for the sake of your name and for the glory of your name. I pray that you would act on behalf of these whom you love, and so I pray that we would, as your saints, believe you can, and believe you would be willing. The results, ultimately, are up to you, but our hope is in your goodness and grace, that you would grant reprieve from these illnesses and these sicknesses for our brothers and sisters who aren't here, and for our brothers and sisters who, for whatever reason, aren't in a place that they feel comfortable standing to be prayed for.

We pray that you would lavish upon them the same grace and mercy that we're praying for for those who have stood up. You're good, and you do good, and we have nothing but thousands of examples of that, and so we pray that, again, for the sake of your name, you might work on behalf of these whom you love. It's for your beautiful name we pray, amen.

Really, one of the desires of my heart, and really one of the goals I have here as one of your elders and as the elder you'll see most often onstage as a representative of the elders... I can tell you our passion, and our hope, and our desire is when all is said and done, you'll get God's God-ness. More than I want you to have a good marriage, and more than I'm worried about your money or your this or your that, my belief, from the Word of God, is if you get God's God-ness, if you get how big he is, how deep he is, how mighty he is, and how expansive he is, then those other things kind of settle themselves under the weight of his goodness, grace, and sovereignty.

One of the reasons I want to continually come back to, really, the magnificence of God rather than some just some sort of practical, "Here are eight steps for you to grow in this area, and here are four things for you to do to get better at this," is it's my fervent belief that if we could just be in awe of who God is, then the application of God's Word into our lives, in light of who he is, becomes a delight for us to walk in and not a kind of religious ritual we have to, with all our effort, pour ourselves into, but we get freed up to pursue the things of God in joy rather than in duty.

I believe Acts, chapter 1 is going to help us do that, because here's my hope in my time for you today. I have several of them, but in my time today, I want us to get up high enough to look at what God is doing in history, and where we are in that play, and what God would have for us moving forward. So let's look at Acts, chapter 1. This is after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is resurrected from the grave. Some of you might have a problem with that. It historically happened. Something happened back then, which is why even secular outlets try to do something with it around Easter, because you have to have some solution to what happened historically upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have a simple answer: he rose from the dead. He appears to hundreds of people after his resurrection. He teaches, he answers questions, and he eats meals. In fact, we'll find out, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul points back to a moment where 500 people had gathered and Christ taught. This is post-resurrection, pre-ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father, and he's going to have this dialogue with his disciples that I find to be quite spectacular.

Acts, chapter 1, starting in verse 6: **"So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'"** Now I want to stop there. This is pre-indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and it shows. What I mean by that is despite the fact they had spent so much time with Jesus, and they had heard the things Jesus had taught, and that they knew the prophets (in particular, Isaiah) pointed outside of Israel to the nations, they're still thinking too small.

They're still thinking, "Hey, now that you've resurrected from the dead, are you going to handle these Roman fools and establish Jerusalem as the place where the whole world comes and listens and obeys our dietary codes and basically becomes ethnically, in regard to culture, what we are? Are they all going to be circumcised? Are they all going to obey the temple rules? Is this when you're going to establish the kingdom in Jerusalem?"

Now the irony of this, if you remember Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, is Jesus' conversation with her was...what? "It's not going to be in Jerusalem or on this hill. The true worshipers are going to worship in spirit and truth. This is something I'm doing globally, not something I'm doing locally." Now in their defense, they don't know there's a globe, so Jesus can't unpack it all at this moment to them, because they don't have the framework for it. They literally don't have the framework for it.

Look at his response. I found a great deal of comfort in his response as I've prayed through and prepared to preach to you today. **"He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.'"** I love this verse. It's really simple and it's not profound. You don't have to dig around in it. It's just right there. There are times, and there are seasons, and God sovereignly rules

over those times and seasons, and that's of great comfort to me. You and I are in a time and in a season in our culture, in this country, and on this planet, that God is sovereignly over and governing in.

I can derive a great deal of comfort in that for all the, *This is what's happening here, and who knows what's going to happen here.* God has this. There's a great deal of rest that should come on the soul of a believer in Christ who can go, *God knows the seasons. God knows the times,* and come really face-to-face with the reality that some of those seasons will be pleasant and easy and some of those seasons will not, but God is sovereign over them all.

Look where he goes next. **"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."** We need this power of the Holy Spirit, because these guys have shown, since day one, they're not the sharpest knives in the drawer. I can say that knowing we get to see each other and hug each other in heaven. This is not a contingent of the brilliant. They don't understand Jesus' parables. Think how often he's talking in parables. Even Jesus goes, "Seriously? Let me try to explain it to you this way then."

They hear his stories. Everybody else is confused. You can almost see them kind of nodding when Jesus is telling the parable in front of the crowd, and then when they pull away, they're like, "What were you talking about?" Jesus says, "Okay. Let me explain." Then you have, repeatedly, just failure, and you have, repeatedly, a level of cowardice, and you have them arguing over the greatest is among them. In the middle of Christ training and teaching it's about lowliness and humility, a fight breaks out over who would be the greatest.

We're going to need some power here, because if the kingdom of God is hinging on these men, you and I aren't sitting in this room. But Jesus says, **"...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."** If we had time to walk through the book of Acts (which, maybe, one year or two we'll do, Lord willing), ultimately, if we had the time to unpack it, when the Holy Spirit comes in chapter 2, you see two things happen. When the Spirit comes, you see an internal transformation of these men. You see men who were cowards no longer be cowards.

You see Peter, who ran and denied Christ, now stand up and boldly proclaim Christ crucified, and not in a manner that was neat and clean and that would get the approval of his hearers. So something happened to Peter's heart. You see his disciples, who were so apt at arguing over which one of them was going to be the greatest, and had all this concern over who was going to be Jesus' favorite... All of that melted away, and now they have all things in common. They're selling things and they're making sure anyone who has need is provided for. This is the internal transforming work of the Holy Spirit, and it's one of the ways the Holy Spirit worked his power in the lives of these men and these women.

We could look at Acts 2. We could look at Acts 4. We could just walk through and watch how churches in this city really gave money to support churches in this city, and it really became about men with new hearts. We call this, theologically, regenerates. They were given new hearts. Our old heart is taken and a new heart is given to us, and that is an internal transformation that leads to an external transformation. That's one of the ways the Holy Spirit comes in power.

Now the second way the Holy Spirit comes in power, if we were to be faithful to the book of Acts, is in an external showing of that Spirit's power. So not only is there this internal transformation that leads to an external transformation, but there is an external flowing of the Holy Spirit's power where, as the Word of God is proclaimed by the disciples of Jesus Christ, God has accompanied the proclamation of the Word with what the book of Acts calls signs and wonders, where men and women are healed... You'd have to read the book of Acts to see all the kinds of just beautifully brilliant things that occurred in the book of Acts.

Here's what I've learned. There are people who are really, really comfortable with the inward transformation of the Holy Spirit, and really comfortable with the proclamation of the Word. *Yes, and amen...regenerates, the Word of God...yes.* Then you have some people are really, really comfortable over here, and they'll actually categorize, and paint in a dark light, those over here who do the same thing to them.

Over here, it's, *Well, those people, they just want signs and wonders. They don't want to be obedient. They let experience drive truth rather than truth drive experience.* These people over here are like, *Well, theology is cold and it's dead, and you guys just want to read books and don't want to see the power of God.* That's a caricature of both camps, and it's silly, because what we find in the transforming work of the Holy Spirit is that inwardly we are transformed and outwardly our expectations go through the roof.

Now do we see the amount of healings we'd like to see? No. I don't. Do you? I'm pretty consistently frustrated that I ask God to heal and do those kinds of things and don't see it. I go back and check my heart and ask the Lord, "Is this just how you're working things out? Do I need to grow in my faith? How does this work?" I dive into the text and try to get to the bottom of that. I have some theories. Not anything I'm doing today. That's not the point.

Here he says (thank God), "You men, who have been such abject failures, are going to be filled with the Holy Spirit's power, and in that, you're going to be inwardly transformed. Your expectations are going to grow in regard to what God can accomplish, and you will be my witnesses." Now that's a profound statement. God has just entrusted to his church the gospel message. So not only are we transformed by

the gospel, not only are we sustained by the gospel, but then, ultimately, Christ is entrusting the gospel, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to his church so we might...what? Bear witness to...what? To the gospel!

What do I mean when I say that? These men had witnessed the life of Jesus Christ. Why is the life of Jesus Christ so profoundly important? This is easy. It won't take long. Because you know and I know we fall short. Even if you grew up in church... My tradition is the Baptist church. If you grew up in the Baptist church and you made Sunday school often enough, you got medals. Does anybody remember those? If you put in a lot of time, you could eventually, in your thirties, come to church looking like a general. "Captain Chandler. Hasn't missed since the second grade!" I understand the heart behind that, but I've done things with my kids that I look at in retrospect and I'm like, *Oh, I was such a fool.*

I think those pins are that kind of thing. I kind of get it, but you surely have to look back on it and go, *Really? We gave medals for attendance in Sunday school?* Even if that's your background, surely you know in all your pursuit of righteousness you haven't done it perfectly, and in your righteous acts, you have made the error of trusting in your righteous acts more than you've trusted in the grace and mercy afforded to you in Jesus Christ. Even if you were born in church and raised in church and have a resume of moral perfection that would shame Ned Flanders, you still know you don't measure up. So we need a righteousness that is not our own, and here's where the life of Jesus Christ becomes so important.

These men walked with him. They saw him. They watched him obey the law perfectly. They watched him do all they never could in regard to obedience to and fulfillment of the law. What Jesus is saying to them is, "My life, the life I lived, the life that was perfect, I'm imputing to you, I'm giving to you, and you are witnesses now that the righteousness you have before God is not built on you, but built on me. When God sees you, he sees me. So your confidence isn't in you, because we have well established your failures. It's in me. Now go tell others there's a righteousness for them that is found in me."

But they weren't just witnesses to his life. They were witnesses to his death, and so the second aspect of this witness mentality for the disciples who are hearing this order from their Savior is, "You're going to be witnesses, not only of my life, but what else you saw: my death." Again, the death is as important as the life. There's not a piece of the gospel you can remove. If you remove the life of Jesus and just make it about his death, you're in trouble because you don't have righteousness that can be given to you.

If you remove the death and just kind of go to the life of Jesus, then you're still in your sins. If you remove the resurrection, then all of a sudden we now have problems with whether or not all of our sin has been paid for. You need all three pieces. All three pieces are necessary for the gospel to reign true in our hearts and our lives. They were witnesses to his death, his wrath-absorbing death.

Now the reason *The Passion of the Christ* has served us well... I'm talking about Gibson's movie. I don't have opinions about Gibson. All right? I'm not trying to pat him on the back or give him a hug. I'm just telling you where his movie served us well is the cross. For most of us, it's kind of a sterile, clean thing, and Gibson gave us a glimpse of just how graphically painful and horrific it was. And these men saw that.

So the idea that the crucifixion was him absorbing God's wrath toward their failures, shortcomings, and rebellion, they were able to witness, "Oh, no, no. It was paid for." They were able, despite their failures, despite their mistakes, despite their sins (and some of them were epic)...they could believe. "Oh, yeah. I'm forgiven. That was paid for. I saw that check cashed." Then they were walking around with the guy they saw killed! They were witnesses to the fact that he was raised from the dead.

So think about the confidence that occurs in the heart of a man empowered by the Holy Spirit to believe what they saw was what they saw. **"...you will be my witnesses..."** Then he rolls it out in spectacular fashion in a way they couldn't even conceive. Here's where I kind of want to push you to kind of get your mind around what God is doing. He says, "You're going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem. You're going to be my witnesses in Judea. You're going to be my witnesses in Samaria, and you're going to be my witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth."

Now they don't have, anywhere in their framework, the vastness of the continent of Africa, the vastness of North America and South America, or even, at some level, the vastness of Asia. They have little glimpses of it, but nothing like you and I know now. So even for them to hear, "...to the uttermost parts of the earth," sounds maybe, at some level, manageable, and at some level, maybe, impossible, but look what God has done. Jesus is giving this command to men as part of the triune God of the universe, and here's what has to be in his mind's eye.

Here's what I want to push on you a little bit about today. You and I... Do you know why we're here, why we're in here, why we have this book, why we're transformed the way we are, why so many of us can go, *I know what you mean when you talk about the inward transformation of the Holy Spirit. I know what you mean when you talk about being given new delights and new desires and being transformed...not conformed, but transformed. I get it because I've experienced it?*

The reason you and I can testify to that, the reason you and I can say that, and the reason we're in these rooms today is because these men took seriously the commands of God to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. So off they went. Off they went, and from generation to generation to generation to generation, the Holy Spirit has transformed the hearts of those who would be redeemed by God by the heralding of

the good news of God in Christ by those who have experienced grace in such a way that it motivates them to preach on, speak on, and share the grace, mercy, and forgiveness they've been shown in Christ.

Here's where I'm going to spend the rest of my time with you. It's now our turn. That's where we are. We can look back to Genesis, chapter 12, and hear God tell Abram, "I'm going to save from every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth. That's what I'm going to do. I'm doing it. I'm reconciling all things to myself." We can look at the prophet Isaiah say the nations will gather and be glad. We can read about the great and glorious day of God.

We can see the coming of Jesus. We can hear him say, "There are sheep that are not of this flock who are going to be a part of my family, of my flock. They'll hear my voice. They'll come." We can watch and see the rollout of the gospel, through the book of Acts, to continent after continent after continent. We can go to other countries and celebrate that the gospel is taking root in those countries. This is what God has accomplished, and it's our turn to play in the great drama and in the great unfolding of God's plan on earth.

So let me throw this at you. My wife and I were flying back from Charlotte, North Carolina, yesterday. She leaned over and started reading off my screen, which sometimes bothers me. I was cool with it. I don't even know why. This will let you into a bit of nerd-dom. I was reading an essay by Tolkien on fairies. That might sound funny to you, but let me try to unpack it. Wow. I can tell you haven't read the article because you wouldn't be laughing if you read the essay.

Tolkien was used by God in mighty ways to share the gospel, and ultimately see converted a man by the name of C.S. Lewis, who was a professor of medieval literature at Oxford. Tolkien was also a professor at Oxford, although a bit older than Lewis, and he would engage Lewis around this conversation, that in a secular day and age, we're still drawn to certain stories and certain things. So we all spend, in our culture, millions, if not billions of dollars on entertainment driven around some pretty consistent themes.

We want a love that's unbreakable. That's what we want, so we're going to buy books that teach on that. We're going to go watch movies on that. I mean, come on. Tell me a romantic comedy isn't the same exact movie over and over and over again. There's love. It's fun. Could this be it? There's a secret. "Just tell her." "No, I'm not going to tell her." Then they get outed. There's a breakup. Surely, all is lost. She has been betrayed again. It will never work. Then the crescendo is...what? It works. Now you know that's what's going to happen. You know that's how it's going to work, and you're still spending \$10.25 to go watch it.

But that's not the only theme we like. We want good to triumph over evil. We want to see evil crushed, and so we spend millions, if not billions, if not trillions of dollars watching movies, reading books, and playing

video games that show good conquering evil. Tolkien's point to Lewis is the reason we're drawn into these stories is because it's the story we're actually in. He took it to a whole other level of nerd-dom. I mean, he literally created an elvish language, and it got weird quick. But his argument to Lewis is the reason why we're all drawn to this, the reason why we want so badly to be a part of something like this is because we're actually designed for it, and in Christ, we're walking in it.

So the refrain from Acts, chapter 1, has echoed from the beginning of creation in God's redeeming, reconciling work in Jesus Christ, and it was heralded to us, either by parents, or by friends, or by a coworker, or by whatever, and now the message has been entrusted to us, and the command hasn't changed. To Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth...

Now most of the time, people like to draw concentric circles. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost parts of the earth. I get that. I don't think that's wrong. It doesn't really work that way on a map. You have one of those that is north, one of those that is south, and then Jesus just goes big. But it can be looked at in other ways. Jerusalem is legitimately where they are. They're all there and they're asking about Jerusalem, looking down at Jerusalem. "Is this when you restore the kingdom to Jerusalem?"

"Well, that's not for you to know, but you're going to receive power. When you receive that power, you're going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem." Now here's what's crazy to think about. Nobody has a problem with that here. They have no problem proclaiming Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. In fact, in just a chapter, if you turned your page, Peter's going to boldly stand up, proclaim Jesus Christ as living, crucified, and resurrected, and people are going to get saved, and now we're off and running.

Everybody is heralding and talking about Jesus at home, but they don't want to get out of there. They don't want to go to Judea and Samaria. They're comfortable at their crib. So Saul begins to ravage the church, and that's when they go. They're not going to Samaria without a bit of prodding, and so God is like, "No, no, no. This isn't just about Jerusalem. Get going." He disperses the church out into, not only Judea, but Samaria.

I want you to hear me say I believe you have a responsibility where you are. Proximity matters. In regard to being a witness to the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ at home, you should understand where you work, where you live, and where you play actually has eternal significance. To go back to what Tolkien was imparting to Lewis, you're actually caught up in the greatest epic love, good-versus-evil battle the universe will ever know.

You're right smack in the middle of it. Some of you just don't know it because you're being entertained by things that paint a picture for you of what you're actually currently standing in but not spiritually aware of.

You have a responsibility in your Jerusalem, in your neighborhood, at your workplaces, in the circles in which you run, to be heralds of the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

I'll tell you something that struck me as interesting as I studied this. I really think we've kind of done a flip-flop. Here is what my experience has been. What I've found is in the first century, they're all about Jerusalem, but they don't want to go out. They don't want to go talk to other ethnicities and in other countries. They were so ethnocentric that they were just about them. What I have found that is so peculiar is we're literally the exact opposite.

If you put us on a plane and you send us to Mexico or Africa, we're bold for Jesus. I mean we're *bold* for Jesus in that setting. "You guys need Jesus. Let me help you understand. Let me show you this. Just don't make me go to my next-door neighbor. I don't want to be weird, man. I don't want to look goofy at work." We have the exact opposite problem, where we're bold in Samaria, bold to the uttermost parts of the earth, but not all that bold here. I think, honestly, the thing that drives that... Listen. It's a huge fail today if, when all is said and done, you walk out of here feeling guilty.

I'm all for some good Holy Spirit conviction, but motivation built on guilt never leads to transformation. Conviction by the Holy Spirit leads to repentance and transformation. So really, what I think we're lacking is a deep understanding of the grace of God. Think... When you get that, and you understand what he has done and who he is, then you find yourself far more apt to be excited about God's delight in you and the forgiveness made available for you. So either you don't think there is much that needs to be forgiven in you, or you don't quite buy into God's delight in you made possible in Jesus Christ.

So really, what we need in our hearts is a real awakening of grace so we might embrace fully our responsibility to be witnesses in Jerusalem. But I also think an area we really do need to grow in is a steadfastness in regard to the world, a steadfastness in regard to what God is doing globally, what he's accomplishing everywhere. There is not a country on the map that does not have brothers and sisters of ours in it.

There are unreached people groups. There are people who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ, and there are aggressive movements to take the good news of Christ to bear witness that forgiveness and fullness of life is available to those who will put their trust in him. But all across the globe there are those who have not been born into the privilege we have been born into, who have not been born into the resources we have been born into. God's plan, God's goal is the glory of his name made visible in the salvation of the nations.

Yes, you have a responsibility in Jerusalem, but you most definitely have a responsibility to the uttermost parts of the earth. So what does that look like? Well, I think we're going to be all over the map on what this looks like. For some of us, it's simple. We go. Some of us are going. We've prayed since the day I got here that God would mobilize and raise up and send out from this place men and women all over the world to herald the good news of Jesus Christ.

Some of you are going to go, and that needs to be birthed in your heart by God. That needs to be stirred up in your heart by God. One of the firstfruits of that is a real longing for a people group that doesn't make a lot of sense to you, but your heart is just compelled and drawn to. That is one of the firstfruits of God kind of ironing on that and massaging that into your heart where you're going, *I love this people. I don't even know why I love this people, but I'm in.*

Some of us are not going to go. We're going to send. We're going to be part of supporting, and giving money to, and pouring into the lives of those who do go. Unfortunately, some of us are just going to be disobedient here and we're going to look inward and not upward and outward. It's about us, and about where we are, and about where we're comfortable, and about what we want. *Surely, God gave us this for this reason. We'll attach Jesus' name to it, but ultimately, we're not after what God is after, but we're after what we want with God's name on it.*

A significant portion of the money you give to this church actually leaves this church. It plants other churches. It funds certain projects around the globe. It is sown into people and organizations that are doing hard work in hard places. We are aggressively planting churches anywhere we can aggressively plant gospel-centered churches. This next year there will be over 22 trips taken around the world, from the Middle East to Africa to Asia to South America. Two a month. We'll head out... To give you just a taste of what God is doing around the world.

So this Wednesday, when we gather and we pray at our campuses, we're going to ask that God would continue to stir up in us a heart for the nations, a passion for the nations, an openhandedness that says, *I want to be a part of what God is doing here, and here, and what God is accomplishing here, and how he's going to save and work here*, and that we might, more, and more, and more, push all our chips in on the great drama that's unfolding and that we've been invited to, the great love story that encompasses the universe, the conquering of evil, once and for all, in Jesus Christ. The invitation to come be a part of something infinitely larger than ourselves...

So just to kind of begin to close out our time together today, I'd like you to maybe just do a little soul-searching. Do you have a delight in the Lord that makes delighting in the Lord something natural for you? I don't know that you'll ever be comfortable heralding the news... I always have a bit of a, *Here we go*, in my

heart when I'm sharing the gospel with somebody. I want to kind of free you with this. The great news about the gospel is the gospel does the gospel's work.

What I mean by that is you don't have to be an expert. I'm not encouraging you to be dumb. Don't do that. Know the Word of God. It's smart to kind of have some answers, but you don't have to have all the answers. I have never won an argument and seen someone break down, repent, and ask Christ into their heart. I've never really kind of cornered and checkmated in an argument over ultimate truth, relativity, or science.

I've just never had it happen where I won the argument and had somebody go, "You're right. Give me Jesus." I'm not saying there's not a role for apologetics in the life of the church. I believe there is, but what I think you'll find is there's a receptivity to the true gospel that people are attracted to and drawn to that can transcend all the other silly questions that are really there as a barrier to not hear.

"Do I want to talk about the Christian perspective on this? No, not right now. Let's talk about Jesus. When you figure out Jesus, we can talk about this. When you get a hold of who Christ is and you have that down, then let's talk about this issue, but I don't want to talk about this issue before you understand Jesus. You're putting a secondary thing in front of a primary thing, and it doesn't make any sense to do that."

You might search your heart and see what it is that drives, unfortunately, some of your silence, some of your hard-grasped desire on comfort over the sacrifice that will be necessary that the nations might be glad. Then you might let the Holy Spirit soften the hard places in you and you might repent of what needs to be repented of and you might have a bigger dream than your neighborhood, workplace, and even what God does here.

Because when all is said and done, there's one song that's sung in heaven, and we're not mentioned. There's not a shout-out coming to The Village Church. In God's eyes, there's one church, and we're a part of that one church. So I'm going to give you just a minute or two just to kind of process and pray, and then I'll pray and close us out.

Father, there are men and women in our neighborhoods, in our city, and in this world, who, right now, know nothing of your goodness, nothing of your grace, and nothing of the beauty of life to be found in you and walking with you, so I pray that you would birth in us a passion to herald the grace shown to us, the mercy given to us, and the life shown to us. I thank you that you have come that we might have life and have it to the full. I pray that we would courageously pursue the fullness of that life.

I thank you that you have written in our hearts a desire for an epic kind of unbreakable love and that you've put a desire in our hearts to be a part of good triumphing over evil. I pray, Father, that in that desire, we

would see we've been invited in to just that, and that we would walk in accordance with your Word and your commands. We love you. Help us. It's for your beautiful name, amen.

I love you guys.

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