

I. Introduction

- A. Great to see you.
- B. I'm so thankful for a chance to be all together.
- C. I am thankful for the great weather.
- D. I am thankful for the 200 volunteers who have volunteered to make this happen and happen so smoothly.
- E. I'm excited for the baptisms we have coming up.
 - 1. Last I heard there were sixty-five people stepping forward to publicly identify with Jesus.
- F. I'm excited for the fall:
 - 1. For the series – FutureYou, based out of Daniel – that will start on September 11.
- G. I'm excited for a new Thursday night service at the Highland Park campus. That is going to target Millennials and be pretty different than anything we've done – same sermon, though very different delivery. You'll hear more about that. It's not going live until we finish the remodel there, so probably in October
- H. I'm excited that we are expanding The 01 to include Saturday night - which will give it more room to grow
- I. I love the summer, but the fall is great. And I'm ready for the fall.

II. During the last four weeks I've had more time to reflect. To catch up and catch my breath.

- A. Sheri and I took a week do a lot of nothing with longtime friends at a cabin in Wisconsin. We also took a couple of the days to be with my Mom on her 80th Birthday.
 - 1. She came up here
 - a) Two of my sisters and their families live on the Illinois / Iowa border, where I grew up
 - b) One of my brothers lives about an hour west of here – the other brother is down in Atlanta
 - 2. But she came up here to run in a race that most of the rest of us ran in as well.
 - a) I was never fast. (Not even when I was 25 and skinny like a distance runner). Since the stroke I am slow. But my Mom is a jock. And she got 5th in her age group. There were over 17K runners in total. Not many in the 80 plus category. Her days of competing in Rio are behind her. But she is going strong.
- B. It was great to have a week off. I took the other three weeks to work on the fall and 2017 and to reflect.
 - 1. One of the things I've come to realize is that I have to do a better job of managing myself. I have to work harder to keep the main thing the main thing.
 - 2. One of my take-a-ways from my health-crisis two years ago was that I don't have forever on this side of eternity to do what matters.

3. I have forever – and so do you. I believe that everyone who has ever been born will live forever somewhere.
4. But this life is short.
5. We don't have forever on this side of the grave to do what matters. We want to be sure we are good stewards with our life.

III. I've been going back through the Book of Acts in my devotional reading.

A. As you may know, Luke, who writes the Gospel of Luke that we've been slowing plowing through, writes a sequel.

1. The Gospel of Luke starts with the announcement of Christ's arrival. It tells us about his birth, gives us a snap shot of Jesus at 12. And then it focuses on his life and teaching, with a real focus on the last week of his life.

2. We will be finishing up Luke this year. I've timed the study to end at Easter. It's taken longer than we thought, but the end – which means that great stuff! – is coming into view.

B. But Luke doesn't stop his investigation after the death of Jesus. He keeps on writing about what happens next, giving us a description of how this small group of people – far fewer than are here today – take on the world.

C. It's quite remarkable. When the book of Acts opens the disciples and a few others are confused and cowering in a room in Jerusalem. No doubt they fear that if the authorities find out where they are they'll kill them just like they killed Jesus.

D. But then, the Holy Spirit shows up and they are empowered and they sell out for God's plan – to advance this kingdom of love, grace and care – and they immediately stop hiding and they run out into the streets and start telling everyone they about Jesus.

E. And we hear that on that day thousands signed up. They want in. After listening to the disciples talk about Jesus – and his resurrection – and after seeing the change in their life, they sign up.

F. And over the next 26 chapters we read as the group expands. As the Good News wins over another group: The Samaritans; The Gentiles; As it expands from Jerusalem to Judea and eventually makes its way to Rome.

G. There is a thirty-year explosion. And then it just stops. It doesn't end. There is not real wrap up or conclusion.

IV. There are three things significant about this rather abrupt ending. One of them is that this is no accident. The Book of Acts doesn't have an ending because we are to keep writing new chapters. Every generation gets a chance. Every person does.

A. I want to invite you this year to write an exciting chapter – to keep the explosion going. To be part of more intentional, thoughtful part of those who want to see the Kingdom of God – His life and death, his message and example – spread.

B. I want to invite you be part of a team of people who want to spread love, grace, hope, joy and meaning – the Kingdom of God which unfolds under the King, Jesus – to others.

C. I want to invite you to be part of those who are doing more good in more places than any other movement anywhere.

1. Providing more food
 2. Providing more education
 3. Providing more hospitals and job training programs
 4. Building more orphanages
 5. Staffing more justice movements
- D. I want to invite you to be part of what Jesus started.
- E. I spent the last few days at a leadership conference, where one of the ongoing refrains is that the local church is the hope of the world.
- F. Using that language, I want invite you to sign up to help spread the message of God to a world that needs it. our crazy world needs the message of God's love.
- G. What does that mean?
1. I want to encourage you take some risks this year. We can't change the world if without taking some risks.
 2. That means, serving more. That means doing things that you've not completely comfortable doing
 - a) Like praying for your friends and looking for God to provide you with an opportunity to invite them to take a next step.
 - b) That means, stepping up to lead a small group of your friends.
 - c) That means, working on a Matthew Home or helping staff the Justice Center or volunteering with the Children's Ministry or Tutoring a child in North Chicago.
 3. That means inviting some friends to church.
 - a) Only 17% of Chicago Land is at any church this morning, but of the 83% who are not, most all: believe in God and would show up at a church if anyone invited them.
 4. I want you to grow closer to God. I want you to be able to look back a year from now and say, "Wow, that was a significant year of growth for me."
 - a) It is unlikely to happen if you do not change what you do.
 - b) Sometimes these changes are forced on us – like a health crisis.
 - c) But we can take a step. I want to encourage you to take a step.
- H. This fall is a bit different from previous years
1. As in the past, it's a great time to step up. Sign up.
 - a) Start to volunteer
 - b) Get in a small group.
 - c) Reboot your spiritual habits – like daily Bible reading.
 2. And like previous years, this year we have a fall campaign that is set up to help you get back into things.
 3. And like previous falls – with FencePost and The Life of Christ, and Seven Deadly Sins and Broken and Deep – there is a big small group focus, and daily readings, and a book.
 4. But unlike previous years, the book this year – which is called FutureView – is not really for you.

- a) I wrote it for you to read but I really wrote it for you to give to a friend as an easy way to invite them into a discussion about the future and about their future.
 - b) I set out to write a safe book – one that you could give to anyone. In the book I look at four global trends and say, “these trends are massive and they’ve been in place for hundreds of years and they are unlikely to stop in the next few years. So we need to ask, where are they taking us?”
 - c) And then I ask, what kind of person thrives in the world we are headed into.
 - d) It seems very likely that:
 - (1) Technology is going to continue to change things
 - (2) Globalization is going to continue to change things
 - (3) And social and sexual and marital dynamics are going to continue to change things.
 - (4) And beliefs and ideologies are going to keep morphing.
 - e) Some of the change will be for the best. Some of the changes are a bit scary. Most are happening on a global scale.
 - f) Where are they leading us, and how do we position ourselves to thrive in that kind of a world?
5. The book ends by suggesting that people think about where they are headed and how they better prepare for tomorrow, and that they do it in the context of friends and neighbors.
6. I wrote the book – which takes just a couple hours to read – with the idea that you would give it to your friends and then later follow up with an invite for them to join you on Sunday, Sept. 11, when I will talk about that and set up a series based on the first half dozen chapters in Daniel.
- a) Where Daniel and his friends find themselves in Babylon – a strange world, an advanced world – and thrive.
 - b) Out of Daniel we’ll be looking at things like: hope, courage, friendship, wisdom, grit
7. Let me be clear, as always, you can audit all of this. Just show up. But I promise you, few things will cause you to grow more and pray more, than if you take some risks and invite some others.
8. And that applies double if you step up to lead a small group. Some of you need to take this challenge. It’s time.
- a) WE make it easy. And there is a training session coming up at all of the campuses starting ????
9. And this year we are making it as easy as ever to do that.
10. Buy a copy of the book – by the way, I do not get one penny from the sale of these books. Buy a copy and read it and give it away. Or buy several copies.
11. There are bookmarks that go in them for you to use to keep the conversation going.

- I. I am actually going to go one step further than asking you to do this, I am going to encourage you to help build a monument.
1. In Joshua 4 we see that as the Jews entered Jerusalem they were instructed to pick up 12 stones. They were to remind them of what God did.
 2. We are setting that up. I want you to write one word on this stone, let me suggest that it is the name of a person you are going to invite – the name of someone you want to see Jesus touch and transform.
 3. We are going to turn this into a piece of art that will travel between all three campuses.
 4. Do not write any last names.
- V. I mentioned that there are three things that get noted about the ending of the Book of Acts. One is that it doesn't end it stops. A second is that it doesn't tell us about the fall of Jerusalem, which happened in 70 AD.
- A. The Romans got tired of their rebellions and tore them apart.
 - B. They destroyed the temple, plowed the city under, changed its name to Palestine
 - C. And sent the Jews into the diaspora.
 - D. This is significant for a few reasons, one of them is that, if Luke finished Acts before 70 AD and he wrote Luke before that, it means that the Gospel of Luke was in circulation much earlier than some have claimed.
 - E. It adds to the historical reliability of the record.
- VI. The third is the one recently got my attention.
- A. It's the suggestion that Luke doesn't write about Paul's death in part because Paul is not the focus of Acts. Jesus is, and the thing the first readers would have marveled at was that this group – this small collection of nobodies that was cowering in an upper room in Jerusalem – makes it to Rome in thirty years and is marching ahead with great courage, telling the story of Jesus. Who is the hero.
- VII. Men and women, I want to encourage you to write a new chapter. I want to encourage you to make an invite. And I want to encourage you to keep everything focused on Jesus.

- I. Post service announcements
- A. Go ahead and have a seat. There are a number of announcements and I also need to explain a handful of things about what will be happening next.
- B. In just a couple minutes I am going to pray for us and then we are going to walk over to the junior lake for the baptism.
- C. As you are walking out, there will be a box for you to through your stone and your marker.
- D. The walk to the pond:
1. Is about a 10-minute walk through the field.
 2. There are bathrooms along the way.
 3. If that is too difficult of a walk, there are a few golf carts to help ferry a few people over.
 4. We hope you all join us. And, you will need to head in that general direction anyway, because the picnic is that direction.
- E. If you have not signed up yet but want to be baptized – and Jesus is your savior – it's not too late.
- F. If you want to be baptized today you need to have something to wear in which you'll get wet. Next to the bathrooms is a table with some shorts and T-shirts.
- G. Let me say that those who are being baptized will go to join ? who will be standing with the balloons for some last minute instructions.
- VIII. After the baptism we'll come part and immediately queue up and start eating.
- A. Three things to know about the food
1. First: we should have plenty, but with over a thousand people it's sort of a guess, so if you are among the first in line, be aware that there are 1,000 people coming behind you. You can always come back after everyone has been fed.
 - a) Jesus could multiply food. None of us here can.
 2. Second: no one eats alone
 - a) I know, I know, you are thinking, "I don't know these people. I don't recognize most of these people. Or, I can't tell if I know them or not."
 - b) Hey, no one here knows everyone here.
 - c) But, everyone here has a name tag. Meet people. Be inclusive. This is a gathering of brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - d) Introduce yourself to others. Be bold.
 3. Third: You will see buckets like these where you can make a donation to help cover the cost of this day
 - a) We got a great deal on renting out this facility. We're very thankful for the staff at Banner and to their staff, and to the hundred plus people from Christ Church who have volunteered their time.
 - b) But, of course, there are costs. When you factor in the food and the facility and the staff and all the assorted costs, it's about \$10 an adult.

c) If you are able to make a contribution along those lines, great. If not, please know we are thrilled you are here. Stay. Eat. Have fun.

B. At the pavilion you can buy a book

A. After the picnic

1. You will have lots of free time with lots of opportunities to play
2. All four pools will be open
3. There are fields
4. There will be organized softball games and kickball

B. If you have questions about something, those wearing a green shirt like mine are the ones to ask. They may be able to help you.

1. By the way, there are way too many people to thank for working on this. But let's have everyone who is wearing a green shirt stand to be thanked.

II. OK – let me pray for us and then we will head immediately to the junior lake for the baptism.