

- I. Intro
- A. So far this morning we've prayed and worshipped, we've explored the call and faithfulness of God and we've looked at a few of the key turning points in our history. Good stuff. Fun to think about. God has been faithful. There is a lot to celebrate.
- B. Over the next twenty minutes I want to look at what's next. I want to talk about the plan going forward.
- C. We are calling our new initiative, REACH. I hope you picked up on that by now. We are basing this name on several passages:
1. Principally, I Cor. 9:19, where Paul talks about REACHing others: He says, "Though I belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to reach as many as possible."
 2. And also Phil 3:13, where Paul talks about reaching for God. Of pressing ahead to know Him. He wrote, "I'm setting aside my accomplishments, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on towards the goal for the prize of the higher calling of God." The Greek word translated "press on," can be translated "REACH." I am REACHing to follow God.
- D. We are calling on you to REACH – to extend your heart to others, to REACH up to God. And I have five specific things to share with you. That is my assignment
- II. But before we talk about what I want to talk about why.
- A. What you are going to hear me say is that we are doubling down on our mission. That we want to take the call of God seriously – that we want to fuel a movement that Reaches People and Renews Communities.
- B. Or to state this differently, that we want to be more like the church in Antioch than the church in Jerusalem.
1. If you read the Book of Acts you see that the church in Jerusalem had all the people, all the leaders, all the money and all of the resources, but they never got around to sending people out. The assignment from Jesus was to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. But they stayed in Jerusalem. It was a small, under resourced church in Antioch – with few people and fewer leaders – that sent out Paul and Barnabas to REACH others.
- C. We've got ideas about that. Exciting ones. You are going to hear me map out the what. But before we talk what, give me three minutes on why.
- III. Why REACH? Why do anything? Why take risks to follow Jesus?
- A. I've been thinking about this since my stroke four years ago. When I was being loaded onto an ambulance in the middle of the night, I remember thinking: I don't think I'm going to die, but I might. And that made me sad. I remember, thinking: I really do not want to leave my family behind. But, I'll be fine. Heaven will be better. And then the next thought was, "Wow, you played it pretty safe." And there was some regret there. I had no regrets about following Jesus, but some regrets about playing it so safe.
- B. I don't want to be the person who plays it safe. I want to be the person who takes risks for things that matter.
- C. I really believe that living for God makes the most sense.
- D. I really believe that Eternity Changes Everything - that if I am going to live forever, it only makes sense to live today in light of forever, especially since: life is short, eternity is not and opportunity is now. So, I want to invest my life in forever. Before God I want to be a good steward of the many blessing, benefits and opportunities I've been given.
- E. And I believe many of you share those desires. Once that gets settled, then the question is, well how do I do that? Or, how do we do that?
- F. What is the plan? Well, let me tell you how we can do that. Let me go to my five points.
- IV. Number one: **REACH is about doubling down on our mission – our assignment: Slide:**
- A. Last fall I spent a few sermons unpacking our new mission and vision statements.
1. Our mission is to help people discover life with God;

2. And our **vision is to fuel a movement that Reaches People and Renews Communities. SLIDE**

B. At that time, I noted that we had modified the wording of these statements a bit. And I explained that we'd done this to reflect an awareness that a few things had changed. That over the last few years the church in the US had lost home field advantage and we needed to think more missionally than before.

C. But, I noted that we not only had the same message – our method was largely the same.

D. We have always understood that God's plan for his church was to point people to Jesus and mobilize them to Love God, Serve Others and Reach out. But these are different times so we need to think a bit differently - work out our assignment in a different setting. And we've been doing that:

1. We have a Th. night worship service in what looks like a coffee shop;
2. We hold a men's outreach in a sport's bar
3. We are in discussions with Retirement Communities and colleges about how to partner with them in ways that allow us to go to them.

E. Our goal remains the same: we want to see people come to faith and the kingdom of God spread. We intend to stay focused on Proclaiming the Good News and Engaging in Good Works. That was the old plan. That remains the new plan. We are doubling down on that plan.

V. **Second, the way we intend to do that is multiply multiplying churches.**

A. To be more specific:

1. Locally: we want to help other churches thrive; we want to start three new Christ Church campuses; and we want to expand our church's service among the poor, especially in North Chicago.
2. And globally we want to help our level one global partners plant churches that are going to Reach People and ReNew Communities.

B. We cannot do everything. As Peter Drucker noted, "If you have \$100M to give away, the question is not what to do with so much, but what to do with so little." So, this is our plan. Why the church? Why this plan over others?

1. Because the church is God's plan. The church is not my idea. It wasn't the disciples' idea. It isn't an organization that emerged during the Middle Ages, the church is God's idea. It is his plan. Jesus was the first one to use the term "church" to mean what we think it means. He brushed off a political term used in ancient Greek writings and latched onto it, saying, "I will build my church – a movement of my followers who are going to lean into my values – and it will win. The church will spread everywhere. Indeed, the gates of hell will not be able to hold it back.

a) Which was an audacious statement. An unthinkable statement. Jesus was surrounded by a bunch of "also-rans." Looking at the disciples does not lead you to think he was going to launch the enterprise that would become the largest, most significant, most global, longest lasting organization in the world. But that is what he did.

2. Why the church? Because it's a good plan. Churches make things better.

a) Recent studies by secular agencies have made this point: A Penn study showed that a congregation of 200 people was worth \$1.5M dollars to a community. And that the economic value of the 12 churches they studied in Philadelphia was \$50M annually.

b) A second study showed that most people had no idea all of the good that churches do – including the people who attend them. I suspect that most of you had no idea about all of the things that go on across the campuses. The programs, the service, the efforts to serve others. And here's a big point, I would argue that most of the good isn't done through the formal programs – it happens in places that no one sees.

c) I'll go so far as to say, if the church doesn't thrive nothing else has a chance. Our government, the family, businesses and schools all suffer. Those institutions work best in a world that works – and the church makes everything better.

d) And this shouldn't surprise us. . Jesus is not just amazing for his insights, his example and his death, he's smarter than anyone else. In fact, he's a more impressive entrepreneur and leader than Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk, or anyone else you can think of.

e) And the church was his plan. Against great odds, open hostility,

3. A third reason to focus on the church is because it not only deals with now it deals with forever. Jesus alone has the words of eternal life

a) Towards the end of John 6, Jesus ups the ante for following him. The crowds have been getting bigger and bigger, because he has been healing people, feeding them, performing miracles. He has been advertising the upsides of following him. But then, as he will do on a couple other occasions, he talks about the costs, and lots of people leave. And at that point he turns to the disciples and says, "What about you? What are you going to do?" And in John 6:68, Simon answers, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

b) Following Jesus – being part of his family, his body, being the church - is the right choice for today and for eternity.

c) This is why seeing Gospel-centric churches expand is so critical. Lacking a church is not like lacking movie theater. It's like lacking a clean water. Areas need going, growing, Gospel-saturated churches. They are good for today and they change forever.

d) Which, by the way, is why investing in them makes so much sense. It is an opportunity to store up treasure in heaven.

e) Occasionally I hear people lament not buying McDonalds in the 60s; Walmart in the 70s; Microsoft in the 80s; Starbucks in the 90s; Google or Netflix ten years ago or Bitcoin ten months ago.

f) There is always some stock that has shot up. And people say, "If only..." No! Stop focusing on returns on invest that will only pay out for the next fifty years and start focusing on returns for the next 50,000.

g) If Jesus is who He claims to be, then you are going to live forever. And you need to look past retirement and store up treasure in heaven, where moth and rust cannot destroy and thieves cannot break in and steal. You want to go all in for the Kingdom of God.

C. I could pile up other reasons:

1. Why the church? Because starting new churches and new campuses is the single best way to reach the lost. Nothing else compares. New works reach new people – and it forces others to grow.

2. Why the church? Because the church will win. God wins and his church prevails.

3. I could keep at it but let's move on.

VI. Major point number three.

A. Point number one: we are doubling down on our mission

B. Point number two: we are focused on multiplying churches for all the reasons I just gave.

VII. Point Number Three: **We will measure three things.**

A. First - baptisms

1. The first part of our vision is to Reach People. How will we know if we do? We are going to look at baptisms. It's not a perfect metric. Ideally we'd measure disciples, but that is very hard. Baptisms isn't a perfect measure of

because some people who come to faith will not take this step. Some people who previously came to faith will get baptized. But it's a pretty good metric.

2. Just over 100 people were baptized last year. **GRAPH**. We've baptized just under 350 people in the last four years. Our goal is to baptize 500 in the next three. Wouldn't that be awesome. I want to be part of a church that is seeing lost people place their faith in Christ and head down the path to being a disciple.

B. The Second thing we are going to measure is service hours. **GRAPH**

1. The second part of our vision is to Renew Communities. We have decided to measure this by tracking how much time we invest in serving people outside our walls. Again, not a perfect metric – for several reasons.

a) For starters they are challenge to track. We have lots of volunteers working inside the walls of the church: small group leaders, Sunday school teachers, elders, deacons, greeters, worship leaders, office volunteers – it's a long list.

b) We have an equally large number of people who serve outside the church. These are hours helping staff PADS, working on the Matthew Homes project, tutoring in the public schools thru NCCP, serving people via HBI in Chennai.

c) This doesn't capture those who volunteer in their neighborhood or through other ministries. But we said, it's good enough, and we would consider it a big win if we hit 100,000 hours donated outside our walls. That feels like something Jesus would celebrate.

C. The third goal is to help launch ten new communities of grace, hope and love. I have already explained why we are dialed in on this. We want to fuel a movement that reaches people and renews communities. So we are:

1. Helping other churches grow. We've been doing this quietly for years.

Gathering churches for prayer and events like the baptism happening in a month, providing resources, we have – you have – helped put on a new roof when a local church was unable to do this themselves, you've helped refurbish a flooded basement; we have sent resources to other churches, we have sent people. We want to help other Gospel centered churches go and grow.

2. We want to prepare to start three more campuses. Highland Park and Crossroads are success stories. We want to be ready to start new works and help restart those that are struggling.

3. Third we want to help our global partners start churches. Six to be exact, We intend to work primarily through our level one partners – International Teams in Istanbul; International Needs in Ghana and HBI in India. These will not be Christ Church campuses or churches – our goal is to help our partners start churches.

VIII. **Number Four: To do this we need to get everyone involved** - our first REACH related goal is 100 percent engagement. We want to help people take a step forward. Our second is to raise \$19M.

A. We are looking to push and challenge people to take a next step. And we are looking to raise money to fund our local and global efforts to REACH out.

B. \$19M includes funding everything we are doing today across all three sites for two years - which will be \$12M - and it provide \$7M additional dollars for the plans I have laid out. Let me say two things about this:

1. First, the number is doable. By way of reference, raising this amount is possible. Back in 2003, when our budget was just over \$2M, we raised close to \$7M. Today our budget is \$5.6M and our goal for new money is \$7M. So, this is doable. It is big and bold and will not happen unless God shows up, nor will it happen without sacrifice. But it is doable.

2. Some of you have not ever given to Christ Church. You will be asked to. Sharing our life and resources is part of what it means to be a Christ follower.

And everyone wins when you are generous, starting with you. I really do believe it is more blessed to give than to receive.

3. Others of you have been faithfully giving for years – and what I'd like you to hear is: thank you and we are hoping and praying that during the next two years you will do more. Sheri and I are stepping up.

C. Second, the number is the small part. To fuel a movement. To get to some sort of tipping point at which things are really happening – that will take people who are all in.

1. That will take prayer. That will take disciples, not fans. Jesus wasn't a fan of fans. He wanted disciples – people who were willing to count the cost and follow.

2. I was talking to someone about REACH a few weeks ago and they said, "So you are coming after my money?" And I said, "you wish all I was coming after was your money."

D. Which brings me to my last main point: 1) we are doubling down on our mission; 2) we are focused on churches; 3) we are going to track baptisms, serving and new churches; 4) we want to get everyone involved and we need to raise \$19M over two years.

IX. **Point Number Five. We can do this.**

A. This is a bold plan, and as I said, if God doesn't show up, we fail. But I'm too old for small plans. I want my life to matter. I want to be involved in things that change eternity. Things that matter to God and will last.

B. Take it from a guy far too old to be working as a stunt man! Life is short; Eternity is not; And the opportunity to make a difference for eternity is now.

C. In the coming months, we will be unpacking this. There are a variety of moving pieces and I'm sure you have lots of questions. We'll get to that. Let me make two requests right now:

1. Show up for REACH. Starting in three weeks, I will be preaching out of Genesis 12-18. We will be looking at Abraham – a guy who arguably has had one of the biggest REACHES of all. A man who walked with God. We are going to be looking at his life. I am excited about the series, and there will be a number of moving parts along side it. This all starts on Feb. 18. Show up for REACH

2. Please pray the church, pray for the people who will be coming to faith because of you, pray for yourself, pray for me. Ask God to guide and direct us.

3. We have a 20 day prayer focus that starts tomorrow. ??????

X. I am excited about this. Sometimes excited isn't the word I'd use. Scared and overwhelmed seem more accurate. But I am ready to risk. I am ready to REACH. I hope you are as well. Lord God Almighty, direct us. Amen.

XI. Let me direct you to the screen.