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## Christmas Notes

### Part 1 – Go Tell it on the Mountain

Pastor Ted Cunningham

Several things... Three things, as the offering comes around. 1) We say thank you for your generosity and how well you've been giving to meet the needs of this church, community, and around the world. 2) The Giving Tree has been going so well. I think we have a few envelopes left. Last year, we ministered to 222 kids during this time of year. I think the number is already at 250, so you've exceeded last year. We're grateful for that and ask that you continue to stop by there after the service. Then, in a couple of weeks, we'll be making all of those deliveries. 3) It's a good time to let you know where your giving is going. Today, we just want to talk to you about missions, outreach, and benevolence, or what we do to meet the needs of those in our church.

For the first 11 months of the year, your generosity has gone to help many. In missions and outreach, you've given \$345,000.00, and for that we are very grateful. I want to just share with you a few ways that breaks down.

**Missionary support** - Out of that \$345,000.00, you've given \$162,000.00 to missionary support. That goes to meet the needs of children in Haiti, Tanzania, International Students around the country, and our missionaries all over the world.

**Care for Kids** - You hear this number mentioned quite often around here, especially as we head back to school. You've given \$42,000.00 to Care for Kids. That goes to meet the physical needs of students in Stone and Taney Counties. It meets everything from dental and eye glass prescriptions to coats and shoes and food, whatever the 14 school districts deem necessary. Whatever the need within the life of their students, they are able to take from those funds. We're part of many others in the community. I believe over \$100,000.00 was given to the school districts for counselors to determine how to meet those needs.

**Mercy requests** – today is the first Sunday of the month. Whenever we have a first Sunday, we take the Lord's Supper together and we take a mercy offering. If you've been in church your whole life, you've probably heard the term *benevolence* and that's really what this is. When you leave here today, there are boxes in the back for a second offering that we take the first Sunday of every month. That goes to meet the physical needs of family members here at our church. Every dime you put in those boxes will go to pay rent, mortgage, food, utilities, clothing, whatever the needs are. You've given \$38,000.00 in the first eleven months of the year to that.

**Back to School Shoes** – In August, we do something extra to help families get back to school. You gave \$13,000.00 to back to school shoes. That was pretty much all given out in one evening.

I wish we could give you a long list this morning, but for the sake of time, I want to give you just a few other places that it goes. This is not an exhaustive list by any means, but you can see how it starts to break down as we meet needs in a lot of different ways within our community.

**Prison ministry** – We've given \$4,000.00 to a prison ministry.

**Faith Community Health** – You've given \$5,000.00 Faith Community Health to meet the health needs of many in our community.

**Options Pregnancy** – You've given \$5,000.00 to save the lives of unborn babies.

**Jesus Was Homeless** – You gave \$2,500.00 just a couple of weeks ago for their Thanksgiving meal.

And many other places. I just want to say, as your pastor, thank you for your generosity in giving, and continue through December to give well. Again, I've never been part of a church that has been this generous and for that I am grateful.

They told me they really didn't have room for the television today, so here you go; this is the pulpit and it's going to be a short message. That's all I can tell you. We're going to move forward. We're starting with *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. How many of you love those videos... I'm addicted to those baby gender reveal videos online. I don't know why that excites me; I get all giddy. What's even better than those are the bloopers. If you've ever seen baby gender reveal gone bad... Oh, they are some of the best.

My favorite one is this... I don't want to stereotype, but this redneck has this big dually truck. One of the ways you can reveal the gender of your baby.... If you don't know what I'm talking about, it's a big deal now to celebrate what gender the baby is. You film it, and everybody is surprised. Family and friends gather around. One of the ways that they do it is they put blue or pink powder in the exhaust pipes of the vehicle and then when you start the vehicle. It shoots up blue or pink and everybody screams.

This guy has this massive, almost semi, dually looking truck with massive exhaust pipes out the back of it. He gets the idea that he's going to start it from the outside of the vehicle. He didn't realize he had it in gear. He starts this thing... You have to find it on line and show it today, but we don't have time. If you want to laugh at someone else's pain, this is one of the best videos. He starts the truck and blue shoots out of the exhaust pipes and his truck takes off for the woods. He's on the side of the window, dragging along. He finally gets off, his truck crashes. You'll howl with laughter. There are hundreds of those online.

Today, we're launching Christmas, the birth of our Lord and Savior, and the big announcement. I asked Stephanie Watson, "Can we do a gender reveal at Woodland Hills?" She got all excited and so we asked

a couple... We told a couple that they were going to come up on stage and do their gender reveal. We did that in the 8:30 service, and we want to show you a clip of it. That's Joe and Jessica Nothum. Let's hear it for them. They're having a girl. That was Mom and Dad standing behind them and their home group gathered around them with all those gifts. Let me just make a plug for home groups right now. If you want to get a bunch of gifts every time you have a baby, get in a home group. Then they got a cake saying, "Congratulations, it's a girl." Then they all, as a home group, didn't even go to the first service. I'm hoping they are in the second or the third. They headed out and had a party as a group together, celebrating with Joe and Jessica.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 2. We're going to kick off Christmas with the big announcement, the birth of Jesus and how it comes to the shepherds. Isn't it fitting that shepherds were chosen to bring this news, to spread this news. Shepherds are going to spread the news of the spotless lamb of God and the one who is our Good Shepherd.

***8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby... Okay, to be clear here, they weren't hanging out in fields nearby, it says they were living out in fields nearby. ...keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."***

Today, we want to look at ordinary shepherds and the lessons we can learn from them, and other lessons that you and I can use to share with our lives the good news of great joy to family, to friends, to those that we love. Again, there is much... After country roads, I felt it should have been a 30-part series, but we kept it at five parts. There was more to say about sharing the story.

***"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*** And then here's the announcement. ***11 "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."*** Christmas is a great time for us to have celebration, for us to talk about salvation, and for us to talk about reconciliation. The angel said, "Look for Bethlehem and in Bethlehem, there is the Messiah." ***12 "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."***

***13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel... That term actually means an army of angels provide divine confirmation for the announcement that has been made. ...praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."***

As we talk about our lives today and how we can share the good news of great joy with our lives, it behooves us to start with talking about worship and who the object of worship is. Let me break it to you; it's not you. It is glory going to your Father in heaven. We've been talking about your story a lot and sharing your story. We want you to share your story, but make glory to the Lord be the goal of your story, make it be the priority of your story.

Something I've heard people say for years that I've never... With probably over 20 years in church ministry, I've never had a good response to this type of person or this comment being made. I've never

known what to say, so I haven't said anything. But have you ever heard someone say, "I didn't get a lot out of worship today" or "I wasn't feeling worship today"? "You know, I liked last week better. I like those up temp songs. Today was kind of blah." "I don't like that one song."

I've never known what to say or how to respond to that until last week. I got it. It came to be by way of Francie Chan. When I heard him say this, I said, "I've been looking for that response for 20 years." I got to use it after the first service. This is what I love about our church. People always give me the opportunity to try new things. Sure, they were doing it with a sarcastic tone and acting like they didn't hear the message. People who don't like bluegrass came up and said, "I'm not really a bluegrass fan." I was ready and waiting. The next time and every time I hear someone say, "I wasn't into worship today," here's what my response will be: "That's okay, we weren't worshipping you." Is that the best response in the history of man? I heard Francis say that and you know his way. I was like, "Yes, that's exactly it." Guess what? It's not about you.

I remember I spent 20 bucks on the book *The Purpose Driven Life*. I opened it to Chapter 1. The very first sentence was worth the entire price of the book. It said, "It's not about you." I could shut the book, put it down, and be like *I got everything I needed out of that book*. Do you know what I want to do? Wouldn't this be fun? Spend the afternoon just going on church Facebook pages to their review section. Every time you get a review like, "Not really into their worship," you can respond with "That's okay, they're not worshipping you."

This is now a core value of our church and it's going to be on the front page of our website. We're not worshipping you, and all God's people said... Amen. Glory to God in the highest, and all God's people said... Amen. And on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests. In other words, yes, there is refreshment to the soul from worship and that's part two, but it's not the priority, it's not the object. Can you leave here refreshed after worshipping your Father? Yes, but it's because you brought glory to him, you professed him, you proclaimed him, you let your light shine about him.

I love how this story and how this whole message begins in Luke 2. ***15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another...*** Can you imagine this conversation? After what just took place and what just happened, now they're going to discuss with one another. ***"Let's go to Bethlehem..."*** They didn't say, "Let's stick around, let's talk about this some more." What I want us to see today is that we do something with what we know, that we act on what we have, that we go out and tell it from the mountain tops, scream it from the mountains that Jesus Christ is Lord. ***"...and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."***

I want to look at five ways your life and my life, as ordinary Ozarkians and a few sprinkled in tourists, can proclaim the good news of great joy and how we can share our story. It's going to connect a little bit and kind of tie in with the last series as we launch into this new series for the month of December.

**1. Share with urgency.** Have a sense of urgency about you, knowing what you're called to do and knowing that you, as a follower of Christ, one of your purposes in life, one of the purposes of our church is to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

**16 So they hurried off...** As you look at Verse 15, they said, "Let's go to Bethlehem." They went to Bethlehem in a jiffy. They were after it. ***...and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.***

This is what we call the Great Commission. It comes to us in Matthew 28. Jesus gives this to his disciples. He gives this to you and he gives this to me. Jesus says, ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."***

What does it mean to have urgency? Let's look at this for a second from a parent's perspective. When you ask our child to do something, there are two ways they can respond to that. They can do it or not do it. I want to focus on them not doing it. There are two ways they can not do it. Parenting experts call this noncompliance. I have a better word that comes out of Bible and it's called *obedience*. Children obey your parents. And all the parents said... Amen.

When you ask your kids to do something and they don't want to do it, there are really only two ways they can resist: actively or passively. Actively is back talk. Actively is "I don't want to do it and I'll give you a few reasons why you should just do it while you're there." I'm going to start with something super simple. Take out the trash. That's my son's job in our home. I don't know who it is your home, but it needs to be a child's job. And all the parents said... Amen. it's so simple. It takes literally seconds. And then replace the liner. And all the parents said... Amen. I'm sorry this is so personal, but let's just...

So, you ask your child to do something. They can talk back, or they can do it with passive resistance. Both active and passive resistance are wrong; it's disobedience, it's noncompliance. I know I shouldn't like either one of them, but I think I hate passive resistance more. I don't know why.

This isn't every child, but this is a lot of them. "Hey, would you grab the trash for me, son?" They take a deep breath, let it out slowly, sigh, and then slowly move themselves off the chair... If that drives you insane, would you raise your hand and profess before your Father in heaven. How many of you want to go up behind the child and kick them as they walk to hurry them along? All the people from Texas say, "That's how we do it!" I'm not telling you to kick your kids. Don't read that into it or post online. I think that absolutely wears me out. It's like, "I'm going to do it, but not under your conditions or terms. I'm going to do it at my own pace."

Do you know what would bring the greatest joy in my life... and I know in yours? "Son, would you take out the trash?" If they would immediately drop what they're doing and run to do what you ask... Oh, you know what I'm feeling at that moment? I want to take out my wallet and go, "Son, go get yourself something nice." I'm not going to do that, but as a parent, I want to. And all the parents said... Amen. When we see that, that excites us. That gets us going. Have a little bit of urgency and show passion.

If you're a coach in this room, you're the same way. You don't want to have that big paper banner (like high school and Friday night lights) and your team is being announced and you look over and you see

your players with a pair of scissors, leisurely cutting the banner and walking through it. No. What are they doing? They are busting through and getting after it. It's urgency.

Go and make disciples. This is not with passivity that we do this. I think it's one of the things that can kind of exhaust me about meetings. I'm not a big meeting guy because I hate the meetings where we sit around to plan the next meeting. Could we do something? I'll tell people, "Hey, I love you and I'm grateful to be a part of this group, but if we don't do something out of this meeting, I'm going to lose my mind."

Staff members don't make it at our church when they're so lackadaisical. Come on! Come into the office with a little bit of "we've got stuff to do." Dragging your hinny in here ain't it. You ain't going to make it. When we hire people, I tell them, "Watch Stephanie Watson. If you can keep up with her, you're going to do a great job at this church because she's going after it and getting going."

That's what we want. Some of you, I love you, but how many years have you been sauntering into Woodland Hills? Man, come on! Do something! Have a sense of urgency. May this be your message today. They hurried off. Hurry up! I'm grateful that you're comfortable and enjoying your coffee, but your going to be done and plenty caffeinated by noon, go do something, please! Do you think Jesus... If I were to read this, "Hey, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Hey, when you get some time, tell somebody. When it's convenient, share. Guys, you're going to come against some resistance, run when that happens. No, go and make disciples of all nations.

**2. Find your courage.** In Acts 4, we read how Peter and John shared boldly about Jesus and they did this against great opposition from unbelieving Jewish religious leaders. In Acts 4, we read, ***13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*** Isn't that something? In the scripture we read that Jesus used shepherds, fishermen, ordinary, average men. May you and I leak Jesus. May our kids see it. May our spouses see it. May it be in us. May it flow out of us. May people walk away from us going, "That person knows the Lord. Not only do they know the Lord, they've been with him."

Continuing in Acts 4, ***20 "As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."***

Why do we not have a sense of urgency and where is our courage? I believe it's a fear almost every single one of us in here deals with. I deal with it and you deal with it. It's the **fear of rejection**. It's why you're going to hold back at the holidays when your family shows up. "I shared with them years ago and it didn't go well." **Don't let past attempts or failed attempts keep you from sharing in the future.** Don't be annoying. Proverbs says too much of you and they will hate you. But share with courage, with boldness, with a sense of urgency.

I was thinking about it this week. There is something that is burned into my mind. I was either 10 or 11 years old. My cousin, Greg, is not a believer and he's a year older than me. We are in Naperville, Illinois at a hot dog shop. We are eating a Chicago Dog. Have you ever had a Chicago dog? Anybody from Chicago knows what I'm talking about. A church van or bus pulls up and a bunch of teenagers get off

this bus. A few of them come in to where we were, and others go out to the River Walk. One of them pulls up a chair and sits down with my cousin and me. He starts sharing the gospel with us.

I've probably had this happen 12 times in my life and I always play along with it. I don't let them know I'm a Christian right away. I'm kind of grading them and seeing how they're doing. Going to give them some pointers afterwards when they say, "Would you like to pray to receive Christ?" "I already know the Lord, but here's two things I'd work on." No, I don't do that.

You know I say it. "Well what do you do?" "I'm a teacher." "What do you teach?" "History and ethics." "Where do you teach it?" "At a theme park." That's how I get my story going. I don't let them in on too much.

But he starts sharing the gospel with us and I am ready because I had shared the gospel with my cousin. But my cousin is receptive. He didn't place faith in Jesus that day, but he listened as this young man shared. And I mean he is on fire for the Lord. He is proclaiming the good news of great joy to my cousin.

At the table right behind us was an older couple. I'd say in their 40s. I'm trying to say they weren't teenagers. The man turns around... I'll never forget this. The man turns around and looks at this young man sharing with us and he goes, "Who the f#\$% do you think you are, Billy Graham? Shut the bleep up."

I'm like, "I'm going to go refill my drink real quick, alright?" I have flight mode in me a lot of times. Do you know what this young man said? Talk about well trained and on fire and in love with the Lord. He just simply said to the guy, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'll keep it down." And he continued to share. Do you know what that is? That's courage.

Here's the other thing we fear. **We fear not having the right words.** "I don't understand it all..."

**3. Keep it simple.** You don't have to be a scholar to share the good news of great joy. You can share it in any walk of life at any age and no matter how long you've been a believer. None of that matters when it comes to sharing the good news of great joy.

1 Corinthians 2, the Apostle Paul says, ***1 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.***

We talked about this last week. Go ahead with awkward, work through it. Awkward is awesome. When Paul preached, he had fear and trembling. I'll be honest with you. I'm always a little bit nervous when I walk up here. I'm a lot nervous when I share with someone one on one. I hope I don't ever lose that. I hope I always have that little bit of "something big is happening here." This is God's work and we need...

***4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom...*** This church isn't about

giving you TED talks with a Bible verse. We're about proclaiming the good news of Jesus, the gospel of our Lord. ...**but on God's power.** Paul is saying here, "I brought you a straight forward message."

A new value of our church, something we're brining in... And we say a lot of things around here like, "Do for one what you can't do for all." Here's a new one that we want to be clear on. "It's better to be clear than clever." In our day and age, with Instagram and Facebook, you've probably sat there and hit the backspace button I don't know how many times to make your post different, unique, and clever. Go for clarity. Seek to be clear more than anything.

And before you post or before you share with someone the good news of great joy, take a moment and pray what Mel Gibson prayed in *The Patriot* when he leaned up against that tree and he cocked his riffle. He said, "Lord, make me fast and accurate." That's the prayer of every pastor. "Lord, make me fast and accurate." I now say, since we started this in September, "Lord, make fast and accurate and done by 9:30, 11:00, and 12:30. Something I've added to it, just so we stay clear here at this church, is "Lord, make me fast, accurate, and clear." We never want to be a church that after we speak, someone says, "I have no idea what that person was trying to say."

Sometimes, you'll hear people say, "We need to go deeper." If by "deeper" you mean more complicated and more mysterious, no. That's not what we're going after. We're going after taking the truths of God's Word and making it as clear as possible to every single person that walks in here. Keep it simple. Keep it clear. Communicate it with the words that you have.

**4. Make it personal.** We looked at this story in the *Country Roads* series. The Samaritan Woman. Here's her story. John 4 says, **39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him (Jesus) because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."**

In Psalm 66, David said, **16 Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.** Again, keeping the Lord the center of your story, not you, but you use your story of God's redeeming work in your life and as we talked about last week, your family. Let your story show how God redeems people.

We read about the man born blind in John 9. **25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"**

People love stories. This is why Jesus used stories when he talked. He communicated with stories. No one else has your story. That's what's great about your story. You are the authority of your story. Remember what we say at this church. The authority of our lives is the scripture. Scripture is in the driver's seat. In the passenger seat we have tradition. We put experience in the middle seat with reason. And in the back seat, we put emotions. **You are the authority of your story, but your story does not become the authority for another person's life.** Scripture is the authority for that person's life.

No one else has your story. Stories are easy to remember and pass on. That's why Jesus spoke in parables. He wanted people to understand deep kingdom truths with an earthly story.

Last week, after we spoke on blended families, we received so many letters. I even got some handwritten ones. People still do that. They handwrite letters and I love them. Some of you have unbelievable penmanship; I'm very impressed. So, I got some of those and I got emails and messages. Some of them were so encouraging and inspiring and others were sad.

*The whole Country Roads series, not only do we have a blended family, but I also have a prodigal. Some of the stories just led me to pray. It was all I knew to do.*

I got this one and I asked for permission to share it. Talk about a story to encourage someone and to show how God redeems people and how this person is giving all of the glory to God and not taking it for themselves.

*Ted, the Broken Road message spoke to me in two specific ways I'd like to share. My mom passed away in 2005 and my dad, who had been faithful and loving to her for their 30 plus years of marriage began dating within a few months and remarried within the year. My stepmom, a wonderful Christian lady, brought with her four kids of her own. The youngest being around eight years old, I, at the time, was in my late 20s and I wanted no part of it.*

*Over the next few months and even years, I literally walked through every one of the four feelings you mentioned last Sunday. I did not want to share my dad and felt I was betraying my mom to even recognize this new family. I was quite literally the hard-hearted stepchild you prayed for on Sunday. Thankfully, we have a loving God and he kept chipping away at the crevasses of my heart and he never gave up on me.*

*In time, I came to realize that this new family did not replace what I had with my mom and my love for the two could co-exist. Last year, at my youngest sister's wedding (I don't even call her my stepsister anymore), she hugged me goodbye and at the end of the night, whispered to me, "Thanks for sharing your dad with me. I needed it." It was in that moment that I truly realized that she needed a dad more than I needed to have my way all of those years.*

*I'm thankful for a God that makes beauty out of ashes and what could have been a severed relationship is now part of our sweet family journey. I now look for opportunities to use my experience, my story to minister to others walking through a similar situation.*

*While not obvious practical application from Sunday, your message hit home in a more current way also. We have recently taken on three foster kids, a sibling group ages 10, 4, and 2. Overnight, we went from being a calm, easy-going family of four to pure chaos.*

*Over the three-month journey, we've had many ups and downs and coming into church last Sunday, we were at a particularly rough spot. The message helped us realize that we are now a blended family and we need to adjust our expectations, unite as parents, and expect bumps along the way. We realize that because we weren't there for the sweet moment with these kids, it can make loving them more difficult when things are really bad. We also get opportunities every day now to say, "Awkward is awesome."*

*We don't know what the future holds with these kids, but we are learning to embrace the time we have with them and pour into them every way we can. In all of this, I realize that both of these experiences tell the story of God's redemptive work, just as you said, and it's our responsibility to share our stories so that others can see the goodness of our God.*

And all God's people said... Amen.

What a beautiful way to put it, and that's the last one we want to share.

**5. Take it home.** I've seen this before in the Christmas story, but something was prompted in me to spend a little time there. I looked it up in multiple translations. In Luke 2, we read, ***20 The shepherds returned...*** Your translation may say they returned to their flocks. What did they do? They went back to what they were doing when they got the news in the first place, but they went back different. ***...glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.***

I make this statement often and I'll say it again. I absolutely love living in Branson, Missouri. One of the things I love about our town and I love about what God has called you to do in this town is you are ministering to people every single day who will return home. We're not like other live music cities that want people to do stuff in their town and leave it there. We hope that what our tourist get in Branson returns home with them. It's our desire that you are inspired and encouraged in this town, from every waiter and waitress to every person on stage, behind stage, in lighting, out a soundboard, to every person in a restaurant, in the kitchen or on the floor, to making beds, to running front desks, to opening shops, whether you have your own shop or you work for someone else's shop. You, every day, have the opportunity to proclaim the good news of great joy, and people are going to take this town home with them. Don't ever forget that.

We used to... And we still kind of say it when we go places and do things in other towns. Amy and I joke about it to the kids. I'll be like, "Hey, I'm going to stand up and sing in front of this group of people I don't know." They'll be like, "Dad, that's so embarrassing!" I always say, "We're never going to see these people again." Have you ever said that? It's harder to have the courage when you're with people you know. And you're going to be with people you know in the weeks to come. Share the good news of great joy with simplicity, with courage, with urgency. Be like, "Okay, I haven't shared for a long time; I'm going to share and encourage."

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank you for the kick off to Christmas at Woodland Hills. As we proclaim the good news of the birth of Jesus, knowing that he is our savior, this is something to be celebrated that as we have placed faith in Jesus, we are no longer in our sins. Our sins are forgiven. We no longer have the penalty of our sins upon us. That has been wiped clean. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. And that is what we proclaim today.

We're grateful for what you continue to do in this church. May the good news of Jesus go out through each one of us and may we share it in bold, urgent, simple ways as we return home.

For all of our guest here today, I pray that they would leave inspired by our community and take this message home with them. The good news of great joy.

It's in the name of Jesus and with the authority of that name that we pray it. And all God's people said... Amen.