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**A Sweet Summer**  
**Part 7 – On Mission for Christ**  
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today we are talking about being *On Mission for Christ*. There's been a debate in the church that has actually grown a little weary for me, a debate that is sweeping the nation and the world. Should your church just be on campus or just online, and is online important and valuable, and how do we deal with it? Alex Himaya was here a couple weeks ago, and I love what he said. He said, "If you're watching online, get your butt back to church." He's got some strength to him.

We haven't gotten all caught up in the on campus/online debate because we want you to be on mission. So, on campus/online. And you know there are people that can spend years on campus and not be on mission. Just like there can be people that watch online, consume content, but they are not on mission. We want you to be on mission with Jesus, serving Jesus, serving the body of Christ, and plugging in.

Today is a great opportunity for our church. All of our ministry teams here at the church have set up booths over at the Chapel. At the end of this service, we are going to encourage you to make your way over there. If you're not plugged in and serving in this church family, we're going to encourage you to just make your way over there. We had a great response after the first service. Our desire is not just to have you on campus or online. We want you taking a step. Whether you're on campus or watching online, we want you to take a step to be on mission to become fully devoted followers of Christ, and that means serving the body of Christ.

You know one of my passions in life is fishing. I've always loved fishing. Today we are going to talk about fishing. More importantly, fishers of men. I just want to say that if you are looking for a sport, nothing gets more biblical than fishing. You can have your other sports, but this one honors Jesus right here (fly fishing).

I love fishing. I had two buddies, Marty and Dave, that came down from Minnesota this week. I took them to Dogwood Canyon. I have a buddy in this church. He's an expert fly-fishing guide; his name is Jim Bracken. Jim is just gentle and kind as a guide. I've hired guides over the years and some of them can be downright mean and nasty. I can't tell you. They yell at you. You miss a fish and the guide is like, "Well, nice job Einstein!" You're like, "Whoa, hey, I'm paying you to yell at me right now. I want you to encourage me." How many of you prefer to be encouraged rather than being yelled at? Anybody prefer being yelled at? Okay, cause those guys are out there; you can pay them \$300.00.

Jim is fantastic. And as we're driving out on the golfcart to Dog Wood Canyon... And don't let anybody pick on you for fishing at Dog Wood Canyon. Yes, it's like fishing in an aquarium, but it is a blast. And no other place on this earth will you catch fish and have an audience cheering you on. Amen, Dave? Dave couldn't believe it. He caught a couple of fish in an area where there were no people and when he brought the fish in and nobody cheered, he was looking around like, *Where is everybody? I just caught this fish.*

As we were driving out, he was like, "Ted, we fish on these streams in Minnesota, and we'll stand out there eight hours and catch nothing." How many of you prefer catching over fishing? That's a lot of people. You can fish without catching; let me see your hand. Not as many. He didn't believe me, but I said, "Dave, you are going to catch a trophy trout in the first two minutes of being out here." They looked at each other and scoffed. He didn't catch it in two minutes; he caught it in the first 60 seconds. It was fun, but we first had to show Dave how to hold a fish. He didn't know how to hold a fish. I brought a little video I want you to watch. [video plays]. That fish gave his life for that video. He's floating in Table Rock Lake somewhere right now. But give it a few hours of walking alongside Jim Bracken. This is what I love about the church.

I absolutely love this about the church. You know you're not supposed to do life alone. You know following Jesus is a team sport. We're to be together, and having those who are seasoned believers, those who have walked with the Lord for years, walk alongside us like Jim walks alongside young people learning how to fish, guys my age learning how to fish... I just love watching him. Just give it a few hours.

Dave, about an hour later, hooked into a fish and it was probably eight or nine pounds. It's where the tram stops and feeds the fish twelve times a day, so I go, "We're going to that pond right there." This thing was huge. You've got to know you're using real light tippet on the end here. He fought this fish for about ten minutes and then he touched the reel when he shouldn't have touched the reel, and the thing snapped off. My heart sank.

Being the encourager that I am, I said, "Well, you'll never have an opportunity like that again in your life; that was it. You just got your last chance." That was not his last chance. We just listen to Jim, we lean into Jim, Jim is teaching us, guiding us. At the end of the day, at the end of our time together, Dave hooks into this fish. I want you to watch the end of this quick video because he's like a guy in the endzone who point up and cheers. He is praising his Father in Heaven that he caught this fish. [video plays]

Now, four hours earlier, he didn't know how to hold a fish. Watch Dave at the end of our time together. He's got the cocky face going on like, "I can't even look at the camera for how awesome I am."

I use this quote all the time in marriage, but it's true of marriage, any sport, fishing, but it's true of our faith as well. Jeff Graham said this: *"Whether in marriage, guitar, or tennis, one can certainly become decent without guidance, but the novice's likelihood of sticking with it, advancing to intermediate, and then developing into a pro goes way up with great coaching and deliberate practice."*

Today, what we want for you is to take a step. We want you to take a step, going on mission with Christ, and serving the body of Christ.

If you have your Bible, turn to Mark 10. Before we get to this story of the disciples trying to figure out what their position is going to be in the kingdom, trying to figure out who is going to be closest to Jesus, who is going to be at His right, who is going to be at His left, I want to take us back to the beginning. Don't turn to Matthew 4, but we're going to start there with the calling of the first disciples.

As you're turning to Mark 10, we read this in Matthew 4. **18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."** "I will make you fishers of men. **20 At once they left their nets...** We studied this years ago and remember that leaving their nets meant they left their livelihoods, they left how they were able to provide for their family. **...and followed him.**

**21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately...** I love that word *immediately*, and I'm hoping that is some of you today that it's immediate. No more thinking, no more spending years and years trying to figure out if you should take this next step. You're going to just take it. You're immediately going to do it. **...they left the boat...** So, they dropped their nets, left their livelihood, but add to it their family. They left their family **...and their father and followed him.**

Now fast forward. This is when they were first called to follow Jesus. Imagine all they saw while following Jesus. Before we get to Mark 10, you see he triumphs over disease and death and demons. He's preaching, he's discipling. And what does this do? This attracts crowds. More people coming to hear Jesus, more coming to need something from Jesus. The disciples are watching this.

Adam showed a video clip last week that I think fits that attitude and what was going around that camp fire. Kind of that tone fits with what we're reading today as well. But they saw this, and they saw more people wanting to follow Jesus. They think the kingdom is going to be on their way to Jerusalem like they are going to establish it once they get there. They are wanting to make sure their position is set, their place in the kingdom is set.

That's where we pick up in Mark 10: 35-45. **35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."** That's bold. Let's just all admit that's pretty... That's your child... I don't know if you've had this happen to you as a parent. Your child come to you and says, "I'm going to ask you a question; I need you to give me a yes." You're like, "If I can't know the question, the answer is no." If you read this account in Matthew, Matthew and Mark don't contradict one another on these accounts, but when you read it in Matthew 20:20, you see that it is their mother that actually makes this request of Jesus. When you get to Mark, you can understand it was these two sons that were encouraging their mother as well. So, there's no contradiction between the two stories. But they are going to make a request.

Jesus handles it way better than I would, way better than you would. I'd be like, "Sit down!" Jesus say, **36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.**

**37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right..."** which was the place of prominence. **"...and the other at your left..."** which would be just below that. **"...in your glory."** What are they asking for? They're asking for a position, they're asking for a title, they're asking for prominence, prestige, privilege. But what we're going to see today and what we need to be reminded of, followers of Christ... Especially if you've followed the Lord for a long time.

The gospel challenges everything we think we deserve... everything! And on mission with Jesus isn't about positions and platforms. Are there positions in the church? Absolutely! Are their roles in the church? Absolutely! Do people have platforms? Do Christian leaders have platforms? Absolutely! But the Kingdom of God is not about establishing your personal platform. It's not about establishing your personal kingdom. We are called to serve Jesus and his kingdom. And if your goal every day is to wake up and to find a place and make sure you can't lose followers, you can't say anything or do anything that might hurt my platform, people say this to me all the time. "Be careful what you say. There is some stuff you might want to avoid because it might hurt your platform." Well, let it, because nothing will hurt the church. Nothing will bring down the church. Our job is to serve Jesus and His kingdom, not establish our own little kingdoms everywhere. So, it's not about positions and platforms. Although we have them, that's not what we're to be going after.

**38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said.** What he is going to say is "Those closest to me will suffer the greatest. Those closest to me are going to work the hardest; they're going to suffer. You're asking about positions right now in the kingdom and I'm here to tell you about something else that is coming your way." **"Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"** Suffering and ultimate death of Jesus.

John Piper says it this way: *"The more earnest we become about being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and reaching the unchurched peoples of the world, and exposing the works of darkness, and losing the bond of sin and Satan, the more we will suffer."*

Jesus says, "Can you take this cup? And can you have this baptism?" How do they answer? **39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them...** And most believe that, in this story, right here, they didn't know, they didn't fully comprehend what Jesus was talking about – His suffering and his death. And that Jesus is inviting them into that.

**"You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."** "You come to me with positions and I'm telling you it's about suffering."

We're talking about serving today. And yes, we call it the Sweet Spot. The reason we call it the Sweet Spot is because we want you to find your spiritual gifts, your heart motivations, your abilities, your personality, your experience. That's your spiritual shape and we want you to use that to serve. But

make no misstate, when we talk about serving, and this text is clear, Jesus invites us into his suffering, not some soft serve indulgence.

I like soft serve ice cream. You can tell. It's one of my passions. A dipped cone from Dairy Queen... bring it on. But when it comes to serving, it's not about "I serve until someone hurts my feeling." "I serve until I don't get the appreciation." "When this stops coming, I'm done." "When they ask me to do something I don't want to do or when Jesus calls me to something..." No, we are called to enter into the suffering and death of Jesus. Do you want to be close to Christ? It's not about positions and platforms. And if I can encourage you. If you've ever stopped serving, don't allow hurt feelings keep you from serving. Somebody said something, they did something to you, someone didn't give you the appreciation, the applause that you think you deserve. No, the gospel challenges everything we think we deserve.

I hear it often and it's a conversation that never ends well. Someone wants to share something they think needs to happen, something we need to do, and they lead out with, "I tithe at this church." That conversation ain't going anywhere good. Do you know why? Because that's a person that's living with entitlement. That's a person who is like, "I do this, so I better get this." No, you do this and guess what that brings you? It brings you into a place where you are invited to suffer. It doesn't bring you privilege and perks; it brings you entering in and serving with Jesus, being on mission with Christ.

Now watch: **41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant...** They were mad. Why were the other disciples mad about the request James and John made with Jesus? It's because they had the same ambition. This is just tone; I'm not adding to the scripture. The attitude here is "How dare you! Who do you two think you are?! I'm Peter! You want the right..." No, no. They are ticked. ...**with James and John.** Because these were the positions they wanted.

And it gets ugly. Ministry competitiveness is ugly. And ministry competitiveness fills us with pride and arrogance. We don't compete in this church. And if I can just say, we don't compete with other churches in this town. When something great is going on at another church, we have only one response, if it's a Bible teaching church... If it's a heretical church, we don't, but if it's Bible believing, Bible teaching church and something great happens, we have only one response – we applaud them.

Someone gets mad or frustrated here and they leave and go to another church. We celebrate that, we bless that. We have gifted First Baptist Church I don't how many members over the years. We have gifted Bloom, First United Methodist, First Presbyterian Church. And as God is working in those churches, Woodland Hills, may our only attitude and opinion every be to applaud them. Go serve the kingdom. You're reaching people we don't reach. You're able to minister to people...

Here's the thing. With our ministry, with our ministry as a church, stay in your lane. God has you in a lane in your race. Run. Don't be one of these that when someone runs alongside you, and they will... The older we get, younger people run faster. Can I get an amen on that one? And all of us, as we grow older... I'm already seeing this at 47. We need the 20-year-olds and the 30-year-olds running past us; they've got more energy. And as you run past me, I don't want to hold you back. You're in a lane and as you run past me, I have one response – to applaud you.

Go, run, run, run. Cheer on runners in the other lanes. Other churches running and growing... When a church gets planted in our town... I see it happen too much. "Uh oh, such and such a church is planning a campus in our town and it's going to destroy our church." No, applause is our response. Why? It's because we are all on the same team. Run your race. Don't hold back. keep going.

So, Jesus calls them together because he's got a bunch of children that need to understand what's really going on. **42 Jesus called them together and said...** I'm going to add "Sit Down!" Again, it's tone. I'm trying to bring some tone to the message. Some of you are like, *That wasn't Jesus' tone. He was more like your buddy, Jim, at Dog Wood Canyon.* **"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them..."** He's going to tell them that's a bad example for them to follow, that is not the kingdom. This is not a corporate structure, this is not a work your way up the ladder, get to the top, and have everybody else serve you. That is not the kingdom... period.

So, that's why there can be no entitlement. I've been a believer for 40 years. There can be none of this "I've served the church for 20 years, it's time for me to be done." No... Where's Al. Al Greeted you at that door on the way in. He's like 98 years old. And both of us are convinced... He's popping his head in. Everybody look back at Al right there. He's more like 70, but let me tell you something; he's going to die at that door. And that's what we want to invite you all to. Come here and experience the death process at Woodland Hills Family Church. Come and die. Get a cup of coffee, be comfortable in your padded seats and caffeinated while you die. Jesus said this isn't who we are, this isn't the kingdom.

**"...and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you."** Get that out of your thinking. Don't ever again lead out in a conversation... If you're visiting here or... Don't ever lead out a conversation with how much you give. Don't ever lead out a in a conversation with the leader at your church with all that you've done and how important you are, and how this church won't survive without you. I'm here to tell you it will. **"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you..."** It's not about the right or the left position, privileges, perks, platforms. **"...must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."**

On mission with Jesus is not about power, perks, or rising to the top. He uses the ruler of the gentiles lording it over them. I created this and it's not going to shock you to know that I made this graphic right here. The graphic artists are going, "Man, he's awesome." That is a power point graphic of stick people. You're welcome.

This isn't about working your way up so now you have all these people serving you. "I've got something I want to do; I'm going to start this ministry. I need you serving my ministry. I'm going to build a platform. I have this position. I need you taking care of me." Jesus says just the opposite. Flip this upside down. What Jesus is saying is everyone of us in here should be descending into greatness. And we become the servant of all, slave of all, serving those.

I don't know where you are right now in your next step. You're a born-again believer, you are a Christian, you're following Christ. I just have to ask you how many people are you serving? We have people all over this campus, online. We have people all over this town all week long that are serving students, they're serving children, they're serving couples, they're serving singles. They are serving

couples in crisis. They're serving newlyweds. They're serving guests. There are people here that are like, "Man we can't wait for the guest to show up today. We're going to be prepared for them. We're going to be ready for them."

This is not our example – Ascending into greatness. This is our example – descending into greatness. Jesus ends the text with this. **45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** Remember he's still sharing with the disciples. He's saying, "You guys have it backwards. You think the kingdom is going to be set up and it's going to be like lording it over people. No, no, become a servant of all. Humble yourself."

Today, our heart as a church is that you would find a place, go on mission with Jesus. Would you help me welcome 49 new members of the church that joined on Wednesday night? We're grateful that you're here. Welcome to the family. Some friends of mine have said...And this is true. In 2020 and 2021, we're not just seeing it in the workplace and we're not just seeing it in communities, we're seeing it in churches too. It's been called this great turnover. It's staff and churches and members turning over, and there is this great reshuffling across the country. A friend told me this weekend and I thought he was spot on. He goes, "Maybe it's not a turn over as much as it is a sifting."

What the pandemic did and what we all went through in the pandemic... We talked about it a couple of weeks ago, It just revealed our foundation and it sifted people. And yeah, there are people that aren't on campus. We're online and they are completely disconnected from the church, but they were for years. I just want to encourage you. It's time to make the decision to go all in, go on mission with Jesus. One of the things I love about what the teams have put together at the Chapel this week for you to visit today after the service is you're going to meet people at these different spots in the Chapel. We've got fly fishing guides spread out all over there. They've all committed to be... None of them are going to yell at you. There will be no yelling. They say that for me up here when it's more a corporate feel. But no one is going to yell at you. They're going to come alongside you. You might not know how to do it and you may feel like you're fumbling, like my buddy, Dave did, but give it some time. Plug in, serve.

Check out this video that explains a little bit more about the Sweet Spot:

[video plays] The hexagon is known to be one of the strongest shapes that exists. As the honeycomb is formed through the compiling of a grid of hexagon, we learn that a healthy hive is built with strength and fortitude in mind. Through out the ages, God's plan for the gospel message to reach the ends of the earth also included a structure built with strength and fortitude in mind. This is the church. Every week, many members of our church family work together to inspire the family to become fully devoted followers of Christ. Whether you're greeting with a smile, teaching the next generation, running tech equipment, or practicing hospitality, something sweet happens when members of the body of Christ bring what we have to benefit the church. They become united on mission.

"I think the most meaningful thing about serving the church has really been just being able to build relationship with the kids we work with, but also their families. As parents, we know that the hour we get to spend in service is super important to our marriage and our individual walks, and so it's just nice to be able to give that back to other families."

As the honey bees produce come in an abundance of volume, a variety of colors and flavors, so varied are our labors and their gifts.

“I would definitely tell someone who hasn’t served yet they might be scared at first, they might be prodded by their wife a lot to do it. But once you do it and once you find something that you love, it’s awesome. What you get back from it is so much more than what you put into it.”

Our heart is that those who connect with our church get to share in the abundance of these flavors, and just as honey never spoils, our service unto God makes an eternal impact in our congregation, community, and our world. When we really believe that every member is a minister and put this belief into action through serving at Woodland Hills, we find our Sweet Spot.

So, we just want to give you some practical ways to take the next step and some things to consider. I want to encourage you that if you’re not serving at Woodland Hills on a Sunday or throughout the week in different ministries that take place, consider serving an existing ministry of the church rather than starting a new one. We’re always concerned about mission drift because it happens a lot in the church. Somebody gets passionate and they want to start something brand new. They run it for six months and then they are done, and they just want us to find them a leader. Now we’re like trying to take care of this and the problem is if we don’t have a passionate leader leading the ministry, we will kill it.

Some of you know what I mean. You’ve served at church maybe growing up that they started ministries all the time and they never stopped ministries. And their bulletin became really thick. That’s when you get into mission drift. You’re like that sounds strong to kill a ministry. We always give it a decent burial. We honor it and we want it to do well, but the problem is if it doesn’t have a passionate leader... Some of you, there are plenty of ways you can use your spiritual gifts without starting a new ministry. Some of you are like, “Well I’m a starter.” Well, we want to encourage you that there’s plenty of ministry already taking place and encourage you to plug into that. .

We have many people that are in vocational ministry. If you serve in vocational ministry, serve your local church too. You serve big C church, but I want to encourage you to plug into your local church and serve as well. Bring your gifts and bring your abilities and personality. Bring your experience to meet the needs here at this church as well.

If you feel you’ve served enough, I was trying to find a softer way to say it, keep serving. Be like Al. Die in your position here at Woodland Hills. There’s going to be a shirt made off of that I can tell. “Be like Al.”

You’re like, “I’m in my lane and I’m running, and I want to say I fought the good fight, I kept the faith, I finished my course, I did the work that was given to me. I’m not going to stop.”

However, if you need a break, take one. There are a lot of people that come to Woodland Hills from other ministries, or they move here from across the country. I don’t know like Stateside, California, and when they get here, they’re like, “Man, I served for 20 years in this ministry at our church; can we just

have a little bit of time?" The answer is "Absolutely." But have a plan. Don't just take a break; have a plan to plug in and serve. Serve again.

If you are new, curious, or intimidated by everything we are talking about, go over right now, visit us at the Chapel. After I pray, we're going to get up, we're going to leave, we're going to head right over there, and talk with someone. You don't have to talk to anybody at first. You can just walk in a look and just see what is available as they are there to greet you with a donut. Anyway, they just want to help and encourage and be that expert fly fishing guide that walks alongside you and just encourages you and gets you to a place where you feel comfortable in what God's called you to do in your life. To where you're like, "Yeah I have a confidence now. I'm going to serve in this ministry."

I'm praying for hundreds of people at Woodland Hills today to take this next step. Please, go online, fill out the form, let us know that you're interested as well.

Father, it is in the name of Jesus that we thank you for our time today. We thank you for what you continue to do at this church. From ministry on campus and online and all throughout the week. To walk into coffee shops and see people ministering to couples and having Bible studies. To see the ministry that takes place in homes all across this community – Southwest Missouri and Northwest Arkansas. We're grateful and we know you will continue to do great work in the lives of people. We thank you for this church.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day they take that step of going all in with Jesus. They confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, believe their heart that he has been raised from the dead that they will be saved. For that we are grateful.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus, and everyone agreed and said, "Amen."