



Summer Playlist

Part 7 – All Together for Jesus

Paster Ted Cunningham

Today, we're kind of picking up where we left off last week about what it means to be on mission as a church family, and for Jesus. Today, we're talking about *All together for Jesus*. Last week, I started with a passionate plea for boater safety. If you were here for that, I got on the yachts, I felt bad about it, but it was a strong offering, so I say thank you for the yachters that listened.

I completely forgot about firework safety. Maybe you saw this thirty second viral video. It had like 40 million views in 24 hours. I saw it and immediately thought... Well, first of all, it reminded me and it's evidence why women live longer than men, but it's why men need women... to stay alive! And this video is a perfect example of that. [video plays] Look at the baby in that little saucer. Someone needs to go to California and help them learn. We need to send someone from the Ozarks to the other states. I see the picture. I just see the son going, "Dad, where do we want to put all these fireworks?" "Set them here under the gas tank, son, that would be a good spot for them." I mean, come on. This is why we need each other.

Today, we're talking about one of the purposes of the church, one of the purposes of your life, and that is ministry, serving others' needs in love, serving as Jesus would have us to serve.

When we go to Acts 2... We sang about it already today. I love that song, the gospel is in it from start to finish. And the church of Christ was born. In Acts 2, we read about the first century church. **44 All the believers were together...** so, all were together **...and had everything in common**. I think the thing that gets me most excited about the church is when the body of Christ is functioning together and healthy and ministry is going out, needs are met within the church. There's not an unmet need. Needs are met in the community and it's because we are all doing our part. **45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need**. This idea of being all together and serving others is what we're talking about today. A purpose of the church but also a purpose for your life.

Do you have a life-giving friend? Do you have someone who every time you're around them, it's fills you up because the conversation is always, "So, what's going on in your life? How are things with you? Anything I can do to help you?" That type of person is life giving because it's not all about them. We have the drainers or what we call at this church "extra grace required" people who when we get around them, the story is always about them. You can get two sentences into one of your stories and they hijack it to finish it with one of theirs.

Believers who fulfill the purpose we're talking about today – ministry and serving others like Jesus – they're life giving in everything. They're life giving in their marriage. Can you imagine being married to a person who gets up in the morning, their feet hit the floor, and they're like, "Honey, I woke up so excited. What can I do for you today? Can you give me list? Give me a bunch of stuff to do. I want to serve you." In the family, could you imagine the teenager in here right now who when their feet hit the floor they run in and go, "Oh, blessed mother, I know you have a lot to do today. I have to go to work, I've got to be at the marina, or I've got to be at Tanger. I've got to work, but before I go, is there anything I can do around the house here?" You're like, "I want that kid. Where's that kid. Bring that kid into our home."

In the family, in the church, in the community, in the workplace, we're talking today about ministry and how serving others is life-giving. We know this. As the church, we're called the body of Christ. And we thrive when we all do our part.

Paul says to the church at Corinth, **12 Just as a body...** I love the word picture here. **...though one, has many parts...** And you have a part to play, I have a part to play. And we are healthiest when all the parts are functioning together. **...but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.**

– 1 Corinthians 12: 12

Last month, my wife sprained her ankle. It was one of the most severe sprains I've ever seen, so we took her to urgent care to make sure it wasn't broken. It wasn't broken. It was a swollen, purple ankle, but I've never seen a sprain this bad. Her whole foot became purple. Her toes were purple. I'm looking at it and I'm like, "Did you sprain your toes?" She said no. Travis explained it to me. Everything is attached. It's all fully purple.

I was in there when the doctor gave instructions and all that. We got in the car and the very first thing I did was I looked at Amy and I said, "Well, let's make a list of the chores you'll still be able to do." I mean I know there are some things she can't do with a sprained ankle, but... NO! I didn't do that! You know it didn't do that. Of course, I didn't do that. But if you know my wife, my wife is far more into fitness than I am. She does a walk in the morning and a walk at night. She walks me and the dogs every night at sunset, but she does a walk by herself in the morning.

I knew when we got out in the car that that was going to be the number one thing on her list – just the "I'm going to be so unhealthy as this thing heals. Because of this stupid ankle." I could sense the edge to her, the attitude to her, because she wouldn't be able to walk. I said, "I can help you... get good at not exercising. If you will walk alongside me and let me serve you in this way, we can get through the next six weeks together." Five days later, she had had it because she was home and she couldn't walk. I mean it was bad. She had the boot and everything.

My wife is not a complainer, she's not a whiner. So, I had this idea. We were driving down Shepherd of the Hills and I stopped at the pharmacy. I said, "Do you have one of those scooters that you can kneel on?" He goes, "Got one in yesterday. They're pretty pricey." I got it and it was great. So, that morning, she used it.

I gotta find out why, in Taney County, we're not using asphalt anymore, everything is chip and seal. I'm going to work on that. I may be running for something in Taney County here pretty soon. She's trying to scoot on gravel road. That's what chip and seal is; it's gravel road.

We have a senior adult that sees... Now, we're only in our late 40s, but Amy is scooting on this thing up the road and this senior lady stops and looks at Amy and goes, "Good for you getting out here." I said, "This is where it begins, Amy." She did it for two days and she gets up and she goes, "You know what my ankle needs? My ankle needs a good workout." I went, "Well, I don't want to remind you what the doctor said, but that's the opposite of what the doctor said." He said, "Stay off it, elevate, and ice." He repeated that like four times. He didn't say, "Get out there, work it out." I said, "Sit on this couch with me right now, Amy and rest that foot. I will rest with you."

She gets out there and she starts working out. I just told her, "This is so inspiring for me because I know we're not going to go at a fast pace. We're going to do more of the leisurely walk, but good for you, Amy, as our senior adult said, even limping along saying "I'm going to do it. I'm not going to let the rest of my body be slowed down even if this goes completely against doctor's advice."

I said, "Could you imagine what the church would look like if every part... the parts that thought they were old and done said, 'I may be limping, but I ain't gonna slow this church down. I'm going to get out there and do my best. I may be tired, I may be exhausted. I've served for decades in the church. But you know what? I'm not going to keep this body from moving forward.'"

Today, we want to talk to the parts that are serving, we want to talk to the parts that are not serving, and we want to invite you to go on mission with us and be all together for Jesus. As the body moves forward... Again, I hear this a lot from people, and we've always wanted to say this to make sure you know this at our church. Many people come to this church exhausted from another ministry, like they got burned out. Burn out is very real; we understand that. And we invite you to take that rest. Actually, before you start serving at this church, we ask you to take a six-month period of time. That's not about just red tape before you become a member; that six months is very intentional. It allows you to rest, it allows you to learn about this church body, it allows you to understand our DNA and why we do things the way we do it. You're learning and growing during that season. But what we don't want for you is to get to a point where you're like, "You know what? I'm done." We want you to keep moving forward.

Ministry is more than a program or a project. We have a lot of programs around here that you can serve in, and we want you to. That's why we say it's more than. I didn't say ministry is not a... it's more than. There are some that are just looking for a project. And off of this message, they'll find a staff member and say, "Hey, can you get me and my small group a project to serve someone?" We want you to see beyond just finding someone to get you a project once a year so you can say you served, and develop this heart, this attitude in the body of Christ of serving others. It's the overflow of your life.

Ministry is here in buildings, and it's taking place right now. There are those who are serving, meeting the needs of our children and our students pouring into them. We have people that are driving our students down to Florida right now for camp. People are serving others. So, it does take place in buildings. **But it's outside the building too.** It's the attitude you have when you get up in the morning

and you look to your spouse. It's the attitude you have when you look to your children and when you look to your parents, when you look to your aging parents. What can I do to meet needs?

You go a couple chapters into Acts, you get a little bit more description of this giving heart, this serving heart that the first church had, and the outcome of when they truly do serve.

32 All the believers were one... Functioning as one. ...in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify... So, when we are all together for Jesus, this is a testimony. People see it. people observe it. they want to know what is going on. I've heard three or four times today from people at our church who have invited others to our church and these people are like, "No, I have no use for the church." You have use for a church that is functioning as one body, and is healthy and serving as we talked about last week – feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and welcoming the stranger. **...continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them.** And that's the prayer of this church that there would be no needy among us, that through our giving and our servicing, we're meeting needs in love. **...For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.** – Acts 32-35

Now, two chapters from this, you get to Act 6 and there's a distribution chain issue. Widows were being overlooked in the distribution of the daily food. This was brought to the apostles. Now we see the importance of the role of deacons take shape. The apostles... We have the ministry of prayer and the word; we can't neglect that, but their heart should be the heart of the entire body of Christ, which was we can't let the widows be overlooked. Those needs need to be met. It's great story and illustration for us. It's not about who is meeting your needs; it's about the fact that this church is meeting your needs. Sometimes people get caught up in that. They want this person or that person. No. the goal here is that your needs are met. We want the all togetherness of this church, all together for Jesus, to be a powerful testimony of the resurrection of Jesus in our lives.

So today, what we want to do in the time that we have left... We're going to do four gut checks. I love doing gut checks. I do gut checks as a parent and as a spouse all the time. Just little questions I like to ask myself. I've already done these, but we are going to look at four gut checks for those who serve. These are attitudes. This is between you and the Lord this morning. I don't think you would say any of these four out loud. You would never say it out loud, but it's that inner voice, that thing that kicks in when we're not getting our way, don't have the position we want.

I think the first one we want to check is this:

I want a prominent position. I want something important. You need to know this about ministry at Woodland Hills Family Church. We said it last week. Every member is a minister, and we believe that every ministry is important. We don't have a 10 ministry and a 1 ministry. All ministry is important.

Why? Because we are one. And you have a part to play, I have a part to play. And when all the parts come together, we are functioning as the body of Christ, testifying to the resurrection of Jesus.

In Matthew 20: 20-28, this story alleviates this gut check pretty quickly if we have this **"What I'm doing is not important enough."**

20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

21 "What is it you want?" he asked. I love that. I love the straight forward directness.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." So, we're talking about the position on either side of Jesus.

22 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "I know you're talking position, but let me tell you what happens with those who are closest to me." We've looked at Acts 2, Acts 4, and alluded to Acts 6. When you keep reading after that, those closest to Jesus suffered the greatest. It's still a lesson for us today. Those who follow Jesus closely will suffer.

I was talking to a pastor friend this week. Not Alex Himaya, before y'all go, "He was talking to Alex." It was another guy. I reminded him of something Alex and I talked about two weeks ago. God has always grown the church on the backs of suffering leaders, on the backs of suffering servants. So, I don't fully understand all the whining out of the pandemic. I don't even know if that's the level of suffering Jesus is going to talk about. The persecution that Jesus is going to talking about... Just to remind, God is still growing the church, not just through the Book of Acts, but to this day, 2,000 years later, God is still growing the church on the backs of suffering servants. He's using you and he's using me.

So, he asks the question, **"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"**

Look at how long this answer is. **"We can," they answered.**

23 Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant." Closely following me is imprisonment, suffering, persecution, death. But the position to sit at my right or left, is not for me to grant. **These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."**

24 When the ten (the other disciples) **heard about this, they were indignant...** That's the word we see when the disciples try to keep the children from coming to Jesus. It says Jesus became indignant. That's why we don't like the pictures of Jesus sitting on a rock, holding children. The picture needs to be Jesus holding the children with the disciples over there with a scowl on their face. That's a better understanding of that. Jesus was indignant with the disciples for keeping the children from coming to him. Now, these disciples are ticked. "You think you're more skilled than we are to be a leader? Do you think you're more loved by Jesus?" **...with the two brothers.**

25 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them...

This is a conversation taking place at churches all across the country today in denominations all across the country today because sometimes church leaders lord it over people like the rulers of the gentiles do. They get to a position of authority and then everything about being in that position is maintaining power. We see it in our government all the time. I started out as a servant but once I have this prominent position of authority, I’ve got to keep it and keep it at all costs. That’s not how we function as followers of Jesus. It’s not about getting to a place and then protecting that place. To be a follower of Jesus means we are descending into greatness. We are becoming humble servants, not prominent positions to where we can lord it over to feed ourselves and care for ourselves and gorge ourselves. He said that’s how they do it. ... **and their high officials exercise authority over them.**

And what we see today, what we’re called to as followers of Jesus, serving actually leverages. If you are a follower of Jesus, your serving leverages your influence, your resources, and your gifts for the benefit of others, not yourself. That’s the difference. That’s why Jesus says **26 Not so with you.** You’re not like the rulers of the gentiles. You don’t lord authority over people. ...**Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave...**” Then he says, ‘I’m the example of this. I’m the model of this. Follow my lead on this, guys.’ **28 “...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

And if you want to follow me and you want to serve me, serve others. Serve others to the point of losing your own life. It’s not about an important position or a prominent position or getting to a position where you have to then protect it so you can continue to mask influence and resources. No, it’s about taking any influence or resources you receive and using it to bless and benefit others.

Andy Stanley talks about this often. And it’s true of every single person in here. You’re going to find yourself at work this week in a little meeting with two or three people. Maybe it’s just at the lunch room. You’re going to find you’re the most powerful voice in that room. Maybe you have the most authority in that group of two or three. Leverage that authority to the benefit of those in the room, not to your own. If you are a leader and you have the authority on the job, leverage that authority to bless and serve other people.

The second gut check we do today is this. **It’s all about me.** It’s all about me and bringing glory to me. Peter walks through this clearly in 1 Peter 4: 10-11. **10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received...** So, you’ve been equipped and empowered by God to serve. Not for you glory, but for his is what he’s going to say. You’ve received a gift **...to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.** Use it. **11 ...If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides.**

He equips, he empowers. He has called you to do something. I just want to remind you. There’s always going to be someone who wants you to be someone you’re not. There’s always going to be someone who’s smarter, brighter, faster, stronger, than you in an area. I just want to encourage you. Be who God created you to be, do what he has gifted you to do, and don’t be distracted by demanding, manipulative, controlling people. Know your lane and stay in it. And then when others come alongside you and they

run past you in another lane, cheer them on. I've been sharing this with you because it's one of the things that came out of the pandemic that I'm so grateful for. It's the friendships that have developed among pastors in this town.

I woke up this morning to a text from a pastor in Branson. I'm not going to tell you who it is and stop trying to guess. He was encouraging me. We encourage each other like this all the time. It was two lines, but it so blessed me. This is what he said – "Hey bro. Don't stink at preaching today." That was it. I can't tell you what I texted him back; it was worse. We are all pretty sarcastic with that. Anyway. That's exactly what it means to be all together for Jesus. Cheering each other on, knowing who we are and who we're not. And stop being trapped in this. When you find out who you were created to be and the good works you're created to do in Christ Jesus, go at it with everything you've got and don't quit because someone is trying to sidetrack you. But don't do this for your glory. It's not about you; it's about Him. **...so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.** When you're done serving someone, I hope at the end of it, people are giving glory to God, thanking their Father in heaven for you and for your service. **...To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.**

Do we have any Cardinal's fans in the room? Let me just see the hands of Cardinal's fans really quick. Okay, I want you to pipe down on this illustration for just a second. I love this story of David Robertson, relief pitcher for the Chicago Cubs. Don't tune me out because I'm using a Cubs' picture. He's a relief pitcher. Doesn't he look cool I just standing there. He's got it going on. He's in the major league 14 years and never once did he step into the batter's box. He's a pitcher, not a hitter. But he wanted to try hitting. So, Coach Ross and David Robertson devise a plan. There are going to figure out a time to do it and they found the perfect time. David had played 695 games with no swing of the bat. On the 696th game, the Cubs are winning and it's the top of the 9th, two outs, 14 to 1. Some of you are going, "Who are the Cubs beating 14 to 1? It's the Pittsburgh Pirates. And you can get a front row seat at the Pirates for about \$12.00 if you want to go to a Pirates game.

I just want you to see this because it's a great illustration for us and what we are talking about today. He steps into the batter's box with a smile on his face. I don't want to give too much away, but he strikes out. But what makes the whole thing better is the Pirates put their second baseman on the mound. Two outs and this guy lobs 40 mph softballs into him. I'm watching the video going, *I think would have gotten a hit.* But his smile grows with each strike.

[Video plays]

There are so many lessons we can learn from that. But the thing that strikes me about that clip is the joy on his face, striking out. And the Cubs... you saw they were all off the bench cheering this guy on. This is a team who understands he's not a hitter. There are no expectations. Do you know why he can have so much joy doing that? There is zero pride in that moment. Would he want a homerun? Would that be a story for the ages? Yes. But there was no pride.

And when we serve... Sometimes, we get outside of our giftedness, we have to. There are going to be things you're called to do here in serving others that doesn't fit your giftedness or your passion or your experience or what God has wired in you. And that's okay; we all have to do things we don't want to do or feel called to do sometimes and we're going to strike out. So long as we always have joy in doing it.

Why? Because it's not about us. It's about bringing glory to Him. And that's what Jesus gives in this next gut check.

There are those that might say, **"I've done my part and I'm done."** "I've served long enough. I'm old; let some young people step and do this." How about this. You, older person, stay serving and walk alongside a younger person who needs to serve. Jesus has strong words for the one who says, "I've done enough; it's time for me to kick back, recline at the table, and enjoy a little time."

Luke 17: 7-10 **7 "Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? 8 Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? 9 Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? 10 So you also... Every single one of us who follow Jesus. ...when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"**

Do you know what Jesus is teaching here? He's teaching against entitlement and spiritual pride that sets in often when we serve. And that should not be. May your example today, first and foremost, be Jesus, but may you go and serve today. As you figure out what you are called to do, we have spiritual gifts assessments you can take at our church. We'll have them include that in the notes online when they post this week, but find out what you're supposed to do. And when it doesn't go just right for you, that's okay. Smile like David.

I need to be noticed and appreciated. You know, in over 20 years at Woodland Hills Family Church, people have left this church hurt or mad because they didn't get enough applause, and they didn't get the pat on the back.

Matthew 6 is very clear about our service and about our giving. **6 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness, Jesus said, in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.**

That's something we've said to our kids for years. This is maybe not the best parenting line. I hope it worked and I hope it sticks, but we said this often to our children. "We love spoiling you so long as you never act spoiled. We're going to treat you to this, but the moment you cop attitude, the moment you act like it's owed you, we turn the faucet off. We're going to take care of you and we're going to have fun as a family, but as soon as that pride and entitlement creeps in, it's turned off." We say the same thing here... I could've come up with a better conclusion probably, but let's just leave it with this. We love appreciating you for all you do for the kingdom so long as you never expect it, and you want all glory to go to your Father in heaven. And all God's people said... Amen.

Father, in the name of Jesus, I thank you for Woodland Hills Family Church and this body of believers, that we would be all together on mission for Jesus. That we would serve others, putting their needs in front of us and taking the opportunity to be generous to feed the hungry, care for the sick, welcome the stranger. When we do this together, all doing our parts, what a testimony it is to the resurrection of Jesus.

I pray for one who has never placed faith in Jesus that today would be the day of their salvation. That they would come forward and meet with a member of the prayer team, as Travis encouraged earlier, and give their life to Jesus.

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