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Beyond These Walls: Call *Acts 2:42-47*

I want to begin my message by passing these around. These are very old and precious to me. So don't drop them! See if you can figure out what they are.

If you weren't able to be with us last week, I welcome you to Week 2 of an all-church initiative called, "Beyond These Walls-Making Disciples That Make History." We are going to spend these few weeks asking an important question: How can we give ourselves away to our community and our region as never before? How can we move beyond these walls as never before? And to spur our thinking, we asked some of our younger theologians several important questions. Take a look. (Visit www.chapelhillpc.org/beyondthesewalls to view the video!)

Isn't that great? I loved Jacob's line about what he'd do with the money. "Share it with my family." Then quickly he revised that: "...with half of my family!" I'm not sure who just got cut out of the deal, but I'll bet it's his sister. And to the question, what would Jesus do? "I don't really know, because I don't think he really buys anything."

Your elders have prayed over this question for more than a year. And it's not theoretical. If the people of this church rise up and, in an extraordinary act of sacrifice, pay off our remaining \$5 million debt and free up \$600,000 per year, how would we use that money? And here's what your elders have decided. At this point in our life as a church, we don't need more. We have enough. So if we could free up \$600,000 per year, we believe God is calling us to give ourselves away as never before. In three ways. To **multiply life groups** that move into their neighborhoods with the love of Christ. To mentor and **release** pastoral and missionary **leaders** into ministry as never before. And to **love Gig Harbor** as never before.

All of this is outlined in your Journey Guide, but let me give you just one example of how we are hoping to love Gig Harbor as never before. A few months ago we were approached by a program called W.I.C.: women, infants, and children. And by the way, this is just one of five organizations that have approached us this year for significant partnerships. WIC is a national program that provides care and nutrition to low income moms and their babies. WIC told us they have 300 clients coming from the peninsula to Tacoma—moms who can't afford the toll, the gas, or the time to travel that far. WIC wondered if we would remodel our old youth room to provide a clinic on this side of the bridge. I told them we couldn't afford to do that, but that we would loan them some adult education space for a year until we can figure out what else might be done. Well, June 1, the Chapel Hill WIC clinic opens its doors. Can you imagine? Moms of different religions and backgrounds will bring their babies here to be cared for, and they will be exposed to people who

love Jesus and love them. Can you think of a better way for a pro-life church like Chapel Hill to put its money where its mouth—and its heart—is?

This is just one example of what we hope to do in loving Gig Harbor. Our church has been blessed like no other church in the history of this city. It is time for us to focus more of our attention and resources beyond these walls! And apparently you agree, because I've never felt the kind of enthusiasm for a giving initiative that I have in the week since we launched BTW. Frankly, it's hard to find fault, isn't it? It's a pretty compelling vision. We are going to get out of debt, and then we will redirect our mortgage payments into ministry and mission that move beyond our walls as never before—the walls we've just finished paying for!

I *want* us to make history—to change our community and peninsula, to change the lives of tens of thousands of people, not for our glory; not to pound on our chests and say, “Look what we have done!” But because that's what Holy Spirit-filled, all-in, generous disciples of Jesus do! Last week we looked at a passage in Acts 2 that described the early church. I don't think ANY of those people in that upper room in Jerusalem were saying to themselves, “You know what...I'll bet we are about to make history and that 2000 years from now, Christians in Gig Harbor, WA, will be talking about us!” Of course not! They were just so excited about the risen Christ, so stirred and empowered by the Holy Spirit that they went about being the Church, and, on the way, they *did* make history!

Over the coming weeks we are going to journey through Matthew and discover how Jesus took green, inexperienced, under-qualified men and women and transformed them into this Acts 2 group of Spirit-filled disciples who made history. Today, we return to where it all began for Jesus' disciples. And where it *still* begins for every disciple of Jesus. The “Call.” The call of Christ upon individual lives. Listen to the call of the first disciples from Matthew 4: 18-22.

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Let me set this story in context. After thirty years of anonymity working at his father's carpentry shop in Nazareth, Jesus appears near Jerusalem and is baptized by his cousin, John. Immediately the Holy Spirit sends him into the wilderness to do battle with the Devil. Jesus is victorious, sends him packing, and, we are told, moves to Capernaum along the shores of Galilee where he begins to preach.

That is where our text appears. Before a parable or sermon is offered, before a healing is performed or a demon cast out, the *very* first thing Matthew records is this story. Jesus, walking along the Sea of Galilee, calls two sets of brothers to follow him; Peter and Andrew and James and John, the sons of Zebedee. It is only after these four drop their nets, leave their boats—leave their father!—and begin to follow Jesus, that we read details about his history-making mission. Listen to the next passage:

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Notice that phrase, “great crowds followed him.” But Jesus didn’t start with the crowds. He started with individual, personal calls: invitations to set aside what they were doing and follow him. We see another instance of this personal invitation in Matthew 9:9 which is autobiographical. Matthew describes the call of Matthew--himself!

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

By chapter 10, we have a complete list of the 12 apostles. Matthew doesn’t provide the details of the calls of the other seven. But I’ll bet it was the same story repeated again and again. Jesus looks the man in the eye and says, “Follow me!” “Philip, follow me! Bart, follow me. Thomas, you old doubter, follow me. Simon you Zealot; stop assassinating Romans; follow me! Judas, here’s your chance to save yourself. Follow me!”

Here’s what strikes me about the gospels: It wasn’t the crowds that made history. It was those called *out* of the crowds that made history. And it’s not like those crowds didn’t experience spectacular stuff. The crowds heard the Sermon on the Mount. The crowds ate miracle food and witnessed healings and resurrections and exorcisms. But it wasn’t the crowds that made history. In fact, when things got rough—when the pressure was on—the crowds slinked away. And worse, on Good Friday, it was the crowds that called for the death of Jesus. It was not the crowds that made history. It was those called *out* of the crowds that made history. However under-equipped, ill-suited, irritable or inadequate they might have thought themselves to be, something happened when someone heard Jesus call his name—her name—looked around, realized the Lord was talking to them, and set aside whatever they were doing, whatever they treasured, even precious relationships, and followed Jesus.

But not everyone. The call of Jesus was powerful; it was not irresistible. Matthew tells later of a rich young ruler who would have seemed like the *perfect* disciple. Wealthy, influential, smart, moral. Problem is, Jesus perceived that he was addicted to money. He told him to sell his possessions and follow him. And the young man went away sad because he had a lot of money. It was too much to ask. Even to follow someone like Jesus, too much to ask. It is sad when people decline the call of Jesus.

Here’s my point: our journey toward becoming disciples that make history in both quiet and great ways always begins in the same place. It begins when we realize that the call of Jesus isn’t generic, a “Come one, come all” call. It is always individual. It’s personal. Shaped and intended precisely for

one person at a time. The journey of history-making discipleship begins when we hear the voice of Jesus calling *our* name, and we reply.

But it's not easy in a crowd. And this is a big crowd. When we hear the voice of Jesus, the voice of his Spirit, prompting us to follow him—to confess our sins, to come up for prayer, to overcome shyness and join a LifeGroup, to teach Sunday School or go to Haiti or serve as a deacon, *or* to sell some of our possessions and give generously—it is easy when we sense such a prompting to look to one side and then another. To say to those around us, “Wow, this is a message you need to hear. Pastor's speaking to you! I hope you're paying attention!” It's easy to dodge the call.

We like to hide in the crowd. We like to assume that others will respond. That others will take care of whatever needs taking care of. Sometimes it's because of indifference. Some who sit in the crowd really don't care. This is someone else's church, someone else's responsibility. But I think the bigger issue is inadequacy! We look at the person on the left or right and compare ourselves and say, “I am not as talented as that person. I am not as outgoing as that person. I am not as wealthy as that person. So, I'll let other more gifted, more talented, more resourced people answer the call. I'll just hide.”

You're beginning to understand the scope of Beyond These Walls; how this is an opportunity to free up resources that could change the landscape of our community; that we need to raise \$5 million in order to do that. But do you remember what our *number one* goal for this initiative is? 100% participation! That means that *no one* who considers this their church home is out there saying, “Well, I wonder who's going to make *that* happen? Sounds like a great idea; hope someone can write a big check to help us pull this off.”

Our highest hope is that everyone who considers CHPC—from the wealthiest to the poorest, from the oldest to the youngest, will listen for the call of Christ upon *your* life and say, “What I have, what I can, I will do. I want to be a part of this.”

Remember those metal slivers. Do you know what you were looking at? A lepton. A tiny Roman coin from the first century worth about six minutes of your daily wage. You know it by another name. The widow's mite! Remember where Jesus saw a poor widow drop two of these into the offering plate? He bragged on her! Even though what she gave was numerically insignificant, Jesus said, it was everything she had. In other words, Jesus reserved his highest praise for the tiniest gift, because it was given with a heart of gratitude and represented incredible sacrifice.

I will never forget Bernice Cameron. Bernice joined the church in same class as my future wife, Cyndi. Every Sunday Bernice showed up in the same pink jacket and pink pillbox hat. Not because she was trying to be fashionable. But because they were the only “church” clothes she owned. Bernice was poor as a church mouse. She lived in a tar paper shack. She had nothing. But she loved the Lord, loved his Word, and loved this church. One Christmas, our deacons sent Bernice a \$100 check to make the holidays more pleasant. The next Sunday, in the offering plate, appeared a check from Bernice Cameron for \$10. I called her that week: “Bernice, why would you give back such a large chunk of what we gave you?” She said, “Pastor, the Lord has blessed me with a gracious gift.

How could I do anything other than offer back a tithe of that gift for his generosity to me?" Until I die, I will remember that story.

But the spirit of Bernice lives on this church. Last week after my sermon, a widow came up to me and said, "I have a piece of land I'm going to sell and give part of the proceeds to Beyond These Walls." Another widow texted me to say that she is talking to her financial adviser this week about what she can do. And yet another wrote: "I am on a widow's pension, I pay full tithe and supplement my sister's income. I also support other ministries. Lord willing, I will participate in Beyond These Walls. It'll be the lowest line on the chart, but I will commit. In Jesus' name!"

And it's not just our older saints responding inspirationally. Did you know some of our middle-schoolers have already turned in pledge cards? And one high school girl is taking old furniture, painting it and selling it on EBay so that she can fulfill *her* BTW pledge. 100% participation!

That inspires me. I hope it inspires you. Obviously we need larger gifts to hit our number and we are waiting and praying for some of those. But if, at the end of the day, every person in this church has responded to this call—100% participation in an initiative that will take us beyond these walls as never before—then I believe that God will have already done something great in the hearts of our people.

Great or small, rich or poor, I invite you to join in this journey. Use your journey guides. Talk with your spouse...really! Talk together! Grapple in your LifeGroups. Our conversation last Friday was one of the most stimulating ever. In the end, it doesn't matter what Chapel Hill is asking you to do or Pastor Mark is asking you to do or your elders are asking you to do. In the end, only question matters: What is Jesus calling *me* to do?