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Beyond These Walls: Conspicuous *Matthew 5:13-16*

Happy Mother's Day! If you're visiting with us today, you find yourself in the middle of some family business regarding a new initiative we have launched. So, please enjoy listening in and feel released from any burden to participate. Speaking of family business, it's actually pretty rare that I end up sharing church vision with those outside Chapel Hill, but this week I've found myself doing it several times. I've had people, who don't go to church, ask me, "How are things at the church?" And, so I've told them about Beyond These Walls. I tell them, "It's exciting at the moment. We just launched a new initiative called Beyond These Walls. We want to go beyond the walls of our church and make a difference like we've never made before. We want to empower our people to reach out in their small groups to their neighborhoods, we want to see leaders being sent as pastors and as missionaries all over the world, and we want to love Gig Harbor like we've never done it before."

And you know what? People love it. In fact, I've been so surprised by their reactions. Even those to whom I've mentioned how we're going to finance it. I tell them, we're going to pay down all the debt we have on our building and then take our mortgage payments and turn them around to go towards these Beyond These Walls initiatives. I told one group of friends an example of how we might do this. I told them that Gig Harbor's FISH Food Bank approached us and told us that their lease was running out and asked us to consider allowing them to build a new building on our property. I told these friends how both Chapel Hill and FISH came to a mutual decision, after much work, that it wouldn't work out, but that Chapel Hill plans to make a lead gift to their building campaign when they are ready to build. One of my friends remarked, "That's awesome!"

Church, the possibilities this initiative opens up for us are tremendous. To one day be able take a \$600,000/year mortgage payment and turn that around to go Beyond These Walls is incredible. To see how God might use us, disciples of Jesus, to make history in this community and, through leaders that we train up and release, around the world is so exciting. Multiplying LifeGroups. Releasing Leaders. Loving Gig Harbor. And it's not like we haven't already been doing this, we just want to do it more and more. This week I want you to hear from one woman in our church who is already at work reaching out Beyond These Walls. (Visit chapelhillpc.org/beyondthesewalls to watch the video!)

Cyndee caught the vision of the potential she had as a follower of Jesus to step out Beyond These Walls and make a difference. To change someone's life. To make history. And Jesus knew the potential his twelve disciples had to make history, and he wanted them to catch that vision too. Last week we began a journey through Matthew's gospel, looking at how Jesus made disciples that made history, and it began with a call. A call to specific individuals. This week, we are going

to see that Jesus followed up this call with teaching these disciples what life with him looked like. Jesus went up on a mountain and his disciples came to him and he began teaching them. This was one of the things he said to his disciples:

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:13–16 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Jesus knew the potential these disciples had to make history. He saw it in them. Notice how he tells them “you are” the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Not “you should be,” or, “you could be,” but, “you are.” Jesus knew they were already the raw ingredients that could make history in this world. When I think about this church, I start to get excited thinking about the potential impact we could have on this community. I start to think about the number of people we interact with on a weekly basis. How many people in this community come into contact with a Chapel Hill person each week? 10,000? 20,000? 30,000? The potential we have is unbelievable.

But here’s what Jesus goes on to point out. You might be the salt of the earth, you might be the light of the world, but unless you use that potential for its intended purpose, it goes to waste. Salt was used for many things in the ancient world—preserving, flavoring, purifying, fertilizing—and it’s hard to know what image Jesus was getting at here, although I think it’s fertilizer, but I don’t have time to dive into it. But here’s what I do know, whatever its use, salt is useless unless it actually touches the thing it is meant to act upon. Salt can come within a millimeter of a piece of food, or the soil of the ground, but unless it actually touches it, it does nothing at all. Salt has incredible potential, but unless it actually touches something, it never reaches that potential.

As disciples of Jesus, we have incredible potential to make history, but unless we actually touch people’s lives, we don’t reach that potential. This week I heard a story about a LifeGroup of young moms who have recognized the potential they have and are stepping out to touch the lives of others. This LifeGroup, a daughter group of my wife’s LifeGroup, were attending a baby shower for one of their members. At the shower, two people had a conversation where they said, “Why don’t we host a baby shower for some teen moms?” They approached Young Lives—which is the Young Life ministry for teen moms—and asked if they could do this and the Young Lives coordinator was all in.

So they went back to their LifeGroup and my wife’s LifeGroup and said: “Would you be willing to donate any baby clothes, toys, strollers, car seats...anything that you can to give to these teen moms?” The response was overwhelming. From this group of young moms they collected an entire garage full of baby supplies. Not only are they giving things away, but they want to develop relationships with these teen moms, most of whom have no connection with church, so that they might show the love of Jesus not only in physical giving but in relational giving. So they invited me

to come in and give them some training on how to ask great questions and listen well and connect better with people in conversation. Next Saturday night these moms are getting together to have a potluck. And those teen moms, are going to walk away, not only with a whole bunch of stuff that they need, but they are going to walk away with new friendships and relationships with people who love Jesus and love them. Isn't that awesome?

As disciples of Jesus, we have incredible potential to make history, but unless we actually touch people's lives, we don't reach that potential. Whose life are you touching? Where are you taking the potential of who you are, as a disciple of Jesus and loving others in this community? Maybe it's like this LifeGroup is doing. Maybe it's like Cyndee Gray is doing with human trafficking. Or maybe it's as simple as baking cookies for your neighbor, who you really don't know enough to be able to love them, and taking them over. You have so much potential. Whose life are you touching?

Not only does Jesus say to his disciples, "you are the salt of the earth," but also, "you are the light of the world." Not only do they have the potential to act as salt, but also to act as light, shining into the lives of others. But unlike salt, light doesn't need to actually touch the object it is acting upon. When you put a light in a dark room, it lights up everything in that room without touching a single thing. Light shines upon objects from a distance, unless it is hidden. But Jesus makes a further point, when he says, "a city on a hill cannot be hidden."

This week I read a quote from a Nicaraguan peasant named Marcelino who might help us see better what Jesus is getting at. He says, "A lit-up city that's on top of a hill can be seen from far away, as we can see the lights of San Miguelito from very far away when we're rowing at night on the lake. A city is a great union of people, and as there are a lot of houses together, we see a lot of light. And that's the way our community will be. It will be seen lighted from far away, if it is united by love."

We have a potential as a community to come together, united by love, and shine a light into Gig Harbor in a way that cannot be hidden. We are a chapel set on a hill, and if we unite in love for this city, our love cannot be hidden. We've always been about more than just ourselves. But can you imagine if we were even more intentional at uniting ourselves together in love for this city and pulling together our resources in a way that will overflow from this church and make history in this community?

We feel we are at an opportune time to step out as a community, united together in love for this city, to be a light and partner with others to love Gig Harbor. Why? Because in the last year we've been approached by no less than 5 different organizations in the community asking if we could partner with them in some way. You've been hearing about them already. WIC—Women, Infant and Children, that Pastor Mark talked about last week—will be housed in our building for the next year. The Rescue Mission want to partner with us to create new housing solutions on this side of the bridge, and Pastor Larry is now serving on their board. The YMCA want to partner with us to put the 'C' back in the YMCA, and you're paying me to volunteer as a chaplain for them 5 hours/week! The Boys and Girls club wants to partner with us to love children and youth in this

community. And as I mentioned earlier, FISH Food Bank approached us asking to help them with a future home.

We believe we have the opportunity to unite in love, as a church, and like a city on a hill, shine a light into this city and this community like we've never done so before. To go Beyond These Walls and partner with these existing organizations who are already doing great work. And why would we want to do this? Why would we want to be a light to the city? Why would we want to be salt—touching people's lives individually? So people might come to know the one who loves them—their heavenly Father.

Listen again to the final verse I read to you earlier: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 ESV) Jesus' hope for his disciples is that they would take this potential they have been given to change the world and step out and act as salt, touching the lives of others, and act together as a community of light, so that people might see their good works and ultimately recognize the love of the Father that compels them. Church, we can do the same. Be the salt and light and let others see our good deeds, that they may come to know the love of the Father. He desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And he desires to use us to do it.

Don't you want to be a part of that? I do. We want everyone to be a part of this. That's why we want everyone who considers Chapel Hill their home to participate. Our priority for this Beyond These Walls initiative is 100% participation. We dream of being able to pour resources into this community, both human and financial. But to do so, we need to free up the \$600,000/year that is currently going to the bank to pay off the debt on this building. We've invested \$20M into this building over the last 30 years and we've paid off \$15M, but there is \$5M remaining. We hope to pay off that \$5M over the next three years and release that \$600,000/year to go Beyond These Walls. And we want everyone to be a part of this.

When my wife, Rachel, and I began to think about financially committing to Beyond These Walls, we started by recognizing where we were in our giving journey. We were already tithers—that is, we were already giving a tithe (10%) of our income to Chapel Hill. However, we felt like God was calling us to trust him even more with our money. We are thankful for the Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University training we had received, and so we turned to our monthly budget and asked where we could cut and trim. We talked about giving 1% more, or 2% more. We thought we could make that work.

Then, a few weeks ago, I was struck by how we hadn't started with prayer. We'd just assumed that the right thing to do was to give 1-2% above and beyond. So we put that aside and asked God the simple question: how much do you want us to give to Beyond These Walls over the next 3 years? Rachel and I both felt God gave us the same number. Let me tell you, this was not a number we felt like we could "make work." This was a call from God to step out in faith that he would provide. To trust that he would be faithful in the future as he has in the past. And I'll be honest: it's a little scary. But, I am truly excited to see how God will come through, because honestly, I don't know how we can make it work without him.

I want the same thing for you. I want to see you step out in faith and trust that God is going to come through. Because he will. I know he will. In 3 weeks, we're going to ask all who consider Chapel Hill their home church to make a commitment to Beyond These Walls. To do this, we're going to use a tool called a Commitment Card—you'll find one in your bulletin. On the front you'll see a set of colored steps. We're all at different places in our journey and these steps help us to identify where we might be. Take a look at those steps and see where you would be right now. There's no condemnation here, this is just a tool to help you step out in faith. Find yourself on there, and ask yourself: is God calling me to take that next step and jump to the next level? To move from never having given to giving for the first time? To move from giving sporadically, to giving intentionally? To move from intentional giving to tithing? Or to move beyond tithing to giving extravagantly?

Wherever you find yourself, it will be a step of faith. But I am convinced that we have a faithful God who will provide for us. And I know that by stepping out in this way, you and I are joining in with a church that is seeking to be a light to the world, a city on a hill, salt of the earth, that when people see what this church is doing, they may come to know the love of the Father, that they may come to follow Jesus too. So will you commit to praying about joining us in this step of faith in 3 weeks? Will you take your journey guides and discuss the questions at home with your spouse? Will you discuss the questions with your LifeGroup? And will you consider stepping out in faith, trusting that God will provide, to join in with this vision to move Beyond These Walls?