



April 7 & 8, 2018
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Beyond These Walls Momentum
Loving Our Neighbors
Acts 2:42-3:10

Welcome! And a special welcome to any of our Easter guests who are back with us. We are so glad you decided to come back and spend another weekend with us. And if you are new you couldn't pick a better time to return because you're going to get a glimpse into our heart. For three weeks we are going to talk about things that make us tick! You will hear as we dream of God's future for us; a vision that has ignited a passion in this congregation. I'm glad you're here to listen in! Maybe it will ignite a passion in you, too!

This morning we begin a three-week mini-celebration of something incredible the Lord is doing in our midst. Over the last 30 years we have been blessed to build a campus that has served not only our needs but the needs of our community. And what God has done within these walls has more than exceeded our expectations.

But last year we asked a bold question: What would happen if we could pay off our \$5.4 million in debt, take our mortgage payments.... \$600,000 annually...and invest that beyond these walls! Not to buy more land or build another building. But to reach out as we have never done before into our community and our peninsula.

That was the dream of your elders. We called it **Beyond These Walls**. A year ago, we began to cast that vision ...and waited to see what you thought. Would it take hold? On June 18, we found out! Remember, our debt was about \$ 5.4 million. When I opened the envelope... your pledges totaled \$5,428,137. 700 families...with gifts large and small...all said, "We're in! We believe in this vision!" **I will never forget that moment.**

But pledges are one thing; money in the door is another, isn't it? So...how are we doing? Well, we are calling this celebration "Momentum;" that should give you some idea. For the next two weeks, we will share with you the exciting news of our progress and take a look at what we believe God wants us to do in the years to come. It is important to understand that this is a THREE-YEAR initiative. Every dime we receive for BTW will go toward the debt until it is paid off. Only then will we free up those mortgage payments to do something more. We are only one lap into a three lap race.

But here's the exciting news so far: In just nine months, we have received...ready? \$2,066,222!! In fact, we have already paid off completely one of our THREE mortgages. In two weeks, we will celebrate that fact by burning that first mortgage. (It will drive our facilities manager Dan, crazy, but we are going to figure out some way to have real fire! Woo hoo!) We are \$600,000 ahead of schedule and at this rate, we fully expect to pay off the last of our three mortgages in a little more than 2 years, June of 2020!

So...first of all...thank you! And let's not take our foot off the gas! Cyndi and I have paid about a third of our commitment so we are on pace with the rest of you. Well done!

But BTW has never been primarily about paying off a mortgage. It is primarily about freeing up resources so that we can mobilize our people from within these beautiful walls out into our community. And just because we are **still** two years away from being debt-free doesn't mean we can't start aligning our budget and staff and ministries with this exciting and contagious BTW vision. This last year we have begun to look at **everything we do** through BTW lenses, asking, "What can we do now for NO money...or out of our existing budget...that lays the foundation for BTW going forward?"

As a reminder, we wanted to move "Beyond These Walls" through three specific strategies. Let's see if you remember them: Multiplying Life Groups, Releasing Leaders and Loving Gig Harbor. But apparently, these were confusing. For example, every week we include in our bulletin one of the 15 pastors we have ordained and "released" into ministry beyond our walls. We list them so that we can pray for them. One week former CH Pastor Jeremy Vaccaro was our "released leader." Afterwards, someone came up to me quite concerned. "Where has Pastor Jeremy been released from? I will be praying!" It happened the next two weeks, too! So that wasn't very clear, was it?

Neither was "Love Gig Harbor." 10% of our church comes from Port Orchard and parts north. Although we didn't intend it, to some the phrase "love Gig Harbor" sounded exclusive. We decided to be clearer. So, here's how we are going to talk about these initiatives going forward: Beyond These Walls- Make disciples, Send Leaders and Love your Neighbors.

Today, we will focus on loving our neighbors. Our Bible story comes from the Book of Acts which tells how God took a hand full of disciples who had seen the risen Jesus and been filled with his Holy Spirit... and turned them loose to change the world forever. They certainly changed the life of one man:

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Let me ask what may seem like a trick question: what was the greatest gift that Peter and John gave that man? You might be tempted to say, "His legs!" After a lifetime of immobility, being carried every day to the temple so that he could beg for food money, this miraculous gift of healing transformed his life, didn't it? But his new legs were not the greatest gift. The NAME OF JESUS was the greatest gift he received that day. "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"

And he did! And it was incredible. But notice that he was walking and leaping and PRAISING GOD. He KNEW that God had done this miraculous thing in the name of Jesus. And when the people saw him walking and praising God...THEY knew that God had done this miraculous thing in the name of Jesus. The greatest gift Peter and John gave this man was not his new legs. The greatest gift was the name of

Jesus Christ. It was through that name that he gained not only new legs but a new relationship with God... and a powerful testimony for the rest of the world to be astounded by.

Jesus once taught that the greatest commandment was really a two-fer. Remember? Love God...and what? Love your neighbor. It is interesting that he didn't stop with part one. You'd expect a religious person to say that loving God is the greatest of all commandments. Yet Jesus said IF YOU DON'T love your neighbor too, then your love of God is phony. And WHEN you do love your neighbor, that is one way for you to love God! In other words, the two are inextricably tied as far as Jesus is concerned!

And we saw that in our Easter story, didn't we? Jesus' healed and delivered so many people that the crowds nearly crushed him! He didn't just "talk" religion. He lived it out with acts of mercy that showed his listeners he really cared for them...and opened them up to receive his teaching about the Kingdom of God. Jesus' miracles were never ends in and of themselves; they were the means to demonstrate that real salvation had come to the world in the form of a life-giving person named Jesus of Nazareth.

One of the BTW strategies that really resonated with many of you was "loving Gig Harbor"... or "loving our neighbors" as we are now describing it. The idea that, in three years, we can invest even more significantly in partnerships that address real human needs...that really excited you. And we are already laying the foundation for partnerships that could accomplish what we dream of.

For example, FISH food bank, a wonderful and trusted organization, hopes to acquire land and build its own facility. Your elders told FISH that when they are ready, Chapel Hill will provide the first large matching gift as a challenge to other organizations to do the same.

Another example is the Rescue Mission. Pastor Larry is now serving on the board. One opportunity that we might participate in is building a Tiny House community that will house homeless veterans.

And last November we opened the first chapter of W.I.C. this side of the bridge. "Women, Infants and Children" serves under-resourced moms with medical and nutritional care for her and her baby. We are open twice a week and serving 195 clients per month. That number grows every week. Isn't that awesome?

These are exciting and practical ways for us to love our neighbors. Because every person is made in the image of God, we are called to love and care for them as did the early church. But here's the crucial point: The early church did it all IN THE NAME OF JESUS! It is NOT enough to offer acts of mercy to those in need. There are countless organizations doing that. What sets us apart...what must ALWAYS set us apart... is that WE offer acts of mercy and kindness IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST.

It is a good thing to do good things. It is a good thing to feed and clothe and minister to those in need. But we can never forget that every act of mercy and kindness is an opportunity for us to lift up the name of Jesus; to open the door for lost people, whom he loves, to discover God's incredible passion for them.

Let me put it in even more strongly: IF we do acts of mercy and kindness but neglect to lift up the name of Jesus in doing so, we have not REALLY loved our neighbors at all. Because we have failed in our most important calling. Anyone can feed or clothe or house or heal. Only Jesus provides the deepest inner healing from sin. Only Jesus can breach the gap that exists between every human being and our heavenly Father. If we heal and feed and clothe and house and neglect to name Jesus as our reason for doing so, we have ultimately failed those whom we hoped to help.

Salvation in the name of Jesus is the BEST and MOST important way we can love our neighbors. Which is why I am excited about Alpha. We launched our first season of Alpha in January and the mission of Alpha is to create a safe space where people can explore for themselves the big questions of life, and ultimately the answers that are found in and through Jesus. Alpha takes the message we have received and treasured ...the message of Jesus' love for us.... and projects it into the community. It is THE most important way we love our neighbors. And if THAT isn't living Beyond These Walls, I don't know what is.

Last week we heard the story of one young man, Colin, who experienced Alpha. We heard him articulate how he has gone from feeling empty and like there was a hole in heart to being fulfilled in and through a relationship with Jesus. But Colin is not the only person who has been changed through Alpha. Over 27 million people worldwide have experienced Alpha. According to a recent global Alpha survey, of those unbelievers who finish an Alpha course, 82% of them make a decision to follow Jesus.

Not only that but 97% of all people who do Alpha would recommend it to a friend. And we want you to hear a few more snippets about what God has been doing through Alpha at Chapel Hill, so we caught up with a few of the participants.

Alpha is so powerful, and is the ultimate expression of how we can love our neighbor in the name of Jesus. And here's the great thing. You don't have to wait until the end of BTW to get involved! If you want to be a part of Alpha, we are starting a new season in 2 weeks! April 25. And we need your help.

In your bulletins you will find an insert. This isn't for you to keep, but it's a tool for you to use. Alpha works because people invite people. It doesn't work by putting up posters or flyers. It works because people like you, look at their neighbors, and make a decision to love them in the name of Jesus, and invite them to be your guest at Alpha. I invited one of my literal neighbors to do that, and he made a decision to follow Jesus and now he is hosting a table with me! You all have the power to do this. So please, invite!

And as well as inviting, we need your help to host the guests that will show up. We need people to come and greet. We need people to come and cook. We need people to come and setup the room. We need people to host a table. If you want to serve, we have a place for you, no matter if you are an introvert or extrovert like me. All of that information is on the Alpha page of our website: www.chapelhillpc.org/alpha If you are interested in being a part of this, please go sign up to serve.

Jesus once taught his disciples that they should offer a cup of cold water IN HIS NAME! That is what we are going to do with Beyond These Walls. We are going to love our neighbors by caring for and feeding and clothing and healing and housing them...AND we are going to do so in the name of Jesus. Every time we gain a hearing because of our acts of kindness, we are going to point, point, point to Jesus Christ. HE'S the one! He's the one! He's the ONLY one who can really heal you and save you.

Our ultimate goal as a church...the ultimate way we can love our neighbors... is to invite them into a living, saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Last Easter weekend... I invited our guests...nearly 2000 more than usual... to consider following Jesus; to raise their hand if they realized that they longed for something more from life than they are presently experiencing. Would you like to know how many accepted that invitation? 36 people! And those are the ones that I could count. 36 souls! It is the largest response of faith we've ever had in a single weekend. And my prayer is, that is only the start. That increasingly we will be a church whose heart is turned outwards. Who loves our neighbors so much that we care, not only for their physical and emotional needs...but we care for their deepest spiritual needs as well. And that ONLY comes in the powerful name of Jesus.

"I have no silver and gold, but what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk!"