

February 15-16, 2020
Pastor Mark Toone

GET IN THE GAME

Isaiah 6:1-8; Exodus 4:13

I begin my message this evening/morning with some exciting news. As most of you know, three years ago we launched an initiative called BEYOND THESE WALLS. Our dream was to pay off our remaining mortgage and use the money that had been going to the bank to invest in our community like never before. How many were here when we launched Beyond These Walls? How many have come SINCE?

In 2017, our debt was \$ 5.5 million. Our goal was to eliminate that debt by June 2020. **You have been so faithful** and I'm excited to tell you that we have passed another milestone. Want to hear it? How much debt did we start with? Well, as of this moment, through your incredible generosity, that number has been reduced.... (drum roll please) to \$ 973,059! We have crossed the last Million Dollar mark! Woohoo!

We are in the final countdown. As best we can tell, we have about \$200,000 remaining that we aren't sure where it will come from. But God knows. And when that happens ...when we push that number down to zero...we will free up about \$500,000 per year...every year... to invest in ministries that move beyond these walls. The Session is finalizing those projects and you'll hear about it in the months to come.

But we are in the final countdown. SO...I want you to save a date: Sunday, July 5. We will have ONE weekend service at 10:00 on Sunday the 5th. In fact...wait for it...we will even open the balcony. We are calling the service "Independence Day!" And following worship, we will throw the biggest party this church has ever seen. SO...save the date: July 5, 10:00 a. Independence Day. How cool is that!

I cannot express the sense of gratitude and excitement I feel. It has been such a privilege to lead this church for more than 30 years. And this moment...when we pay off the last dollar of debt on all the buildings we've built...I have dreamed of this since 1992 when we built our gymnasium. This is an exciting time to be part of what God is doing at Chapel Hill.

And, it is a great time for everyone to ask this question: am I fully engaged in what God is asking ME to do in, through and beyond this church? Am I giving according to my ability, serving according to my ability, leading according to my ability...am I playing the part God called ME to play in this great mission. OR...am I just a spectator?

We understand what a spectator sport is. Two weeks ago we watched the Super Bowl. Tens of thousands of fans packed the stadium, cheering for the 22 men on the field. Thousands of spectators in the stands on a Sunday, watching a handful of performers. Huh...what ELSE does that sound like?

American Christianity is the great spectator sport. Every weekend, usually on a Sunday, thousands pack our religious "stadiums", sit back and watch as a handful of "professionals" entertain them. We enjoy it, cheer for it, pay for it, are inspired by it... but for the vast majority of Christians...we never actually get in the game.

And I don't mean get up here and preach or sing. I mean...we never realize that Jesus didn't save us just to go to heaven someday. Jesus saved us and called us to be part of his mission to the world! Every one of us. Being a Christ-follower is about way more than Saturday evening/Sunday morning worship services. In fact, THESE times ought to be the moments when EACH of us is inspired and empowered to go forth on OUR mission for Jesus. Every Saturday night/Sunday morning ought to be a renewed call for every believer to get in the game! And if you are not yet a believer in Jesus...listen up! Because God is calling you to something much more than one hour a weekend in church! He's calling you to a life of purpose and power and influence!

Chapel Hill is a great church. A generous church. A Sweetheart church. God is doing incredible things. We are growing for the first time in ten years. We are reaching our neighbors as never before. We are raising up strong leaders. We are getting ready to launch a new church. We are about to invest a half a million dollars every year into our communities for the sake of Christ. There is no other place I'd rather pastor! AND YET...we aren't much different, statistically, to most every other church in the country. We still have about 20% of our people doing the vast majority of the work, both inside and outside the church. Maybe a little more...but not much.

Put differently, Chapel Hill has an enormous pool of people who are still spectators; who have not discovered the unique role for which God designed them and to which he calls them...and nobody else. So...if this is true...how DO we get in the game? Well, it starts with the call from the coach. You don't just pick your position, get up off the bench and walk in. You wait for the coach to say, "You...get out there!"

That's our starting point. It ALWAYS starts with the call. God called Noah to build an ark. God called Abraham to go to a Promised Land. God called Joseph to save Egypt. God called Moses to lead his people out of Egypt. God called Deborah to defeat the Canaanites. Jesus called the twelve disciples. Jesus called Saul to become his greatest apostle. Every great story in the Bible begins with the call of God.

And here's what I want you to hear. Every follower of Jesus has a call from God. The New Testament says so. God has created each of us uniquely; he has called each one of us specifically; he has gifted each one of us particularly; he has empowered each one of us supernaturally. If you are a follower of Jesus; if you have invited him to be your Lord...then he has a plan for you. A part for you. A position for you to play.

The question is, when the call comes...how will you respond? I want to look at two stories. God calls two men to get in the game. And they respond VERY differently. First, Isaiah. Isaiah is one of the most important prophets of the Old Testament. Every prophecy we recite on Christmas Eve comes from Isaiah. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" Isaiah! "His name shall be called, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah. Isaiah became a big-league prophet...and it all began with a vision. Listen as he describes it. Is 6:

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

Talk about an intimidating sight! God Almighty seated on a throne wearing a robe that fills the entire temple. Winged creatures surround him singing his praises and flapping their monstrous wings. Every time God speaks, the temple shakes! The whole place is filled with smoke. When Isaiah takes all this in, he is terrified! As he looks upon this vision of pure glory...he realizes how unworthy he is. Listen to what **he** cries out:

"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

In other words, Isaiah says, "I am doomed. I have no business being in the presence of such holiness. I am filthy! I am not worthy!" But...amazingly... God looks beyond Isaiah's shortcomings...just as he looks beyond all of ours... and he sees something worth redeeming. Worth calling forth. Verse 8

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

I love to imagine this. God on his throne, surrounded by angels. Isaiah is the only other one in the room. God says, "I have a job. I need someone to speak for me. I wonder who

it will be?" God is staring right at Isaiah. "Whom shall I send....?" And then comes Isaiah's response. "Well; here I am. Send me!" That was Isaiah.

Then there was Moses. Moses was hiding in the wilderness. He was a Jew who had been adopted into Pharaoh's family but, after he murdered a man, he fled for his life. Now, he's tending sheep in the desert. It's been 40 years. Moses thinks God has forgotten him. But one day in the middle of nowhere, he's hears God's voice coming out of a burning bush: "Moses...I have heard the cries of my people who are living in bondage in Egypt. I want you to go to pharaoh and tell him, "Let my people go!"

Moses' response is a little different than Isaiah's. Here come the excuses. A stream of them. Moses says, "I can't do this on my own." God says, "I'll be with you. Moses says, "But I'm a nobody!" God says, "That's all right; I'm a somebody." Moses says, "I don't have the power." God says, "That's all right; I have power to spare." Moses says, "They won't believe me." God says, "I'll make them believe you." Moses says, "I do not speak well." God says, "Who do you think made your lips." Excuses, excuses, excuses...

And finally...finally, when Moses runs out of excuses, he just begs off: "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."

Isaiah. Moses. A study in contrast. Both were called by God to do something great. Both were terrified. Both were unworthy and ill-equipped. Both were in way over their head. Yet when the call came, one said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else!" And the other said, "Here am I; send me!"

As I shared in my blog this week, I played on the West Valley High School football team in Yakima. We were so small...so pathetic. We barely had enough players to field an offense and a defense; several of us played both directions. I was a starting linebacker and back-up quarterback. And we sucked. We got tromped every game we played; didn't win one game. It was not fun.

But I remember one particularly un-fun game. It was with an inner-city school. These kids were tough...and intimidating. And they were cleaning our clocks. Finally, the coach decided to put in the back-up squad and let US get beaten up for a while. He called out to me, "Toone, do you want to take quarterback?" And I said.... "No." Not even, "No, thank you, Coach." Just "No." I was intimidated, beat up, outmatched and scared. I'm not proud of it. I wish I'd said, "You bet. Send me in, coach. I'll do my best. I'll take one for the team." Huh uh....I said, "No."

You may be surprised that God WANTS you in the game. You might assume that Christianity is SUPPOSED to be a spectator sport. Like Moses, you may feel like you haven't got a THING to offer, that no one will listen, that you are ill-equipped. That you

have NO BUSINESS BEING IN THE GAME. And I'm telling you... God created you, equipped you, gifted you and has called you to a task that ONLY YOU CAN FILL. The question is...if you believe me...if you believe this is true, would you respond like Isaiah...or like Moses? "Send me in, coach!" Or "No."

I have no idea what your call might be. Maybe it's a call to serve inside the church. A call to mentor kids. A call to bring a friend to Alpha. A call to serve on security or decorate our facility or work in Titus. A call to be an elder or deacon. Or maybe your call is beyond these walls. A call to serve as a volunteer coach. A call to start a Bible Study in your business. A call to run for public office. A call to be a prayerful teacher or a prayerful doctor. A call to be an intentional, loving neighbor.

Or maybe it's REALLY beyond these walls. Maybe yours is a call to join our Haiti team...or go on our Men's Mexico trip. OR MAYBE God is calling you to be part of Chapel Hill Port Orchard. Part of the launch team or the serve team for several months. Or may...he's calling you to make Port Orchard your new church home. We hope to send 100 people from here to our new campus. Maybe you're one of them...and will be part of pioneering our very first church plant!

I don't have a CLUE what God's call on you might be. But you have one. I know God wants you in the game. I know Christianity was never intended to be a spectator sport. I know that unless you say yes to the position God wants you to play, you will never be fulfilled, never complete. And neither will we. And IF you say yes, even if you have a 1000 reasons why you think God is making a mistake ...you will be blessed to see how He takes your "yes," fills you with his Spirit and empowers you to do the thing that you, alone, were created, gifted and equipped to do.

I want to tell you about a friend. I've known him for years. But recently, he had a powerful encounter with Jesus. It changed his life. This man who had been so successful in so many ways was suddenly struck by what I believe to be a call of God. I watched it happen. I watched as this man, who came to church once or twice a year, was suddenly on fire for the Lord. And then I saw something I really didn't expect; he became one of the best evangelist I've ever met. He is more excited to share about Jesus and his church than just about anyone I've ever met.

Just today...just today, he had five young men in his garage watching one of my sermons on-line. And when I went to his shop, he wasn't there. But he found out I was there... and started calling his employees one by one, telling them to come and introduce themselves to me. He wants them to meet his pastor. My friend didn't know it... he didn't realize it...but God has given him the gift of evangelism.

For three years I've prayed that God would bring more unchurched people through our doors. That he would lay it on the hearts of our people to share their faith with not-yet-Christian friends. In a very short time, this man has shared his new-found love for Jesus with more people than anyone I have ever known. THAT is what happens when someone suddenly realizes that God is calling THEM to be a part of his mission to love and save his world.

So...how about you? Moses...or Isaiah. "Oh, my lord, please send someone else?" Or... "Here am I; send me!"