



## **Of All Nations Psalm 67:1-2**

Good morning. If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Genesis 1. I remember sitting on a scorching November day in the middle of southern Sudan, sipping hot tea with a friend, Bulen. Many of you know that for the last twenty-plus years, southern Sudanese, particularly our brothers and sisters there, have been attacked and had their villages ravaged by a militant Muslim regime in the north. Hundreds and thousands of our brothers and sisters have lost their lives. Bulen has, basically, seen war all of his life.

We were sitting there in the middle of this war-torn village surrounded by ravaged buildings and, all of a sudden, in the middle of our conversation, Bulen paused and looked at me, and he said, "David, I'm going to impact the world." It was kind of a turn in our conversation. Bulen went into this picture of how he was going to change the world, and so I thought I would humor him for a minute. I said, "Okay Bulen..." Here's a southern Sudanese twenty-year old, little to no resources, probably hasn't seen much of the world outside of that village. I said, "Well Bulen, how are you going to impact the world?" He looked me, and he said, "I'm going to make disciples of all nations."

That sounded spiritual enough. I'd read the Great Commission before; I'd preached the Great Commission. So, I kept going on with him, and I said, almost jokingly, I said, "So, you're going to impact the world by making disciples of all nations." He looked back at me and said two words I will never forget. He took that cup of hot tea from his lips, looked at me with those dark brown eyes and said in a slightly high-pitched African voice, "Why not?" What kind of question is that?

It was like he had nothing else better to do in the middle of the African jungle, and so, he was defaulting to impacting the world. Bulen asked me that question at a point in my spiritual journey where God had been in the process of uncovering...abruptly uncovering a fundamental misunderstanding in my Christianity; a fundamental, simple, almost elementary truth of Scripture that for years and years of reading the Bible, I had completely missed. I want to show it to you this morning and ask the question, "Why not impact the world?"

### **We glorify Christ by making disciples OF ALL NATIONS. The purpose we need to acknowledge ...**

You see the top of your notes there, the statement that sums up who we are as The Church at Brook Hills. "We glorify Christ by making disciples of all nations." This is the goal of The Church at Brook Hills. All nations...we want to impact the world. This morning, I want to submit to every member, every potential member of this church who's walking through this membership process, I want to submit to every member of this church that, if you do not

believe, if you do not live like you believe your life was created to impact the world, you will sell God short of the purpose for which He has created you. Christ-follower, if you do not believe and live like you believe, that your life was created to impact the world, you will miss the entire point of your salvation. You'll miss it completely.

Let me show it to you. In Genesis 1, I want to take us back to the very beginning of the Bible: Creation. God creating man. Here's the question I want us to ask over and over and over again through Scripture this morning: Why? Why did God create us? Why is God doing what He is doing?

I don't want to presume to know exhaustively the mind or the motives of God, and I know I want to over-simplify His ways. However, I believe He shows us, He tells us why He does what He does. Specifically, He tells us why He created us. Genesis 1:26:

*God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

### **God created us to enjoy His grace in a relationship with Him.**

The purpose we need to acknowledge...why did God create us? Why did God create man? I believe Genesis 1:26-28 is showing us a two-fold purpose. The first part of the purpose is God created us to enjoy His grace in a relationship with Him. God created us to enjoy His grace in a relationship with Him. We were created in the image of God with the unique capacity, set apart from all creation, to know God and to relate to God, to enjoy God.

The first thing God does in verse 28 there, He creates us, and it says, "God blessed them." This is the pure and unadulterated grace of God. Man has done nothing to earn or merit or warrant the blessing of God, but from the very beginning, He is showering out the blessing of God on His creation, the ones He has made in His likeness. This is the picture in Genesis 1 and 2. Man created to enjoy fellowship with God. Unique, apart from anything else in all creation. We were created to enjoy His grace and have a relationship with Him.

Now, this is where we most often stop. Grace. We were created to enjoy His grace. God loves you and God is gracious towards you and God pursues you; God is passionate about you, God wants a relationship with you. We stop here, but I want us to keep asking the question, "Why?" Why did God bless us? Why did God create us to enjoy His grace in a relationship with Him? Are we the ultimate end of the blessing of God? Does it center around us? I don't believe it does.

### **God created us to extend His glory to the ends of the earth.**

The second part of this...Genesis 1:28, God blessed them and immediately said to them...immediately gives them a command, "Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it." God created us to enjoy His grace in a relationship with Him. Second, God created us to extend His glory to the ends of the earth. God blesses us with a purpose. God gives us His image for a reason. He wants that image multiplied throughout the earth. He wants His likeness to be displayed all throughout the earth. So, He says, "I'm blessing you. Fill the earth with my goodness, with my greatness, with my likeness. Fill the earth with my glory." Enjoy His grace, extend His glory. This is the purpose for which we have been created. This is all over Scripture.

Go with me to the right: Genesis 12. Genesis 12. We're going to run through, and you've got some space there in your notes. We're not going to have time to turn to all of these passages; we'll turn to a few here in Genesis, and then, we're going to go on a helicopter tour, so to speak, a bird's eye view of all of Scripture. I want us to see this over and over again, God pouring out His grace for His glory.

Look in Genesis 12:1.

*"The LORD said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.'" Listen for the blessing of God, the grace of God. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

Did you catch that? Grace of God for the glory of God. "I'm going to bless you, Abram." This is the economy of God. Don't miss it. God says to Abram, "I'm going to pour out my blessing on you. I'm going to pour out grace on you, and you're going to make my blessing known to all the peoples of the earth. You're going to be the conduit of my blessing and all the peoples of the earth are going to know I'm good because of what I do in your life by my grace. I'm going to pour out my grace on you for my glory among all the peoples of the earth."

Abraham has a son; Abraham's son's name is? This is the audience participation part of our program. Abraham's son's name was? Isaac. Genesis 26. Go to Genesis 26. Let's look at Isaac. I want you to see how God continues this in the line of Abraham and these Patriarchs in the Old Testament. "Enjoy my grace; extend my glory. Listen to these extravagant promises God made to Isaac, and then, after that, to Isaac's son, Jacob.

Now, remember, in this day, having descendants and having land was everything. So, listen to what God said. Genesis 26:4, God is speaking to Isaac. *"Isaac, I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands..."* Descendants and lands. Here's why. *"...through your offspring, all nations of the earth will be blessed..."* "I'm going to bless you extravagantly to show my glory to all nations."

Go over two chapters to the right, Genesis 28:14. Isaac's son, Jacob...God comes to Jacob and says, "Jacob," Genesis 28:14, *"your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring."* That's a pretty stout promise when you realize Jacob was a single guy at that point. Didn't even have a wife, and he's going to have all these descendants. That's good news for a single guy in that day. "You're going to have extravagant descendants so that all peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring." This is the picture that God is setting up in Genesis. He is doling out extravagant promises of grace on His people. None of these guys deserved this. Extravagant grace for His extravagant glory to be displayed in all the earth.

This is the story line that is set up in the first book of the Bible, and it continues book after book after book after book. We won't have time to turn to all these. Exodus 14:4. Remember when God led His people out of slavery in Egypt? They were slaves in Egypt, He led them out through the Passover, and the Egyptians were eventually running after them. The Israelites were running from the Egyptians, and God leads them to the Red Sea, which by all accounts, did not seem like the smartest thing to do.

He leads them, basically, to a dead-end, where they've got this huge body of water in front of them and the Egyptians about to overtake them from behind. Ask the question, "Why?". Why did God lead His people to the edge of the Red Sea where they were about to be overtaken by the Egyptians? Exodus 14:4 gives the answer. God led them to that place so that He would split that sea in half, send His people through on dry land. They would look in their rearview mirrors and see the water come crashing down over the Egyptians.

God says in Exodus 14:4, *"I will gain glory for myself among all the Egyptians and through Pharaoh's army, and they will know that I am the LORD."* God splits a sea in half and sends His people through. Extravagant grace...because He is making His glory known. We see all throughout the rest of Scripture, people pointing back to that day when they saw the glory of God revealed.

The same picture that Deuteronomy 4:5, 6, and 7 give. We know God gave His people the Ten Commandments. God, by His grace, gave His people His Word. Why? Why did God give His people His Word? Deuteronomy 4:5-7 says God gave His people His Word so that when they followed this Word, they would show, display, the wisdom and the character and the glory of God to the nations around them. God gives them His Word by His grace for His glory among all the nations around them.

You get to Joshua 5 and 6. Remember the first city the people of God were to take in the Promised Land? The city of Jericho. You get to Joshua 5, around verse 13, and Joshua is trying to figure out, "Okay, how are we going to take this major city?" It's a major city with massive walls all the way around it. Joshua is sitting there trying to think, "Okay, how are we going to take this city?" Basically, in that day, he had five military options available to him.

Number one, he could take the army over the walls; number two, he could take the army under the walls; number three...third option...he could try to break through the walls. The fourth option was to send in kind of a like a quasi-Trojan horse type thing, a decoy in. Or, number five, they could starve the people inside the walls and make them come out. So, he's got five options available to him: Over, under, through, send a decoy in, or starve them and make them come out.

In Joshua 6, God comes to Joshua and says, "Here are the battle plans." You can almost picture Joshua, "Okay. Over, under, through, decoy, starve them." God says, "I want you to get your trumpet players and pull out your sheet music, and you guys march around the city and play some tunes." Then, here's the kicker: "One day after you play some tunes, shout really loud, and the walls will come down, and you'll take the city." That's weird. If you're Joshua, you're wanting a second opinion at this point. "Why? Why are you doing this, God? Why did God design this to be the battle plan for taking the first major city in the Promised Land?" The answer is what He's doing all throughout Scripture. God is designing, He is orchestrating the events of His people so that, in the end, only He gets the glory for what happens.

Let me tell you what you don't see. In Joshua 6, when they take that city, just like God had said, you don't see all the Israelites going up to the trumpet players, telling them what an incredible job they did that day. "Ralph, I've never heard you play that well." "Harry, you hit the high C! It was awesome, we went running in." No. See, the people are saying, "Only God could have done this." It's the story over and over and over again.

You look in Daniel. Daniel 3. Remember Daniel 3? Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? These young Hebrew boys taking a stand for God, and they get thrown into a fiery furnace? Why

did God let these three boys who were so passionate about His glory, why did He allow them to get thrown into a fiery furnace? The answer is...we read that story, and we miss the whole point, because we don't get to the end. Daniel 3:28-29. What happens is when those boys are brought out of the fiery furnace without a drop of sweat on their brow, the King Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan King, declares, "The God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is worthy of glory because He is able to save His people."

That's what God's doing: Showing His glory in a pagan nation. Same picture in Daniel 6. We see Daniel, and he's praying. What does he get for praying? He gets thrown into a lion's den. That will make you think twice about having your quiet time tomorrow morning. This is what happens when you pray. You get thrown into a lion's den. Why would God let that happen? We read the story; it's a great story, but we miss the point if we don't get to the end. Daniel 6:25-27, when Daniel does come out of the lion's den alive and King Darius this time declares, "The God of Daniel should not be profaned; he should be praised in all the nation." God, pouring out great grace on His people for great glory to His name.

Same picture in 1 Kings 10: Solomon. We know Solomon was wise, the wisest person on the planet. Why was Solomon so wise? 1 Kings 10:1-9 says that Solomon was wise so that people like Queen Sheba, a pagan queen, would come to Solomon, see his wisdom, and walk away saying, "God is great." It's all over the stories of the Old Testament, the writings. Look at the Psalms. We know Psalm 23; "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He restores my soul; He leads me beside quiet waters; He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Why does God guide you like a gentle shepherd? For the sake of His name.

Same thing two chapters later. Psalm 25:11. "Forgive my iniquity, O Lord, though it is great, for the sake of your name." The psalmist says, "Forgive me for your name's sake." It's the same picture we see in the Prophets, Isaiah 43. Some of the most beautiful words coming from God to His people. Extravagant grace. He says to them, "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, and you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. Because I am the LORD, your God, and you are precious and honored in my sight, and I love you.*" Why, God? Why such extravagant grace? Verse 7, "You are the people I have created for my glory."

Isaiah 48:9-11; God says, "For my own sake, I forgive your sin. For my own sake, I show patience with you as a people. For the sake of my name, I do this." Go to Ezekiel 36. You've got to see this one. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel; Ezekiel 36. I want to show you this one. While you're turning there, you might write down Psalm 67:1 and 2. This is the verse that's at the top of your notes there. It sums up, I think probably best, this whole picture of God giving grace for His glory.

Psalm 67:1 says, "*May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us...*" So, there's the grace. Verse 2, "*So that your ways may be known on earth, and your salvation among all nations.*" This is the blessing I pray over my kids every night. "May God be gracious to you, Joshua and Caleb; bless you, make His face shine upon, so that His ways will be known on earth and His salvation among all nations." This is the picture: Grace for His glory.

Get to Ezekiel 36:22. These are astounding words from God to His people. Some of the most astounding words we see in Scripture from God to His people. Listen to this. "*Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says...'*" Listen to what God says to His people.

*"It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes."*

Did you catch that? God just said to His people, "When I work among you, when I show love and mercy and discipline, whatever I do when I do among you, it is not for your sake. I'm not doing this for your sake; I'm doing it for the sake of my name among the nations." So, this is the picture we see throughout the Old Testament; a God who is radically passionate about blessing His people for His glory to be made known in all the world; a God who is centered on making His glory known to the ends of the earth. It's the very purpose of God in the Old Testament.

Now, is this just an Old Testament thing? I don't think it is. When you get to the New Testament, the first book, Matthew 24:14. "This gospel, my salvation, will be preached in all nations and then the end will come. I want my gospel to go to all nations." Matthew 28:18-20, which we studied last week, "Go and make disciples." Where? "All nations. Teach them in all nations to obey me."

Mark 16:15, "Go and preach the good news to all creation." Luke 24:47-49, "Jesus died so that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in all nations." Acts 1:8, "I'm going to put my very presence inside of you." You talk about extravagant grace. God says, "I'm going to dwell in you." Why? Why does God give us His Spirit living in us? So that you will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and where? To the ends of the earth.

That's why you have the gracious presence of God living in you, to go to the ends of the earth. That's what we see; that's the outline there in Acts 1:8 for the entire book of Acts. We see it all over the letters, the Epistles. It's Paul, in Romans 15 saying, "My ambition is to make the gospel known where it's never been heard." Then, you get to the very end. Look with me at Revelation 7. Go with me there, Revelation, the last book in the Bible. Revelation 7:9.

These verses, I hope, are extremely familiar to us, members of this church, this faith family. Revelation 7:9. This is the image that drives us. Revelation 7. You remember the very...we began this journey back in Genesis 1, the first chapter in the Bible, and God saying, "I'm going to bless my people, so that you will fill the earth with my glory." God was saying to Abram, "I'm going to bless you so that all the peoples of the earth will praise me and be blessed by me, will know that I am good, and will know that I am great." Listen to where all of creation is heading, Revelation 7:9,

*After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

This is the picture. God said from the very beginning, "This is my purpose," and He says at the very end, "My purpose will be fulfilled." This is the great, global, guaranteed purpose of God in Scripture. He is in the business of pouring out extravagant blessing and grace on His people for this reason: To make His extravagant glory known to the ends of the earth.

## The question we need to ask...

Now with that picture in Scripture, here is the question we need to ask: Have we disconnected the blessing of God from the purpose God? Have we disconnected the blessing of God from the purpose of God? Here's what I mean by that. Our hearts resonate...our hearts resonate with the idea of enjoying God's grace in a relationship with Him. We love sermons and conferences and books that exalt a grace which centers on us, but here's the danger for all of us. If we disconnect His blessing from the purpose for which He gives it, we miss the entire heart of God. We undercut the entire purpose of God. I think we're in danger of doing exactly that.

You ask the average Christian sitting in a church building today to sum up the message of Christianity, "What is the essence of Christianity; the message of Christianity?", you will most likely hear something along the lines of, "Well, the message of Christianity is God loves me," or "God loves me enough to send His Son, Jesus, to die for me." If that is how you would respond, I would humbly say to you, based on the authority of the Word of God, that you are incorrect. "God loves me" is not biblical Christianity. "God loves me enough to send His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross for me" is not biblical Christianity.

Here's why. Pull out English grammar for a moment. If "God loves me" is the essence of Christianity, then who is the object of Christianity? God loves "me". Therefore, Christianity is about me, and church is about me. It's what best works for me, and the music I like, and the programs that cater to me. My life is about...my dreams, my ambitions, my desires...is about what I want to do with my life. The house I live in and the car I drive and the clothes I wear and the lifestyle I live, I determine for me. It's about me and what works best for me.

We come to Scripture, and we see a radically different picture. We don't see Scripture describing Christianity as "God loves me", put a period on it, smile and go home. Instead, biblical Christianity says, "God loves me so that His glory and His greatness and His mercy and His majesty might be made known among all the peoples of the earth." Now, who's the object of Christianity? God is. Everything is made to center around Him. Isn't this exactly what Ezekiel was saying? Oh, bless you for your sake. God doesn't bless us to center on us; He blesses us for His sake. He pours out grace and salvation on us for His sake.

So, you're thinking, "Dave, are you saying Scripture is saying God has an ulterior motive in blessing us? That God has a deeper reason behind opening my eyes to salvation and forgiving me of my sins? That God has an ulterior motive in blessing us?" Absolutely, that's what Scripture is saying. Who...who of us in this room would be so arrogant as to think that we are at the center of God's universe? You're not at the center of God's universe; I am not at the center of God's universe. God is at the center of His universe, and everything revolves around Him. Everything revolves around His glory. This is biblical Christianity.

Why did Jesus die on a cross? Why did Jesus die on a cross? Do not say, "To save me from my sins." It misses the point. People say in Christian testimony, "When Jesus was on that cross, He died just for me." Absolutely not. Luke 24:47-49, "Jesus died so that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in all nations."

I, in no way, and I don't believe Scripture does...in no way I want to take away from the very extremely personal nature of God's grace and His salvation in each one of our lives, but the picture is not about each of us; it's about His glory and the whole world. That's the whole point of what God is doing throughout Scripture. We've got to be careful, and I, in no

way, want to communicate, because I don't think Scripture communicates, that this takes away any from God's love and His grace towards us; that's the picture we've seen: Extravagant grace, extravagant, merciful, showering grace on us in unbelievable ways. However, not to center on us...to resound to His glory in all the earth.

The beauty of it is, His grace toward us, and glory to His name, they go together. So, we experience abundant grace as we live for His abundant glory. The beauty of Christianity is you experience grace and love to the maximum as you live for His glory to the maximum. This is the picture that Scripture gives us. God in His purpose is overwhelmingly global. He is passionate about His global glory being made known. This is the very reason He saves us; it's the very reason we have breath at this moment in this room.

## **The phrases we need to avoid...**

### **"I'm not called to foreign missions."**

However, we miss it, and we ignore it, and we undercut it with the way we talk in the church today. We show that we don't believe this when we say things like...phrases we need to avoid, radically unbiblical phrases like, "I'm not called to foreign missions." "I'm not called to foreign missions." Radically unbiblical. It goes against everything we've just seen.

Now, when people say this...Christians, church leaders, even pastors, when we say this, we're most often looking at missions as an optional program for a faithful few in the church who are actually called to that. We'll watch their slideshows when they come back, but we're just not all wired for that. So, they're good at that. God help us. We have taken even the very global purpose for which you saved us, and we relegated it to a program for a few people to be involved in.

That we might be called to...this is not an issue of calling; this is a command. It's the reason we were created. We look at the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. It says, "Go and make disciples of all nations." All nations. We think, "Well, that means that some people go to all nations." However, then we look over at Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." We say, "Now, that means me." Acts 1, "The Spirit of God living in you to be witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." Witnesses to the end of the earth. Okay, some people...1 Peter 5, "Cast your cares on Christ. He cares for you." Now, that means me. By what right do we draw a line of distinction between the obligations of Christianity and the privileges of Christianity? Relegating the obligations of Christianity to a few while the rest of us enjoy the privileges of Christianity in a self-consumed bastion of religious activity.

This does violence to Scripture and the very salvation we claim, looking for a call to go to all nations, when this is the reason we have been saved, the reason we have been created, the reason we have breath in this room. It's not an issue of calling. I know, and Scripture shows us, there's all kinds of different callings represented around this room. People think, "Well, Dave, I hear you. You're called to that; you're called to that, but we're not all called to the same thing." Absolutely. We're not all called to the same thing.

You're a pastor; you're a teacher; you're a stay-at-home mom; you're an accountant; you're a lawyer; you're a doctor; you're an engineer; you work in construction; you're a student. We all have different callings represented around this room. However, where did we decide the Great Commission is a matter of calling, that we have to wait for God to call us to do what we have been commanded to do? Every single one of our lives, regardless of

what we've been called to do, is created for this one purpose. The callings we have in this room are the means by which God accomplishes that purpose in each of our lives.

What if we realized that every single person sitting in this room who is a follower of Christ, has been saved by God to make the glory of God known in all the world. That's what Scripture's teaching here. So, it's exactly what Paul said in Galatians 1:15-16. Paul said, "God was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that..." Now, don't miss it. This is Paul, purpose clause. "...so that..." Paul, why did God reveal His Son to you? Why did God show Jesus to you on that road in Acts 9? Why? Paul says, "God was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the nations." Paul said, "This is the very purpose. God saved me so that I would preach Him, proclaim His salvation among the nations."

That's why he says in Romans 1:14-15, "I'm obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, but to the wise and the foolish. That's why I'm eager to preach the gospel also to you at Rome." That word "obligated" literally means "in debt". Paul says, "I'm in debt. I'm in debt to people who don't know this gospel. I'm in debt to them." Paul is saying, rephrase it, "Every saved person this side of heaven owes the gospel to every lost person this side of hell. Every saved person this side of heaven owes the gospel to every lost person this side of hell." God help us, with our marching orders on the table and our debt in hand, not to come out from other the weight of a lost and dying world, wring our hands in pious concern and say, "I'm just not called to that."

How could anyone...how could anyone who has been saved from eternal damnation by the blood of Jesus sit back and make excuses for not sharing that with the rest of the world? It's not a matter of calling. We were created, and we have been commanded to be a part of a global mission.

You know, it's a bit ironic that one of the most common questions, if not the most common question, that is asked in our church culture today is, "What is God's will for my life? How do I know God's will for my life? God, show me your will for my life." 1.4 million Bedouins in Algeria; 100% Muslim. No churches, no Christians, no missionaries, no gospel, no Jesus, and we're sitting back here saying, "What do you want me to do, God?" God, raise up a church, people, that will no longer be content to wait for a tingly feeling to go down our spine to cause us to rise up and do what we have already been commanded to do; to cause us to do that for which is the primary reason we have breath in this room. The Bible is clear from cover to cover...His salvation...He has created you for a global mission. Therefore, we don't say, "I'm not called for foreign missions." We say, "I'm created for a global mission." Every single one of us.

### **"I'd rather give than go."**

Second phrase we need to avoid, "I'd rather give than go. I'd rather give than go." Now, I want to be careful here because giving is obviously important. We will, especially in this wealthy culture that we all live in, we will be held accountable for the way we use our resources for the glory of God in all nations. At the same time, I remember that trip to Sudan, and I remember preparing to go on that trip. It was a somewhat expensive trip, having to get chartered flights getting into this remote part of the Sudan. It was about \$3,500. I remember a lady in the church where I was at the time coming up to me and saying, "David, why don't you just send the money instead? I mean, you're going to be there for two weeks. Can't that money that's used to take you for two weeks, can't that be better used for those people there if you just sent that to them instead?"

I remember wrestling with that and asking, "Am I being unwise with using resources like this?" I wrestled with that. I remember I got into Sudan and was sitting with Andrew, a

friend of Bulen's, likewise seen war all of his life, over twenty years. Andrew shares with me how over that twenty years, a variety of different organizations, most of them NGO's, have brought supplies and resources to them. He said, "We are extremely thankful for all the resources people provided to us over these years." However, then he looked at me and said, "But do you want to know how you can tell who a true brother is?" I said, "How, Andrew?" He said, "A true brother comes to be with you in your time of need." He said, "David, you're a true brother."

Tears welled up in my eyes as I realized the fallacy of what I'd been wrestling with. It's the whole point of the gospel, isn't it? When God decided to bring salvation to you and me, praise God He didn't send gold or silver, cash or a check. He sent Himself. So, how will we ever show that gospel to the world if all we send is our money? We're not so shallow, are we, as to think that our money is the only answer to the needs of the world? We see all around us in a money-saturated culture, that's not the case. God help us to give sacrificially, but to go unreservedly as well. This is the gospel.

**"We don't need to go there because there's so much need here."**

Another phrase we need to avoid may be one of the most common: "We don't need to go there because there's so much need here." "We don't need to go there because there's so much need here." Sometimes this phrase, "What about people in Birmingham?" Sometimes the phrase, "Well, I hear what you're saying, but my heart is for Birmingham," or "My heart is for the United States."

We have to be careful. This can be a smoke screen very easily because, well, the majority of Christians are not that passionate about feeding the hungry and clothing the poor in Birmingham or the United States, or sharing the gospel in Birmingham or the United States. We have to be careful to avoid this smoke screen. However, even if we are, even if we are, I want us to think about a statement, in light of what we've seen in Scripture. "My heart is for Birmingham" or "My heart is for the United States". God's heart is for the world. Therefore, as soon as we say, "My heart is for the United States," we admit we have 5% of God's heart, and it sounds like we're proud of that. Or, if we have a heart for Birmingham, we're saying, "Well, I have less than 1% of God's heart." Okay, well, what if, what if we begin to see God's heart as for the world, which certainly includes Birmingham but is not limited to Birmingham. When we begin to take that step, things begin to look radically different.

Let me illustrate. Those of you who are in this room this morning who are fifth grade and under, if you're a child fifth grade or under, let me invite you to stand up where you are. If you're fifth grade or under, stand up where you are. Okay, it'll be kind of hard to see. We got...there we go, fifth grade or under. All right, you've got kids standing all around you. All right, you guys stay standing for just a minute, fifth grade and under. You guys stay standing for just a minute. We do realize, don't we, that every time we breathe, that a child dies of hunger in the world? We realize that since we gathered together this morning, hundreds of children just like these, took their last breath because they did not have food or water. What if it were these kids? Would we do something? Absolutely we would do something, no question.

Well, then, why don't we do something for those kids? Because we've made ourselves content with sitting back and imagining that the world looks just like this and turning a deaf ear to the needs over there and masking it by saying, "I'm just going to care about the needs here." You guys can have a seat. What if we don't have to choose? What if we don't have to choose to care about these kids or those kids? What if the global heart of God mandates that we care about both?

This is the picture. We have to be very careful with all three of these statements. If we're not careful, we'll start getting into either/or propositions. "Well, either I'm called to local missions or global missions; either I'm going to give or go; either I'm going to care about needs here or there." Some might wonder, "Well, aren't we going to get things out of balance if we talk about the nations all the time? Maybe we're too far out of balance. All we talk about is global mission; all we talk about is nations all the time."

Ladies and gentlemen, we are so far out of balance the other way. We could talk about this every single Sunday for the next fifty years; we would not even begin to balance this picture. We don't need to be concerned that we get overly-passionate about needs in the world, when a billion people haven't even heard the gospel and 30,000 children died today of starvation and preventable diseases. That is not a problem for us. The problem is that, when we begin to look right here, we miss the whole point of our salvation according to Scripture.

So, we don't ask these questions. We don't say these phrases, because the Great Commission is not an either/or option. The Great Commission is not either local mission or global mission, either give or go, either kids here or there, either needs here or there. No, this picture is a both/and command.

You think about it. Just one illustration that helps us picture this, the dangers of either/or. You look at Southern Baptists, of which The Church at Brook Hills is a Southern Baptist Church. Sixteen million Southern Baptists on rolls, so to speak, at Southern Baptist churches. That number is probably inflated for a variety of different reasons. Let's imagine, and this will make the math a little easier even; imagine we can find ten million of those folks. Ten million. So, the Baptists have a missions agency, the International Mission Board, that sends out missionaries. There are 5,000 missionaries serving around the world today with the International Mission Board.

So, let's think about it. If we're going to disconnect either local or global, either give or go, either here or there, then what we've decided to do is we've decided 5,000 are going to go, which works out to .05%; .05% of us are actually going to go, and 99.95% of the wealthiest people in the world are going to stay. .05% are going to do this all-nations thing, 99.95% are going to do one nation. Is that wise? "We're going to give so .05% can go, because you're the ones called to do this, but we are not." This makes no sense. That leaves...you do the math...that leaves one person, one missionary for every 200,000 unreached people in the world. That makes no sense. This is not wise. We know that's not the best way to go about this.

What if, though, we don't have to differentiate it between local and global, I'm going to give or go, I'm going to meet needs here or there. What if each of our lives, wherever we live, whether in Birmingham or Egypt or anywhere in between, was created to impact all nations for the glory of Christ? What if there's a way for the Great Commission not to be either/or, but both/and? What if that's what disciple-making is all about, about living wherever we are for the sake of people in all nations? What if it's about bankers and lawyers and doctors and teachers, all kinds of different professions represented across this room, saying, "God's graced me with opportunities and skills and resources. Now, how I can live for the sake of His glory in all nations with all that He's entrusted to me?"

Now, the Spirit of God that lives in each one of us is being unleashed in the people of God to accomplish the purpose God for the glory of God. This is the picture. I'm not saying...somebody's thinking, "Well, does that mean we're all supposed to move overseas?" That's not what I'm saying. I'm not ruling it out; it's a possibility. It's a possibility. However,

this is just it. Isn't that the way we think? "If you're passionate about global missions, you need to be living in another country; you only live here if you're not passionate about global missions. You're passionate about local missions, that's why you live here."

However, that misses the whole point of Scripture here. I know some of you are thinking, "Why don't you go to another nation, Pastor?" I hope I'm joking on that, but anyway, but that's the way we think. "If you're passionate about global missions, then go." However, that's the beauty. What happens when an entire faith family realizes we are all intended to be passionate about global missions; we're all intended to live our lives in Birmingham for the sake of God's glory in all nations. Maybe, one day, He will send us overseas, or here or there or here or there, but regardless wherever we are, whether we're living here or there, we're going to live for His glory in all the world. We're going to spend; we're going to pray; we're going to give; we're going to go for His glory in all the world.

## **The goal we need to achieve...**

### **World-impacting disciples.**

Now, how do you do that? How does your life impact the world? This is what Jesus said; this is the goal we need to achieve: World-impacting disciples. World-impacting disciples. Each one of us living our lives. This is what Jesus did. Think about it. Jesus didn't go to every single physical location in the world. He lived His life, did ministry in one isolated geographic location, didn't He? Does that mean His heart wasn't for the world? Absolutely not; His heart was for the world, and it changed the way He lived right there.

So, we talked about last week Eugene Peterson's quote, "Jesus invested 90% of His time in twelve Jewish men so that He could reach all Americans one day." That's the picture. What if God has designed a way for your life this week and next week and next month and next year and for the next twenty, thirty, forty years...what if God has designed a way for your life, wherever you are, to impact nations wherever you're not? This is the Great Commission. It's what it means to make disciples. It's why we give ourselves to this picture. It's why we challenge each other as a faith family. We don't have to do this either/or thing. We challenge each other to give two percent of our lives in a year...a week of our lives...in a context somewhere else in the world, because it will transform the 98% of our lives we live here.

Oswald Smith is right when he said, "The light that shines the farthest ends up shining the brightest," where? "At home." There are stories all across this faith family of people who have realized their lives were created for a global purpose and that radically transforms the way we live in Birmingham, Alabama. It's not either/or, it's both/and.

### **Ever-multiplying churches.**

World-impacting disciples planting ever-multiplying churches. If we're doing disciple-making in Birmingham, doing disciple-making in the United States, and doing disciple-making around the world, then we're seeing disciples, the gospel multiplied, and we're seeing communities of faith joining together to take the world on for the glory of Christ. This is the picture.

Now, don't miss it...now, Brook Hills is no longer a place of ministry; now Brook Hills is a base of ministry to the entire world. Now, people involved in a faith family actually begin to believe that they together can shake the nations for His glory. It really comes down to that...whether or not we really believe God's Word. This is especially important for every

potential member of this church walking through this process; this is key. I want to say this with as much compassion as in me; if you are looking for a place where you can sit back and watch a show or be catered to by programs, then this is probably not the place for you.

There's a story. In the late 1940's, the US Government commissioned the Navy to construct the largest troop carrier in the history of the world, the S.S. United States, an \$80 million ship in the forties. This ship could carry 15,000 troops at one time. It could travel 10,000 miles without having to stop for fuel or supplies. It was designed...you could get anywhere in the world in less than ten days. It could outrun any other ship in the world. It was the troop carrier that we would use in urgent times of war. The only problem is it was never used that way. One time, it was put on stand-by during the Cuban Missile Crisis, but otherwise it was not used as a troop carrier.

Instead, they transformed it to be used as a luxury liner to carry Presidents and Heads of State, all kinds of different celebrities. Now, when it was operating as a luxury liner, it couldn't carry 15,000 troops, just under 2,000 passengers could enjoy the luxuries of 695 staterooms, four dining salons, three bars, two theaters, five acres of open deck with a heated pool, 19 elevators and the comfort of the world's first fully air-conditioned passenger ship. Instead of a vessel for battle used during the trenches of wartime, the S.S. United States was a means of indulgence for wealthy patrons desiring to sail across the Atlantic Seas.

You know, things look a lot different on a troop carrier than they do on a luxury liner. The faces of soldiers on a troop carrier preparing for battle look much different than the faces of patrons on a luxury liner eating their bonbons. The conservation of resources on a troop carrier contrasts sharply with the liberal opulence that characterizes a luxury liner. The troop carrier moves at a much faster pace; by necessity, it needs to because it has a task to accomplish, while the luxury liner is free to take its time and causally enjoy the ride.

Based on the picture we have seen in Scripture of the people of God, I want to remind us this morning that The Church at Brook Hills is not a luxury liner. There are no spectators, no time to indulge in luxuries that revolve around us. The Church at Brook Hills is a troop carrier. I, in no way, want to be over-dramatic, but the picture is we are in a real spiritual battle for the souls of men and women in the entire world, and that changes the way we operate as a church.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE FOR EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH AT BROOK HILLS...**

### **You were created to impact the world.**

So, the bottom line for every member of The Church at Brook Hills...this is particularly for those who are walking through this membership process...you were created to impact the world. You were created to impact the world. I know that sounds idealistic. I know that people will walk out today saying, "Thanks for the change-the-world speech." Isn't it biblical? Can we see this? It's all over Scripture. This is what God's doing.

What if it's not just biblical? What if it's possible? There's an old saying, "Those who say it can't be done should get out of the way of those who are doing it." What if a global, God-exalting, passionate idealism is exactly what is needed in the church of Christ today? What if a people who are finished and done with gospel-less excuses, rise up and say, "All right,

my life was created to impact the world. Now how is that going to look?" This is the question we need to stop ignoring and start asking, start wrestling with, to wake up and see God's great glory and the nations' great need, and connect the blessing of God on us with the purpose of God for us and be used to accomplish that purpose.

This is what we're here for; this is why we have been saved in this room. It is the story, not just in Scripture. We see...all over Scripture, we see the people of God resisting the purpose of God. We see the people of God turning inward and turning a deaf ear to the purpose of God and the ends of the earth. We see that over and over in Scripture, and we see it in church history. However, along the way, we see rising in Scripture, and we see rising in church history, men and women and people who embrace the purpose of God and say, "Our lives were created to impact the world." They believe it, and they do it. They do it.

That's why we are here, because people who have gone before us have embraced the purpose of God and have refused to disconnect the blessing of God from the purpose God. So, I want to invite you to hear their story. I want to invite you to consider in a humbling way the landscape of human history that you and I find ourselves on now. I want us to ask the question: "What kind of impact are we going to make at this point in the global design of God?"

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