CRAIG: Hi, Mission Hills. I am so excited to be able to introduce you to Paul Mitton. Paul is a good friend of mine. He is a pastor, he is our liaison to the Rocky Mountain region of the Converge Movement. Liaison is probably not the right word, he can correct me if he wants to. The important thing is he’s been a huge resource to me as I’ve been getting started here in Mission Hills over this last year. He’s also been a huge resource to our church as he helps us connect to the Converge Movement both in this area as well as worldwide.

And we love the Converge Movement because it allows us to be part of leveraging what God’s doing here and seeing the impact kind of spread and extend for God’s glory here in this area as well as around the world. So, thrilled to be able to have him with us this morning sharing from God’s word. Would you give him a warm Mission Hills welcome?

PAUL: Happy Labor Day weekend. So glad that you’re joining us online or in The Mill or right here in our studio audience. Good that you’re here today, and isn’t pastor Craig great? I am so excited that he and Coletta and their family joined Mission Hills, it’s almost a year ago now I think. But what a gift to you guys and to our family of churches called Converge Rocky Mountain. I’m glad that you’re a part of our strategic network, as well. You just celebrated 75 years of ministry, way to go. No, this is smattering.

For 65 of those years, you have been a Converge Rocky Mountain partner. So, you’ve been with us for a long time. And when you were young and struggling and coming out of those first couple of buildings that you looked at, you know, the stronger older Converge churches kind of helped you get through some tough stuff, and now you’re returning the favor. Now you’re helping our new plants and our churches also to really be the best that they can be. So, you’re a great, great member of our strategic network, and I wanna thank you for that.

We believe that we’re better together, converging together to accomplish the purposes of Christ. So, all of our movement celebrates with you on your 75th anniversary. I brought a little something as a little memento of your ministry milestone. You can read it for yourself. No, I’ll read it for you. I hope tomorrow morning isn’t this slow, but that’s okay.

Converge Rocky Mountain honors Mission Hills Church for 75 years of faithful, effective God glorifying ministry. We pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel, your Converge Rocky Mountain family of churches. And really your pastors, your elders, your leaders, all of you really should get a round of applause for your tireless efforts to see lives and communities transformed. Period. Yes, there you go.

And I want you to know that as your family of Converge Rocky Mountains Churches, we have the same verbiage in our mission statement, as well. We share the same heart that you do. This past Easter, we had about 24,000 people worshipping in our 63 Converge Rocky Mountain Churches. Just six or seven years ago, we passed the 10,000 mark so we’re growing at a very rapid pace. Right now, we have an initiative where we’re adding 100 congregations in a 10-year span. And you say, “Why are you adding more churches?”

Did you know that 100,000 people, almost 100,000, relocated to Colorado last year? Did you know that? I know. They’re ruining it for us, aren’t they? No. But we are severely under churched and most of the people coming in, they are unchurched, as well. We have a big job in front of us, and so we’re working together this year. We’re starting a couple of churches down into Springs, we have another church going into St. George, Utah, we have two Hispanic sites that are gonna be in the Denver area. We’re
starting a training center church in Salt Lake City that’s a Hispanic training center church. Two established churches are joining our family. We have the money raised for our next Wyoming church. We’re recruiting planters for New Mexico. So, I want you to know you’re a part of a movement that is moving, and it is moving because of you. It’s your generous leadership and prayer and financial investments that are really helping our ministry co-op do some incredible things together. So Mission Hills, you are Converge Rocky Mountain, and it’s my pleasure to help kind of coordinate your efforts but really, it’s all about you and what God is doing through our team of churches here in the Rocky Mountain West.

And sometimes we are gonna reach people on the other side of the globe, but many times we’re gonna reach people right here in our backyard. We know about 87% of the people in Denver are unchurched. They don’t have a church home to go to. So we have a big job in front of us.

So, today I wanna talk about the blessings and the benefits of simply living as a good neighbor to the people that are around you. And I hope you’re gonna see that this message kind of dovetails with where you’ve been, with your recent focus on the power of living an unselfie kind of life because that is really what a good neighbor is all about. And boy, with Charlottesville and Hurricane Harvey, we need some good neighbors these days, don’t you think? I mean, we are really in tough times and we need to be pulling together and helping each other out.

So, our Bible passage is Luke 10:25-36, if you wanna turn there in your bible or on your device. Luke 10:25-36, very familiar passage. And I’m gonna read it for us but it will be up on the screen, as well. On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the law,” Jesus replied, “How do you read it?” The lawyer answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” “You’ve answered correctly.” Jesus replied, “Do this and you will live.” But the lawyer wanted to justify himself and so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply, Jesus said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.” Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Let’s pray. Father, tonight we come before You We wanna learn, we wanna grow, we wanna be inspired, we wanna be healed. We wanna look more like Jesus. And through your spirit, just take these words and just apply them in each of our lives in individual ways. You know what we need and so we open our hearts, we open our ears now and we ask You to teach us. In Jesus name. Amen.

What a scene that must have been. In verse 25, an arrogant attorney decides he’s gonna test Jesus. He’s gonna debate the Lord of the Universe. Good luck with that. “Jesus,” he says, “tell me, what do you think we need to do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus says, “Well, you know, you’re a smart guy. You’ve read the scriptures. You tell me, what do you think we need to do?” The attorney says, “Well, we need to love the Lord our God with our heart, and our soul, and our strength, and our mind, and we need to love our neighbor as our self.” “Good answer,” says Jesus, because he’s basically reflecting God’s word back to God, which you can’t lose on that.

But then the attorney pushes him, “Rabbi, here’s my problem. I can’t quite grasp this concept of neighbor. Just who is this neighbor I’m supposed to love? Are you speaking geographically? And if you are, how close would someone need to live to me to be my neighbor? I mean, next door or same school district, same zip code? Maybe you’re speaking relationally. Would my
neighbor be immediate family, a good friend, a casual acquaintance? I just don’t know where to draw the neighbor line. Who’s in, who’s out? Who gets love, who doesn’t? It’s an overwhelming social logical concept but Jesus, I’ll be sure to love them as soon as I figure out who they are.”

Verse 29 tells us that the attorney was trying to justify himself, to knowingly break God’s law but then to kind of explain it away as if it wasn’t real disobedience. And the strategy that the attorney was using was to take a relatively simple teaching and to make it so complex that it was impossible to understand and consequently for him, impossible to follow. So, I’m justified if I fail to love my neighbor. I just don’t know who my neighbor is. I plead ignorance. “Well, we wouldn’t want that,” says Jesus. “Who’s your neighbor? Let me try to explain it to you this way.” And then He rolls out one of his wonderful stories that we’ve all heard before.

A man was going from Jerusalem down to Jericho. It’s about a 17-mile journey. Twisty, turny roads, sometimes very dark, perfect place for muggings, which is exactly what happens to this guy. A gang of robbers descends on him, they steal his valuables, rip his clothes off, they beat him, leave him for dead on the side of the road. Tragic. Well, after a little while, a priest, probably a high-class priest, comes riding along and he sees this mess of a man over there, and what should he do? I mean, he’s an expert in religion. He’s a student of the law, well aware of God’s directives to offer compassion and mercy and love, but he’s on a schedule. He’s got important things at the Temple, he can’t stop for just anybody. And so the priest just heads over to the other side and off he goes.

Jesus continues, “Next up is a Levite.” He too, he’s a Temple worker, also an expert in God’s law. But the problem is his head knowledge hasn’t meandered down to his heart yet. Consequently, he’s got a head packed with God’s truth, but it makes little to no difference in how he actually lives his life. And so he sees the guy and he heads to the other side of the road, as well. I mean, just think if you were that traveler, beaten up, thinking you’re gonna die, abandoned in the middle of nowhere, but you see these two rays of hope coming at you, and then they end up being church guys. Of course, they’re gonna help. Just to watch them cross over to the other side, and leave you in the dirt. Crushing.

But Jesus continues, now with a curved ball for the attorney, Jesus says, “Down the road comes a Samaritan and surprisingly, it’s the Samaritan that stops.” At this point, the Jewish lawyer is blown away because you see as much as priests and Levites were revered, the Jews despised Samaritans. They were called half breeds, the impure offspring of Jew and Gentile mixed marriages which had been forbidden. And now it’s this low down dirty Samaritan that’s stopping to help a Jewish guy? Unbelievable.

But Jesus is clear, the broken man has broken the heart of this Samaritan. To him, you know, it didn’t matter about his history or his ethnicity or his likability. The Samaritan just saw this man in need and he knew somebody has to do something, and that somebody has to be me. Who better? I’m standing right here. So he takes action. His personal agenda for the day is scrapped. We don’t know what he was about that day. His donkey becomes an ambulance. He escorts this traveler to the inn, he mends him up through the night, and then in the morning, essentially, he flips this credit card to the innkeeper and says, “Whatever else this guy needs, it’s on me. I just want him to get better.” The Samaritan had no relationship with the man. Probably would never see this guy again. The traveler could have been a drug dealing, whiskey chugging Raider fan for all he knew. That was in the text. But you see, it didn’t matter to him. I mean, all that mattered was sharing what he had to make this broken man’s life a little bit better. He rescued him. He rescued him.

The story ends. Jesus waits a little bit to let the gears turn a little bit, and then he says to the lawyer, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” And notice the genius of Jesus here. He shifted the discussion. He says, “Which of these three was a neighbor to the victim?” He changes neighbor from a noun to a verb. In Jesus’ mind, in God’s Kingdom vocabulary, neighbor doesn’t just define a particular type of person. It defines an action, an activity that a Christ follower does on behalf of someone else. The issue isn’t who is my neighbor, the issue is whose neighbor are you. Who are you neighboring?
The attorney couldn’t even say the word “Samaritan”, notice that. It was too despicable, but he did answer Jesus correctly. He said, “Of course, it’s the one who shows pity, the one who showed mercy.” And then Jesus wraps up their interaction this way, “Well, then go and do likewise. You go and be a neighbor.” Which in the end is really the answer to the attorney’s initial question of what do I have to do to inherit eternal life. Yes, love the Lord your God with your heart and soul and strength and mind. That’s where it all begins. It’s a faithful relationship with God. But the way you put flesh on that, the way you evidence your transformed heart, your new identity as a Christ follower is by a newfound willingness to be a neighbor to the needy, to the broken, to the spiritually lost that God brings into your life, putting your focus on other people just like Jesus did.

And Jesus would have the same advice for us today. Love God. Yes, go deep in a personal relationship with him. But then evidence that love by letting it bubble up and spill over into the ways that you care about people, both inside and outside of God’s family. Neighbor the needy. So, how do we do that? How do we neighbor in our context today? If you’ve been here the last couple of weeks, you have some great ideas on how to do that, but let’s let Jesus continue to firm up those ideas through our passage. In His story, the Lord reveals three actions that a good unselfie kind of a neighbor takes towards others. Trace the Holy Spirit wants to cultivate in all of our lives so that we can live a wonderful life as a life giving, life changing neighbor to other people.

So, first of all, a good neighbor intentionally travels on the needy side of the street. A good neighbor intentionally travels on the needy side of the street and this is easier said than done. Why did the priest and the Levite cross the road? I’m telling you, why did the priest and the Levite cross the road? To get to the other side, where it wasn’t so messy. They crossed over for many of the same reasons that we do today. You see, it’s easier to walk on the safe side of the street. If you really have no intention of helping someone who’s hungry or broken or spiritually lost, if you have no real desire to help the hurting, you really have to walk on the other side of the street. You have to turn the channel when that infomercial for the starving kids comes on. You’ve gotta look away when you see that cardboard sign by the stop light and just imagine you don’t see anything over there. Because as soon as you give a face to suffering, as soon as you start to see the lost soul instead of a statistic, as soon as it gets personal, there’s something that wells up inside every believer and cries out, “I’ve got to do something about this.”

You see, Christ’s love compels us. So, if you don’t wanna get too involved, then don’t get too close. Just isolate and insulate yourself from the real needs of the world. It’s just easier that way. But maybe they crossed over for other reasons, you know, they were religious folks, for calendars, prayer meetings, Bible studies to get to. Just no time to neighbor. Maybe business pushed them to the safe side. What about fear? Fear of getting hurt, fear of getting too involved, fear of being rejected. You ever wonder how a neighbor would respond if you actually walked over and said “hi” to them. They’ve lived next to you for three years, it might be time to say “Hi.” Did you ever go, “Well, maybe.” Or what if you actually reached out to share Christ with someone? Better not.

Now, sometimes healthy fear is warranted. If it’s in the middle of the night and you see a broken down car and you’re by yourself, it might be a wise thing to wait for backup. But you see, many times its unfounded imagined fear that becomes a big deterrent to our neighboring. All sorts of reasons why these highly respected men could have gone to the safe side of the street but in Jesus’ eyes, in this situation, none of them were good reasons.

But look at the Samaritan. He walked on the needy side of the street. He moved in close, no detours, no excuses. He traveled at the right pace and in the right places so that he could see the people that God wanted him to see. He wasn’t blinded by his to-do list for the day. For the Samaritan, it was people that took priority and that’s the example that Jesus wants us to imitate. Not to be preoccupied with our self-interest, not to rev up our schedule so fast that everything’s a blur, including the needy around us. Not just to go through life and be focused on all of our stuff, not seeing what we want to see. But allowing God to open our eyes to the spiritual, emotional, and physical distress around us.

And you see, when we start to see the world through the eyes of Jesus, maybe make that our prayer every day, “Lord help me
to see the world through your eyes,” we’re gonna be compelled to move in close. Loren and Carrie Pankratz, who are a pastor and wife, and they were willing to live on the needy side of the street. He had a job at a mega church in Fresno, California, but God gripped his heart with the needs of the people in Utah. So, they left everything they had and they went and started a church in Centerville, Utah, with your help. Thank you. And God has just blessed them in incredible ways. In that dark, deceived population, they’ve just begun to lay out God’s truth for people, and all kinds of people are finding Christ.

Last time I was there, I got done speaking, I was headed up the aisle. A guy named Hayes Powell grabbed me by the shoulder and said, “Hey Paul, I just wanna thank you and Converge for helping start this church.” My whole family was deep in the LDS church. We were headed for hell, but because of this church, we’ve all found Christ. We’re all headed for heaven. I’ll never be able to thank you enough.” He was just one of the many families that have found Christ in our new churches in Utah. But none of this may have ever happened if Loren and Carrie had chosen to live in their comfortable church in Fresno, California. But they moved in close and lives are being changed.

If you wanna be a good neighbor, if you wanna be a God neighbor, one of the questions you’ll need to come to grips with is, “Which side of the street are you gonna choose to live your life on?” The safe side or the needy side. Will you live at a pace and in places where you can see the people that God is bringing to you? Not everybody, we don’t have bandwidth for that, but God is gonna grip your heart with certain people. When you start to see that coworker you’ve been working with for weeks or months or years, now through the eyes of Christ realizing that they’re lost and headed for hell, if somebody doesn’t tell him the good news, and you’re right there. When you start to see that beggar by the stoplight, not as a nuisance but as a human being that was created in God’s image. And just like he knit us together, God knit that person together too. And He’s got a plan and a purpose, and somehow that guy got way off course, or that woman. But they still need a friend, they still need someone that’ll love them and treat them with respect. Or that lonely widow or that orphan that desperately needs a family to be a part of. Will you see the needy that God brings into your life, or you just close your eyes and keep on walking?

Christ calls us to be a people that notice needs, and once we notice them, to step up and take action, which is the second characteristic of a good neighbor. A good neighbor expresses love through action. Take a look at this Peanuts cartoon. I threw in a little cartoon. It’s Labor Day weekend, you know. But in panel number one, you see Snoopy shivering in the snow. Linus says to Charlie Brown, “Snoopy looks kind of cold, doesn’t he?” Then Charlie Brown says, “I’ll say he does. Maybe we’d better go over and comfort him.” They moved in close. The third panel shows Linus and Charlie Brown in their warm winter coats and hats, standing over shivering Snoopy saying, “Be of good cheer. Yes, be of good cheer.” And then they walk away leaving Snoopy with this big question mark over his head, like, “What was that all about? I didn’t need your cheerleading, I needed you to go get me a parka. That’s what I needed. That would’ve really helped.”

And the point is words can be wonderful and inspiring but many times, it’s real physical action, serving others that can make all the difference. James 2:15 says, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well. Keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” Moral support is helpful but often being a good neighbor is gonna call us to roll up our sleeves and dive into the experience of another to really physically serve them. I mean, the Samaritan cleansed the traveler’s wounds with oil and wine. He transported the victim to the inn. He got involved in the person’s life, even though it was messy. And I’m glad to report that we have a lot of Converge Rocky Mountain Churches. Even though it’s messy, they’re rolling up their sleeves and diving in to help the needs of those in their communities.

Last year, you may remember there was a shooting up in Bailey, Colorado, about a mile behind our Converge Church up there. Tragically, a deputy was killed. The pastor had only been at the church for about two months, young guy, first church. I thought, “Wow, he’s gonna be overwhelmed.” So, I called him up. I said, “Pastor Joshua, are you doing okay?” He said, “Well, we’ve offered our church as the command center for the sheriff, for the CIA, and the FBI. They’re all here. Tragically, the deputy that got killed was also the head football coach at the high school, and so we’ve set up a grief counseling center for the faculty and the students as long as they need it. Our people are making meals for the investigators. We’ll do that for two or three more days, and we’ve also set up cots in our sanctuary because the investigators are investigating around the clock and they just need a place...
to crash. As best as we can, we just wanna serve them, you know, with whatever they need.”

I was so proud of him. Talk about love in action in a very traumatic situation. The next Sunday, their attendance doubled at church and over the last year, they’ve continued to find ways to love their schools, they love on their teachers, they have a food shelf and a clothes closet, all kinds of ways. They just love their area. That church, a year, 16 months ago was 70 people on a Sunday morning. Now in the summers, they average about 270 people. They had over 450 on Easter. I mean, they reached out and neighbored their community and the community responded. They said, “We wanna be a part of a family that loves like you guys love.” Powerful. We have a church up in Craig, Colorado. They reach out in all kinds of ways but they take two Sundays a year where they just cancel service and they go out and serve their community. That might be a good idea for you guys, to just have two Sunday...no, I’m just kidding. Somebody’s gonna have a heart attack. No, you don’t wanna take two weekends off but...

So, one of the teams, they helped this woman that had a trailer, a mobile home that was in disrepair. Every year, they just keep going back and helping this woman. She can’t afford to fix different things that go wrong. Well, all of a sudden out of nowhere, she started to go to church. Then all of a sudden, she went to Celebrate Recovery to deal with some of her addictions. And the pastor said three weeks ago one of his church people called to say that she had called them to say, “Would you help me become a Christian? I really need Jesus as my Savior. I wanna love people like you’ve loved me.”

I mean, the transforming power of love in action, it’s incredible. It’s how we were created to live as God’s people. But you guys are doing that. I know that. You have a whole Love in Action, a web page that I was looking at. I mean, thousands of you paint and pack and pick up trash. I just love pastor Mauricio and what he’s doing down at the Life Center. And now we’re working together on some Christmas projects but most importantly, Hurricane Harvey relief. We’re trying to plan some trips together, not just with Mission Hills but with all of our churches gathering together to go down and to make a difference.

So as a church, you really are putting love into action. But let me push it a little bit. How about you individually? As a church, you’re doing great but what about you, individually? You see, God does have a role for you to play and if you just walk a little slower, he’s gonna move you to a person or a family or an organization that needs your neighboring touch. I’m guessing you have a lot of people around you that look really good on the outside. They’re really good at play acting. But on the inside, they’re as beat up and broken as that traveler was on the side of the road. They desperately need hope, they need healing, but they don’t know where to turn.

You can be the one that moves in close. You can be the one that tells them about the hope they can have in Jesus, the fresh start, the new beginning. You can be the one that assists God in moving their eternal destiny from forever in hell to forever in heaven, simply by living as a good neighbor. Travel on the needy side, put love into action.

The third trait Jesus teaches us in verse 35, that good neighbors live with open hands. They live generously. You talked about this last week. You have a Transformation Seminar coming up about it. But essentially, the Samaritan is very generous. He tells the innkeeper, “Take whatever you need. The sky is the limit. God has blessed me so I can bless others.” There’s freedom in that, and isn’t that the generosity model that Jesus set for us? Didn’t Jesus give up all he had? What more could he have given? He gave up all he had to provide all that we need. He gave his life.

2 Corinthians 8:9, Paul reminds us, “For you know the grace, the unmerited favor of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for our sakes, He became poor so that you through His poverty might become rich.” Jesus had it all but He saw our desperate need for a savior. And He could’ve looked the other way, He could have gone to the safe side of heaven, but He didn’t. In love, He sacrificed all that He had so that we could find new life in Him. And in a very real sense, as Jesus died on the cross for us, He neighbored us. He neighbored us, He rescued us. And now He calls us to imitate His life by sharing whatever we have to help the hurting around us.

Several years ago, I took a mission trip to Jamaica with a church and one of our adult leaders was Karen Smith. And one of
the jobs that we had to do is we went to a poor house where essentially, they sent impoverished people to die. It was wall to wall cots, kind of an open air building, and we were to go in and to cut their toenails and to clean bed sores and to give them haircuts, whatever we could do. The whole place smelled like urine. I mean, it was just bad. And there was a woman there, probably in her early 80s, just skin and bones, short, leathery skin, but her clothes had disintegrated to the point where she was almost naked. They were just kind of rags hanging off her body, very embarrassing.

So, Karen Smith was really moved by her situation. So Karen went into the bathroom and she put on her swimsuit and came back out and gave the woman the clothes off of her back and said, “Here, these are for you.” The next day we came back to do some more work and as we pulled into the driveway, there was this woman now in Karen’s clothes. But they were way too big because she was so small but she was there. You would have thought she was dressed in New York’s finest. And as we started to get out of the van, she started to clap and smile and dance, and then all of her friends started to dance. Karen got out and, “Hey, look at you.” And ran over and hugged her and jumping up and down. I mean, just a picture of the joy of generosity.

And you see, on that mission trip, Karen didn’t have a lot to give. But what she had, she was willing to give away and it changed the life of that woman. What has God blessed you with that you can use to bless others? Your time to read to someone, to sit with someone? Your talent, to do someone’s finances or help them fix their car? Maybe make some blankets you can pass out to the homeless this winter, on the streets of Denver. You know, it doesn’t have to be much. God can work miracles with a couple of pieces of bread and a few fish. But the question is, will you choose to live generously?

I know Pastor Craig’s talked about this so many times. As Christians, we have this false notion that what we have we’ve acquired through our own efforts and through our own hard work, and it’s ours and we’re not gonna let anybody have it. And we’ll give a little bit here and there, but most of it is ours and we’re gonna keep it and protect ourselves because we’ve gotta take care of ourselves and we hoard it. What a captive way to live? God invites his people to open up their lives and open up their hands believing that we have a great and good and generous God that’s promised to supply all of our needs, and He will. We will never outgive God.

The more we pour out as we serve others, the more He’s gonna pour back into our lives. And maybe God’s blessed you with treasure, made funds that you can use for a lot of things, houses and cars and boats and clothes, but hopefully, some of it you’re gonna invest in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ here and around the world. I mean, I hope you’re gonna invest generously in the work of this church. You’ve had 75 great years, but your best days are still in front of you.

And the vision that God has given to Pastor Craig and your elders is starting to unfold now. It is an inspiring vision. But you’re gonna need to work together. Your generous involvement is gonna be needed to make it all happen. The vision that we have as Converge Rocky Mountain, to add 100 congregations in 10 years, that’s God’s size. It’s never been done before. But God is already providing generous partners to ensure that those 100 Gospel Outposts start up. The first two years, we’ve had income of over $1 million come in to help us with our initiative. I had a couple in Wyoming say, “You know, it’s $120,000 to start that next church. We’ll pay for it.” Just walking up out of nowhere. I’ve had people that said, “I don’t wanna be a planter. Train me to be a church planter. I wanna be a part of a plant, or I wanna to be a part of a multi-site. Use my life in that way.” It’s just amazing to see how God is at work.

I mean, just imagine what God will do if you generously contribute the resources that are needed to expand the redemptive footprint of a Mission Hills Church. I mean, just imagine the difference we can make, how heaven will be different forever if the resources are given that we are able to start 100 more Mission Hills that we can scatter throughout the Rocky Mountain West. There is just no better way to invest your treasure than by making sure that people will enjoy abundant life here on earth and forever in heaven.

A great friend of Converge, a woman named Betty Lou Dill, passed away on July 23rd. And as she was putting her funeral together with her family, she said, “I don’t want people to give money. I want them to contribute to starting more churches to the
And Betty Lou had cancer that had just ravaged her body. She was probably in her mid-80s and no hair and skin and bones, just pasty white. When I came in, she was just staring blankly at the wall in front of her. I wasn’t sure, I mean, I didn’t know if she was comatose or what was going on, but I kind of swung around to the side of the bed and I held her hand. And I said, “Betty Lou, I just wanna thank you for your life of ministry. And I wanna thank you for the legacy that you’re leaving through the new churches that you’re helping to start. I mean, you’re storing up for yourself treasures in heaven. And I can’t thank you enough.” And right then, her whole demeanor changed and she turned slowly and looked at me with a little twinkle in her eye and a little smile and she said, “You’re welcome. You’re welcome”. And even in the last days of her life, the joy of generosity, the joy of investing other people’s eternities was filling her life. I hope you have that kind of joy in your life. Blessings come when we live with open hands.

Jesus said to the lawyer, “Which of these three was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, Jesus tells us, “Go and do likewise. Be a good neighbor.” Together we’ll change the world. We’ll change forever for the glory of God.

Let’s pray. Heavenly Father, we love because you first loved us. I pray that you’ll overwhelm us with the knowledge of how high and deep and wide is your love that you’ve lavished on us, and that we’ll let that fill us up and spill over to the people around us. Oh Lord, you’ve created us to live unselfish lives, to give ourselves to others for your glory, to just love and love and love until people ask why, and then we tell them about you and all that you’ve done in our lives.

I pray for Mission Hills for the prevailing church that they are, for the ways that You have blessed them, for each one in this room. You have a role for them to play, You have people that You wanna touch through their lives, and so make it happen. Lord, help us to have the sensitivity to your Spirit to know those individuals that You want us to get close to, and to make a difference. And help us to be good neighbors, just like You have been a good neighbor to us. In Jesus name. Amen.