

WHAT'S NEXT

Life On Mission

Luke 15:1-7 // Craig Smith
November 18, 2018

Craig // Hey, welcome to Mission Hills on all of our campuses. I'm so glad you are here today. And I know I say that every week, and it's always true, but it's extra true this week because I get to do something today that I have been waiting a long time to do. You see when I got here two years ago and God called me to Mission Hills two years ago, the church was working toward a fulfillment of a long-range vision called "the triple play." It had three elements, mind blowing, right? It had three elements, and the first element was to extend the worship service at the Littleton campus, and then build an additional auditorium. The second element was to put a Life Center in downtown Littleton. The third element was to launch a multisite campus so we would be one church in two locations, and the elders realized at the beginning of this year at the end of this year, God will have accomplished all of that!

[Applause]

The construction at the Littleton campus is almost done, and pretty soon the danger tape will go away, and the sticky floors will all be covered in carpet again. The Littleton Life Center is thriving. In fact, a little later today you can hear later today some incredible opportunities for a ministry that God has given us to reach out into the community just in the last 48 hours, crazy stuff happening over there. We have Jews in that community. We thought we would be a church in two campuses, but the reality is we are actually one church in four locations. We have Mission Hills Littleton, Mission Hills Dove Valley, Mission Hills en Español, and Mission Hills Online, and I know probably thousands of people are watching right now online.

God looked at that long-range vision that he gave to Mike Romberger, and to the elders and went, check, check, check. So we started asking the question, like, what's next? I'm pretty sure we are not supposed to close up shop and be like, done, we are out of here. And I'm not a maintainer, and none of the elders believe we are called to maintain, so we have been asking the question, what's next, and God has given us an answer, and I'm so excited to be able to share it. Not just excited, I'm also relieved too. I have known about it since 'April. In April the elders unanimously came to a conclusion that we knew what God was calling us to next. Have you ever gotten someone the ideal Christmas present. Like the best possible present, but like in November, early November, and you have to sit on it for two months? It's the worst. It's just the worst.

So I have been so excited to be able to share this, but I have had to sit on it for several months now. I'm not just excited, but I'm relieved to get it out there. Are you ready? Yeah, I'm not going to do that. No, what we are going to do first is go to God's Word, and here's why. We are a Bible driven church. What that means is, we don't pick a direction and go off in the direction and slap a Bible verse on it to justify the direction we wanted to go. We are driven forward by God's heart as revealed in God's Word, so I want to begin with a look at God's heart, so I want you to grab a Bible and make your way to Luke 15. We are going to look at a parable that Jesus taught that really is at the heartbeat of this vision that God has given us.

It's the heartbeat of the vision that God has for the church in the world across the globe. Luke 15:1 says this, now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. It's such an interesting statement. The tax collectors and the sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. Understand that the tax collectors and the sinners is a blanket phrase to say all kinds of people that are far from God. It includes the whole package. Tax collectors were far from God because they were against God's community. They were coming from the Nation of Israel, the people of God, but they had chosen to exhort from the people of God the community of God, and to give that money to foreign nations. They were traders, really, and so they were living against God's community.

Sinners, on the other hand, were people living against God's commands. They chose to live contrary to the commands of God, and so this is a blanket phrase for people that are far from God. Some are far from God because they have chosen to live against God's community, some are against God's commands, but the point is, they are all far from God, right? But what were they doing? They were drawing near to Jesus, which is kind of odd, if you think about it. What Luke was saying, all of these people that were far from God were drawing near to Jesus, and that's surprising because Jesus wasn't just the Man of God. He was the God Man. He was God in the flesh. Wrapped in flesh and come to us, and what Luke was saying, all of these people that had chosen to be far from God -- and they had chosen it. They weren't driven away from God. They weren't forced from God. They had fled from God by their own decisions.

All of these people who were far from God were drawing near to God in the person of Jesus Christ, and that's a little bit surprising, and it trips me up every time that I read something like that because I don't know about you, but I know some people who are far from God, and my natural

tendency when I think about people that are far from God is to think, they are happy there. They want to be there. They are content with their condition. They wouldn't want to hear about my relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. They wouldn't want me to invite them to church. It's going to make it uncomfortable because they are content with their condition, right? Maybe when you hear the phrase "far from God," you immediately think of somebody. Oh, that's that person in my life. He's far from God. She's far from God.

Maybe you do the same thing I do, the natural assumption, they don't want anything to do with God. They are not going to be open to an invitation to come to church or hear about my faith because they are content in their condition. Then I read this, now the tax collectors and sinners, all of these people far from God, they were gathering around to hear from Jesus, and I think, maybe my assumption is wrong. Maybe what God is telling me, more people that are far from God want to draw near to Him than we realize. Maybe my reluctance to share my faith with somebody, maybe my hesitation about inviting somebody to come to church for something like the Colorado Christmas Adventure or Christmas Eve service, or Easter service, maybe my hesitation to do that and my reservation to be open about my faith, maybe it's based on a fundamental misunderstanding about what people far from God actually want.

Maybe more people far from God want to draw near to Him than you and I realize, and maybe the only thing lacking is they don't know how to change it. They don't know how to move from where they are to something in their soul actually longs for them to be. Maybe they know how they got here, but they don't know how to get there. Maybe all that's missing is somebody to say, I can point you in the right direction. I can help you take a step in that direction to offer that invitation. I want to ask you to wrestle with a question, and it's a question I have been wrestling with this week as I have been preparing this message, and the question is basically this -- who have I written off? Who have I written off as being uninterested without ever extending an invitation. When you think of the person that's far from God in your life, who have you written off as not being interested. They wouldn't respond. They wouldn't be open to the conversation. They certainly wouldn't accept an invitation, and I have written off, but I have done it without actually extending the invitation to see.

Who do I know that I have written off as being uninterested without ever extending the invitation? Jesus says, the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. That's just an interesting statement. The word "all" is really important there. They were all gathering around to hear Jesus. In the Greek, it's really front-loaded. He says, gathering were all the tax collectors and the sinners. It's not just one or two, it's huge numbers, there are throngs of people far from God drawing near to God in the person of Jesus. We go, most of these people, they wouldn't care. They would have no interest, and we are writing them off, and we might be wrong.

Interestingly enough, there is another group of people that are there that day, and they are not extending an invitation but for a completely different reason. Verse 2 says, but the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law muttered. That's a great word. Like we don't use the word "muttered" nearly enough. Like you know, muttered, it's kind of under my breath. I'm not really going to say it out loud because I might be embarrassed, but I'm not happy about it -- mmhmm.

The Pharisees, the religious people, right, the people that should have been closest to God, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law muttered, this man welcomes sinners and eats with them. And that's interesting too. You know, because notice first off, the people who are far from God were drawing near to Jesus, and the people that should have been closest to God, the religious people, the Pharisees was a religious group among the Israelites, the teachers of the Law, the people who knew the Bible, so these are religious scholars. People who were supposed to be closest to God, they were also drawing near to Jesus. They were there listening. They were interested in what he had to say.

See people far from God, and people near to God were fascinated by Jesus. They couldn't get over him. They couldn't ignore him. They couldn't just put him out of their mind. They all wanted more information. They wanted to hear more. They are all there, but the religious people, they are not happy that everyone's there. They are not happy that the people far from God are there. That's interesting. They are muttering. You know why? It's just a fact that church people -- that religious people sometimes forget, and it's this. People who are far from God bring a lot of baggage with them when they come home. People that are far from God bring a lot of baggage with them when they come home.

When we live far from God, it gets messy. Life gets rough around the edges. People who live far from God, they get rough around the edges. They get messy, and then when they start coming home, they start coming into a relationship with God, they are bringing baggage with them, and here's the thing. Jesus forgives all of our sin. We talked about this Easter, Jesus died to free us from our baggage. He forgives us for all of our sin. He went to the cross to pay the penalty of every wrong thing we have ever done, all of the sin we are struggling with right now, all of the sins that we really hope we never deal with again, but the reality is probably tomorrow morning we'll be back in that place struggling with that thing. It's all forgiven, past, present, future. All of our sin as far as east is from the west, Jesus died to forgive, and the for moment, the very moment, we put our faith in Jesus Christ, it's forgiven. It's just gone. It's done.

But the baggage we pick up while living in sin, that takes a little while longer to pry out of our fingers. The moment we say yes to Jesus, our sins are forgiven. It's an ongoing work of God through the Holy Spirit to begin to get our fingers off of that baggage we have accumulated in the far country, and so people that are far from God -- bring a lot of baggage with them when they come home. They don't know how to do it, right? Their language is a little bit rough. They don't know the words to the songs, even the old ones everybody's supposed to know. They sit in our seats. They didn't know that was your seat. They eat the last doughnut at the coffee shop. They didn't know that was your doughnut. It's messy, right?

People who have been far from God, they have a lot of baggage with them when they start drawing near, and the people that have been near for a while, they can get really uncomfortable with that baggage. We have a tag line at Mission Hills. We say we are real, messy and new. I wonder sometimes, is that actual, or is that aspirational? Are we really okay with people who are messy coming here to be made new? Do we like that in theory? That would be nice, but the reality is, they make me uncomfortable, and you do know, that when Jesus called us to follow him, he didn't say, hey, come follow me. I have booked a block of rooms at the Hilton. Get comfy. He didn't say that.

He said come follow me. The problem is, when we follow Jesus, Jesus goes into messy places. He goes into the lives of messy people, people with baggage, and it's uncomfortable, and to follow Jesus, we have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I have a question for you. It's another question I have been wrestling with this week. How uncomfortable am I willing to get to be on mission with Jesus? How uncomfortable am I willing to get to be on mission with Jesus? How about you? How uncomfortable are you willing to get to be on mission with Jesus? The religious leaders, not so much. They muttered. He welcomes sinners.

I love the word, actually. It's an interesting translation. Welcomes -- I understand why they use that translation, but the word in Greek, really, it's a Christmas Eve word. It's more a word of anxious anticipation. Typically, that's how it's translated. You know what you do on Christmas Eve, right? Somebody's coming to visit. Somebody's coming to town, so we put out the milk and the cookies. There is that sense that we are anxiously anticipating. We are expecting with excitement that he's going to arrive. That's the word that's being used here. They say this man is anxiously expecting sinners to come. He's not just anxiously anticipating. He's not tolerating them. He's excited. He's thrilled that they are there, and he goes in and he eats with them. He sits right down with them. They are not comfortable with being uncomfortable.

That's getting in the way with them being on mission with Jesus, so verse 3, Jesus told them this parable. He said suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them? Doesn't he leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? This is something they were all familiar with. They had probably seen that a thousand times, that if you have a hundred sheep and you lose one, you don't go, it's only 1%. We are still good, right? That's an acceptable margin of losses. Honestly, from an economic perspective, it doesn't make sense to do what he's talking about here. It doesn't really make sense to do what everybody did, everybody knew they did. If you have a hundred sheep and you lose one, that's 1%. Like any business, 1% loss, that's an acceptable margin of error.

From an economic lens it doesn't make any sense to do what he says which is to leave them in the open country, because while you go looking after that lost 1%, you could lose a lot more. They could wander away on their own. Predators could come in. People could come steal them. It doesn't make sense through an economic lens, what he's talking about doesn't make sense, but what he says is, but you know this is how shepherds work, because he's not looking at the sheep through an economic lens, and ultimately, God does not look at us through an economic lens. Do you understand that? You are not a number to God. You are not a tick mark on a tally sheet somewhere. You are not an attendance count. You are a son or a daughter, you are a child of God Almighty, and He loves you.

He doesn't look at us through an economic lens. He looks at us through a love lens. And the thing is, when you are in love, you do some things that other people would consider crazy, right? How many of us, let's be honest -- how many of us have done some crazy stuff because we are were in love? And everybody around us, they didn't quite get it. They didn't see it. They didn't understand, right? When you are in love, you will do some things that everyone else thinks is crazy, like -- I don't know -- like send your one and only Son to die in the place of people who have chosen to live far from their Father? Like sending His only Son to the cross, live a perfect life, then go to the cross with no sin of his own to pay for so that he could take our sin on his shoulders, so he could die in our place.

To raise him from the dead and offer to all of those living far from him, you can be forgiven of your sin. You can be adopted into the family of God. You can have life eternally. You can join me on mission. All you have to do is put your faith in what Jesus did on the cross. That's crazy. From an economic perspective, this makes no sense, but God doesn't look at us through an economic lens. He looks at us through a love lens. So he says, he leaves the 99 and goes out looking for the one lost sheep, and he looks until he finds it, and then verse 5, when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.

Can we just understand that a sheep that's gotten himself lost is not a pleasant animal, okay? Probably at some point -- he probably didn't understand what he was doing. He was like, there's good grass there. There's good grass there. Pretty soon he looked around and he was like, where is everybody? At that moment the panic sets in. At that moment he starts racing around, so by the time the shepherd finds him, you know, his wool is matted, and his eyes are wide, and he's panicky, and bleeding, he's sweating, and I don't know if sheep sweat, but they probably do. He's in a cold sweat and a panic, and he's just a mess. And the shepherd finds him, but that moment, he's still -- he's rough around the edges. He's panicking, and so the shepherd had to restrain him, and put him up on his shoulders, and he's kicking and bleeding, and it's not a pleasant thing to have on your shoulders.

By the time you put that thing on your shoulders, it's gooey, sticky sheep slime on the back of your neck. You have to hold those legs because it's still panicking, but you see what Jesus says? When he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders. He joyfully puts it on his shoulders. He's not like -- okay. No, he's thrilled. He joyfully puts it on his shoulder and he goes home. Then he calls his friends. He calls his friends and his neighbors together. He says, rejoice with me. It's a command. Join me in joy. I have found my lost sheep. See, it's a joy that can't be contained. It's a joy that has to be shared. It's a joy that has to be extended.

Really, what's happening, Jesus is calling to those already near to him, the religious people in the audience, you need to join me in the joy that I have that these who have been far from me are coming home. Forget the baggage, forget how messy it is. Join me in the joy that they are coming home. Verse 7 -- I tell you, in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one person that repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent. There will be more joy. Do you understand what Jesus is saying, what Jesus is pleading with him to understand, is that God's greatest joy is when those far from Him come home. Do you hear me? That's really the heart of this whole thing.

God's greatest joy is when those far from Him come home, and He's pleading with them to join Him in that. The problem is that -- this is a truth that is really easy to forget. Those of us who were rescued some time ago. Maybe you gave your life to Jesus, and you let him put you on his shoulders and bring you home, maybe that happened when you were a little kid, or maybe it happened years ago, and you have been walking with him for decades, and it's amazing how easy it is to forget that God's greatest joy is when those who are far from Him come home, and so then when we see Him coming, we start to mutter. We need to get a name plate on the back of that seat so they'll understand, that's my seat. We need a doughnut system so they are not short when I get there.

I'm uncomfortable with this and them. We forget it. I was talking to a guy several years ago. He was a follower of Jesus. He gave his life to Jesus. He was pretty young. He had walked with Jesus for decades. We were talking about this parable. He said can I just tell you the problem I have with this story? I was like, please. He said the problem I have with this story is it sounds like God cares more about the lost than He does about me. It sounds like God is more excited, He's more into, He's more worked up about the lost than He is about me. That's the problem I have.

No, no, no. You have missed two fundamental things. Number one, you gotta remember that God threw you a party too. You were not born into the family of God. We were born, according to Scripture we were born running from him, the moment we began making decisions. You were far from God too. You know what the Bible says, right? The Bible says for a few have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No? If you don't know the verse that I'm quoting, that's not right. I misquoted it. The actual quote is, for many have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No, wrong again, right? How many? All. It's what God's Word says, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That's you. That's me. There is not a single person that has walked this Earth besides Jesus Christ who has not walked this Earth in the far country far from God, and every one of us has come back into the family of God by faith in Jesus has been rescued by Jesus Christ.

They have been brought into the household, and the party has started for us, and here's the thing. I don't think the party ever stops. I don't know exactly how it works, but I don't think there is a time limit on the celebration. I don't think when you were rescued God went, okay, 30 seconds of partying. Go. All right, stop. That's it. Next. I don't think that happened. I think the party started when you got rescued, and every time somebody else comes home, the party gets louder and louder and louder. I don't know what you picture when you think about heaven. Some people think it's going to be this really tranquil place, right? You know? Babbling brooks, calm breezes -- birds chirping in the distance. I don't think so. I think you walk in the gates of heaven and they hand out ear plugs. You are going to need these. It's loud in there. It keeps getting louder and louder.

You see your celebration never stopped. It's just that every time a new lost person comes home, the celebration just gets louder. I said to this guy, you have misunderstood. I said you have also misunderstood this. This is a parable. This is a metaphor. It's an analogy. Every analogy breaks down at some point. The point that it's making is that God's greatest joy is when those that are far from Him come home, but where the metaphor breaks down is this, you and I aren't sheep. You and I are not sheep. We are pretty dumb sometimes, okay, but we are not sheep, and God didn't rescue us and say, you stay there until I get back. I'm going to go do what I do. That's not what God said. Jesus at the very beginning of the Gospel of Mark, the very beginning of his ministry as a few people began to come to him, he said this, this is Mark 1:17, he said come follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.

He said come follow me, and I will make you part of the mission. You are going to join me on mission reaching your lost brother and sisters. He didn't say come follow me and hang out. Come follow me. I booked a suite in the Hilton. Come follow me and get comfortable, no, come follow me on mission in the world, and I don't have a Bible verse for this. I don't really need one because it leaks out of every page in the Bible. It is true that God's greatest joy is when those that are far from Him come home, but you know what I think His second greatest joy is, a very close second? God's second greatest joy is when His people join Him on His mission. You see the party gets louder two different times in our lives. There's that moment when we come home for the first time, when He brings us home, and the party gets louder. But the second moment in your life when the party gets louder is when you begin to join Him on the mission He has built you for, the mission that He has left you in the world for.

When you begin to use the gifts and the talents and the experiences, as we talked a couple of weeks ago, the things that he entrusted to you in the way that he expects, as you begin to join him on mission in the world, the party gets louder still. We are not sheep out in the field. We are on mission with Jesus. I love the fact that the truth of this Scripture is baked into the name of our church. I love it. We are Mission Hills. Kind of a permanent reminder that, that is what the Church is. It's about mission. It's equipping the people of God to be on the mission of God. I also love the fact that it's not Mission Hill. That would be a good name because on mission and the mission is to put the light of the Gospel up on the hill for all of the world to see because that's what the Church is. It holds the light of the Gospel up high, but it's not just Mission Hill. It's Mission Hills, plural.

Almost as though 76 years ago when God called the founders of this church to give it a name, almost like He knew there was going to come a

time in the life of this church where the light of the Gospel would be held up in more than one community. It's almost like God knew. It's almost like He knew there would be a day we would have four campuses. It's almost like there was a day coming that He knew about where what God is doing through Mission Hills would be going out around the world online. It's almost like He knew there would be a day we have 30 partners in 20 different countries and it just keeps climbing. It's almost like He knew -- almost.

Yeah, He knew. We were just the ones late to the party, right? We are the ones going, oh, okay. Two years ago when I got here, we were working to fulfill this Front Range -- this triple play vision. At the end of this year, the elders realized, we are going to be done, so we began asking God, what's next, and God has given us the next strategic vision. He has given us our understanding. It's not a new direction, just a continuation of what we have always been, no sharp right turns. Ready? Are you ready to talk about what our future as a body of Christ is? What our future on mission with Jesus stuff looks like? Here we go.

To reach every lost person in the Front Range. God and I had a little bit of an argument about this one. That's a little -- are you serious, Lord? That's a little over the top, don't you think? God and I had a little conversation and went, okay, we'll tone it down. Which people are you willing to write off? He said which ones do you think I don't care enough about? Okay, fine. You win. You're right. You usually are. He said God has built Mission Hills to the point where you are church of a certain amount of resources and influence to extend this beyond anything you have dreamed about, but it's just what we are getting to you. The goal is to reach every lost person on the Front Range. The Front Range, by the way, is an urban corridor. It's a civic designation that runs from Pueblo, Colorado to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

There is currently about 3,000,000 -- little more than 3,000,000 people living in that corridor. The expected growth is a little over 8,000,000 within the next 25 years. Depending on which statistics you look at, it's 87 to 95% of the Front Range are unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Millions of people. To reach every lost person in the Front Range, but he didn't just tell us what. He also told us how. I'm super excited about this part. He said this: reach every person on the Front Range by unleashing an army of missional followers of Jesus.

That's you. That's all of us. You might not be crazy about the word "army." I wasn't crazy about it, but I couldn't find an alternative. Is it a mob? A hoard? A gaggle? It didn't quite have the punch we are looking for. We are an army equipped not with weapons of war, but with Good News. We are on mission. It's an army of missional followers of Jesus, an army of followers of Jesus who understand that you can't follow Jesus without following him on mission. It's an army of people who recognize they have been called by God not only to salvation but to be on mission with Him in the world, to leverage their gifts, their talents and experiences, the things they have been entrusted with in the way that God expects which is to leverage them for God's glory, and the people's good.

And that our job as a church is to unleash you, to help you discover, develop, and mature into your callings in whatever sphere influence God has given you. It's to unleash an army of missional followers of Jesus fueled by local congregations. That's a key piece too. Fueled by local congregations. We are deeply committed to the idea of the local church. What that means is, we want communities of faith in communities that can unleash people into that particular community. The problem is, if people drive more than 20 minutes to get to church, it's hard for that church to be helping them to be on mission in the community in which they actually live. If you think about it, talk to the person living far from God, and maybe you get to that point where you think, maybe it's time to invite them to come to church with me. That's a good next step. You are talking to a person far from God who probably thinks the church is full of weirdoes, which it is -- right?

Tell them, yeah, I would like you to come with me to this place talking about weird things, singing weird songs, and they are weird people, and once you do that, we need to drive 30 minutes to get there. They are going to be like, what are you smoking in that place? I'm not going to drive 30 minutes to get to a weird place like that. We deeply believe that it's important that the followers of Jesus reaching communities have local congregations who are able support their ministry. It's different driving five minutes versus 25 minutes. So we are committed to local congregations.

Here's what that means. We have three strategic kind of pillars or planks that get us from where we are to where we are headed. The first plank is this. It's multisite multiplication. We are going to continue to plant multisite campuses at Mission Hills. We have four at the moment. We anticipate over the next several years, we'll see a lot more of those as God says, hey, you can reach people in this community doing what you do. You are the kind of church that can reach people in this area pretty well, so we are going to continue to plant multisite campuses -- but, we don't believe Mission Hills is able to reach everybody. We are going to reach some people well and other people, we are not going to be their cup of tea, and that's okay.

But they need to be reached too, and God is going to raise up churches that will reach people that we can't. So the second pillar, or the second plank in this is a Partnership Network that God is leading us to build. The Partnership Network where we pour into a network of churches and ministries other than Mission Hills to enable them to reach people we couldn't reach otherwise. We do this on a global level right now. We have 30 partners in 20 countries. They are inviting people to get connected to Jesus in a Gospel-centered community, but it's not a Mission Hills community. That's okay. We are not trying to grow Mission Hills. We are trying to grow the Kingdom of God, and so God has given us the opportunity to be able to pour training and resources and other kinds of things into churches that are not Mission Hills, but they have the same values. They have the same commitment to the mission of God that we are called to be on, and so we are going to be doing that.

I don't know exactly what that will look like, but God has sort of given us this vision, this call, and so we are in the process of figuring that out.

We also, there are a bunch of churches that are not part of that network. That's okay. They are still committed to reaching their community, and so the third plank is what we are calling, and this is a working title, we are calling it the Font Range Ministry Institute. This is not a college. It's not a school, but it's leveraging the resources God has given us and platforms we can build to be able to strengthen other churches that have no affiliation with us, and we don't care if they ever do, but if we can help the Church be the Church that God has called it to be wherever God has planted it, we are going to make that happen. God has called us to do that. Podcasts, conferences, resource production, we are looking to do that to reach every lost person on the Front Range by unleashing an army of missional followers fueled by local congregations, the areas. What do you think?

[Applause]

Now, understand. It's a two-year vision. It will take us two years to pull it off.

[Laughter]

All right, you are the second fastest of the services to get that. The first service was like, that will be a bit of a challenge. Yeah, we are going to hand this vision to our kids and our grandkids unless Jesus comes back, but this is what God has called us to settle for nothing less, to reach every lost person unleashing an army of missional followers fueled by local congregations. That's what we are calling "The Front Range Vision." Now the question you need to be asking is, what's my part, right? Go ahead and ask. Say, what's my part? So glad you asked, because here's the thing, this isn't something we are going as an organization as a staff. This is something we do as a church, and what you need to understand is what the Church is. Some of us are going to have to revise the way we think about the Church, okay? This is the way we need to think about the Church. If you are not already, you need to go ahead and start making the shift. The Church is not a place that you come to. You hear me? The Church is not a place that you come to, it's a mission that you choose to be part of.

The Church is the people of God, not a place. It's the people of God engaged in the mission of God together. The Church is not a place that you come to. It's a mission that you choose to be part of. The question you need to wrestle with is what does it look like for me to be on mission with Jesus? That's been our theme this whole fall. We are going to continue to unpack that as we go forward studying God's Word together. Let me give you three things I want to challenge you to wrestle with this week as you begin to shift into thinking, I'm on mission with Jesus. That's what it means to reach every person in the Front Range. What does my part play? Three things -- three things we have used consistently throughout the global experience, there are three things that you can do. That's pray, send and go. Start thinking in these terms.

First thing I want you to do is I want you to begin praying. This will never happen apart from prayer. So I want you to do this, right now, why don't you grab your phones and take them out. Serious, get them out. I want you to set a reminder on your phone. If you are willing to take this challenge to pray, I want you to set a reminder on the phone at 9:38. You can do it in the morning. You can do it in the evening. I'm going to do it in the morning because honestly, I'm asleep these days by 9:30. I don't know what happened, but I just am. 9:38. The reason 9:38, like that's a really specific number. Yeah, because as Scott preached last week, Matthew 9, there is a place in Matthew 9 where Jesus said, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are -- anybody? Few. So he said ask the Lord of the harvest then to send more workers out to the harvest, and guess where that statement is? It's Matthew 9:38, so at 9:38, I want you to have a little thing that goes off, and I want you to have a very quick prayer. It can be ten seconds, but you are going to pray, God, raise up missional followers.

Of course, that includes you. Pray for God to raise up missional followers to reach every lost person in the Front Range, and obviously, understand too, we are not just reaching people in the Front Range, we are putting up a tent, a tent outside of the global experience. It's a big tent. If we tried to lift all of the corners of the tent at the same time, it would never work, so we start by pushing the pole up in the center, and that pulls up the whole tent. We are not just interested in the Front Range. We are interested in people beyond the Front Range. I understand, many of you are watching right now in different parts of the world, in different parts of the country, outside of the Front Range. Understand, we are not saying we don't care about you. We are saying, we are going to put a lot of our effort into reaching the Front Range, and that is going to raise up missional followers. We are going to have an impact all over the world even beyond the Front Range.

Pushing up that tent that pulls up all this other stuff, so pray at 9:38 for God to raise up missional followers. The second thing you can do is send. What that means in the context today, you can continue to give generously to Mission Hills. You have already been so generous. God is using your generosity in powerful ways around the Front Range. Continue to give generously to Mission Hills. But I also encourage you to maybe think about supporting a short-term mission team. As part of the experience in the lobby, you can choose to give funds to a short-term mission trip going around the world this next year. I encourage you to think about doing that. The third thing you can do is you can go. One of the ways you can go, you can go on a global mission's trip. We have dozens going out in the next year. If you have never done one, or if you have, I want to strongly encourage you to join one of those teams because going on a short term mission trip allows you to leverage a lot of the gifts and the talents and experiences and other things God has entrusted to you to make a difference in the world. That's really important.

The second thing it does is changes your mind about life. It changes your perspective on the world and it changes your perspective on the day-to-day life here in the Front Range. It will make you more missional in a powerful way. It's like boot camp for missional living. So I love to challenge you to join one of those teams. You can find out more about it in the lobby or online. The other thing you can do is to join a local mission team. Here at Mission Hills we have a whole bunch of local mission teams. We have a mission team that teaches our kids the Good News of Jesus Christ

on the sidewalk. We have a mission team that works with our students. We have a mission team that teaches Life Groups. We have a mission team that helps people find spaces in the parking lot and get into seats here so they can hear the Word of God.

We have a mission team that does greeting. All of our -- sometimes we use the word "volunteers." We are trying to move away from that because it's really more about training to be on mission with Jesus, so if you are not serving in some capacity, I encourage you to find out more at the Welcome Center about how can I be on mission with Jesus here at Mission Hills, and as you begin to do that, to see what God does above and beyond that. Let's pray.

God, thank You so much for coming looking for us. Thanks that we know there is a celebration that began the moment we came home, and it's a celebration that continues. That the celebration gets louder when we choose to join You on mission in the world. Lord, would You stir our hearts and our minds to be on mission with You above and beyond anything we have ever experienced, and would You do above and beyond anything we could ever imagine? Lord, we lay "The Front Range Vision" before You. You have given it to the leadership of this church, although we lay it before You now. We ask that You would raise up this army mission of followers that would reach every lost person. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, would you begin praying right now? Pray for the people around you, that are watching online right now that may not know Jesus. I believe at all of our campuses at this moment, some of you have had a light that clicked on.

You realized for the first time that you are far from God, your choices; your sin has led you far from God. That's where you are. You are not happy with your condition. Maybe for the first time you have heard that God is not happy with your condition either, that God sent His own Son to die in your place on the cross, raised him from the dead, and he's offering you new life. He's offering you to put you on his shoulders and bring you home. Maybe for the first time you are realizing that God loves you, so deeply that He would do that for you. If that's you, if you realize you are far from God and you have never put your trust in what He did on the cross for you, but you are ready to come home, you are ready to be forgiven of your sins and granted eternal life and a place in his family, would you just slip your hand up right now? That's awesome. I see those hands. That's fantastic. If you are watch online, click the button right below me.

Wherever you are, if you're ready to come home, in your heart to God just say this, God, I'm sorry that I have done wrong, and I wandered away. Jesus, thank you for loving me enough to go to the cross for me. Thank you for rising from the dead to prove that you had new life to offer. I accept your offer. I receive forgiveness. I receive new life. God, adopt me into your family. Bring me home. Make me part of your mission here. Amen. Can we celebrate those who have joined us in the family of God today?