**Let the Nations Sing to the Lord!**

**Psalm 96:1-13 (ESV)**

October 22, 2017

Dr. Ritch Boerckel

***1*** *Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!* ***2*** *Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day**.* ***3*** *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!* ***4*** *For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.* ***5*** *For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.* ***6*** *Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.* ***7*** *Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!* ***8*** *Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts**!* ***9*** *Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!* ***10*** *Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”* ***11*** *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;* ***12*** *let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy* ***13*** *before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.*

We owe much to the Reformers who pressed the church to regain God’s glory in the Gospel. So we thank God that He raised up men and women of faith, of courage, and devotion to Jesus, at a time when the church needed a spiritual awakening.These men and women of the Reformation profoundly affect us in practical ways today. This October 31st marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s nailing those 95 Thesis to the door of All Saint’s Church in Wittenburg, Germany. So this month, we at Bethany have been celebrating the Gospel. It is a Gospel restored to her central place in the life of the church during that season of the church’s history.

So we’ve focused thus far largely upon the doctrinal commitments that the church regained through these Reformers. We think about the Five Solas that mark the basic tenets of the Gospel itself: grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone. And we know that because Scripture alone is our authority. And all of that is for the glory of God alone. We’re right to emphasize these doctrines as the central contributions of the Reformation to our lives. Yet the practical impact of the Reformation ripples to us in far more ways than simply realigning our doctrinal beliefs to the Gospel.

This week, in preparation of our GO Conference, I’ve been reading more of the Reformation’s impact upon music and upon missions in the church. Do you realize that we would not sing the way we’ve sung in this service, were it not for the Reformation? Do you realize that we wouldn’t have a Missions Conference were it not for the Reformation? Music prior to the Reformation was rich and beautiful in the church, but the lay people didn’t sing it. Monks and cantors in the church mainly performed music in Latin, a language that the common people didn’t understand. The Reformers asserted that every person could and should commune with God directly, apart from mediation through priests. So they brought music back to the people. They began to sing in the language that the people spoke, so that they too could enter into the worship of God through song, even as the early believers did, as described in Scripture.

Martin Luther himself was an accomplished musician and vocalist. He began writing music that everyone in the church could sing together. Luther believed that music was “a gift of God to be nurtured and used by man for his delight and edification, as a means for giving praise to the Creator, and as a vehicle for the proclamation of God’s Word.” With classic Luther fire, this passionate Reformer also said: "Next to the word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our hearts, minds and spirits. A person who does not regard music as a marvelous creation of God does not deserve to be called a human being; he should be permitted to hear nothing but the braying of donkeys and the grunting of pigs!"That’s Martin Luther! (Congregational Laughter!)

So Luther wrote hymns. And he wrote chorales and melodies for worship in the German language, for the church to sing. And not just Luther, but John Calvin also, for instance, wrote worship songs based upon the Psalms for common people to sing in a worship service. And so these Reformers changed the melodies of church music so that untrained musicians could also sing them in congregational worship. Thus, the Reformation restored the voice of God’s people in song.

Missions prior to the Reformation had waned to the point of being non-existent as a priority of the church. But the Reformation lit a flame of the Gospel which ultimately gave birth to the modern missions movement. Although the major emphasis of the Reformers was on evangelizing and discipling nominal Christians, because that’s what the church largely consisted of in Europe. So that was the main focus of these Reformers. It was on the people who were sitting in the pew right in front of them. But, the Reformation also reenergized Missions in the church.For instance, under John Calvin, Geneva, Switzerland became a missionary-sending center with 1200 pastors equipped and sent out to plant more than 2000 churches in France, Calvin’s native country. Also, Geneva worked with French churches to send Protestant ministers to Brazil for the very first time. Calvin himself remarked, “A good missionary is a good theologian. A good theologian is a good missionary.”

The missionary spirit spread beyond France, too. For instance, John Knox famously prayed, “Give me Scotland, or I die.”Martin Luther summarized the renewed missionary spirit of the Reformation in his preface of his New Testament that he translated into German: “If he have faith, the believer cannot be restrained. He betrays himself. He breaks out. He confesses and teaches this gospel to the people at the risk of life itself.” That’s the missionary spirit. The Reformation was a renewal that would later produce people like William Carey to India, Adoniram Judson to Burma, David Brainard to the American Indians, Samuel Zwemer, an apostle to Islam, Robert Scot Morrison, the first missionary to China, and David Livingstone to Africa.

So today we open up our Bibles to Psalm 96 where these two themes—music and missions—converge. Martin Luther called this a missionary hymn.He said that it’s a prophecy about Christ Jesus, and about Jesus’ future kingdom and the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. And I believe he’s right about that, as we’ll see. As we open our Bible’s to Psalm 96, the central idea is that joyful worship is the fuel and the aim of missions.

Originally, this hymn was sung 3,000 years ago by David on the occasion of his own coronation and the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 16:23-33). Yet, even though this psalm is 3,000 years old, it’s not dusty. It is not dry. I pray that God will use it as a fuel that ignites our hearts in zeal for God, for His Gospel, and for the joy of all peoples throughout the world. There are four ideas I want us to see from this psalm as we think about missions. I first want us to think about the foundation of missions, the ground of missions.

**I. The Foundation of Missions: Joy in God sets the foundation of missions.**

***1*** *Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!*

It’s a song of grace. It’s a song of mercy. It’s a song of God’s salvation.

***2*** *Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.*

This call to sing is not merely a call to make music. Music for music’s sake is perhaps a wonder of God’s creation, but it’s not the heart of God behind His design for music. Here, music is being used as a call for God’s people to rejoice in God as God and as the giver of grace. Singing is a voice of happiness. So, it is to reflect the inner happiness and vitality, the life that’s coursing through the heart and souls of God’s people who have been redeemed. For the Christian church, singing is a voice of happiness. It’s not happiness in the things of this world. It’s not happiness even in certain circumstances. But singing is a voice of happiness in God Himself.

Missions begins with God’s people rejoicing in God. That is the spring from which all of missions flows. It’s not primarily an obligation. It’s not primarily even a concern for people itself. It flows first and foremost from a joy in God Himself. Where people do not rejoice together in God, missions will be absent. We cannot be passionate about proclaiming a God in whom we do not rejoice. And that’s the reason why this missionary psalm begins, “Sing to the Lord, church!” Let’s get our hearts right. If we’re rejoicing, missions will follow. Our passion for His Name will bubble up in our hearts with an overflow to say, “I want others to sing, too!” God is worthy of that.

This past Wednesday night, I received a text from my oldest son, Alexander. We knew that they were expecting and we knew that day, that his wife, Keira, was going to be induced. And so, there was just simply one line Wednesday night. “He is born!” Period. That’s all I got. (Congregational Laughter!) That’s typical, classic Alexander, if you know him. “He is born!” So what did I do as soon as I got that text? Well first, I rejoiced, myself. “Yes! He is born!” But then, do you know the next thing I did? I picked up my phone and I began texting that same line to friends and other family members. “He is born!” And these other family and friends asked, “Who is it? What’s his name? How long is he? How much does he weigh?” And I would say, “I don’t know.” (Congregational Laughter!) But, he is born! It took until the next morning we discovered his name was Malachi Alexander. And then we discovered that he was 6 lbs., 15 oz., and that he was 20 inches long.

Why did I feel compelled to text right away, even before I knew the name of this little grandbaby? “He is born!” Why? Was it because “a good grandpa is supposed to do this, and so I’ll do it out of obligation. And other people are wanting to know anyway, and so I’d better tell them because it will help them.” No! It was out of the overflow of joy in my heart. I wanted to share this great news. There was a glorious event that took place in Abilene, Texas, and I wanted for other people to know.

This glory of a newborn baby is infinitesimally small compared to the eternal weighty glory of God. And when God’s people experience His glory, we know that this is what everyone needs to experience. And we know that this glory is so great that it must be shared. That’s what drives missions. God is worthy to be acknowledged and to be proclaimed everywhere. We consider it an injustice, a travesty for God not to be honored and adored by every person in every place.

***1*** *Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!* ***2*** *Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.*

Never stop!

The desire of the psalmist is for all the people in the world to sing in joy to God because God is worthy. Missions begins with God’s people seeing God’s value, and in seeing God’s value, rejoicing in God’s value, and in rejoicing in God’s value, wanting to proclaim God’s value to everyone.That’s the essence of worship and it’s the foundation of missions. Whenever God’s people worship God with fervor, we are spilling fuel to ignite a fire for missions in the church. If there is no whole-hearted joyful worship of God, there is no fuel to ignite a zeal for missions in any people. Missions conferences cannot be that fuel. We cannot say, “Let’s try to motivate enough energy for missions through this conference.” Missions conferences can’t do that.

Mission conferences can light a match and if fuel is on the ground, then the fire spreads. But Missions conferences can’t be the fuel. The fuel is our joy in the Lord. It is our zeal for Him. It is our love for Him. There must be singing from the heart to the Lord from God’s people, in order for missions to thrive among God’s people. This is why Martin Luther would say, “The devil dreads a singing Christian.” He does, because he knows where there are singing Christians, there is a motivation to destroy his kingdom by advancing God’s kingdom. Because that is exactly what happens. The ground from which missions moves is the joyful worship of God.

There are two applications.

1. Feed your zeal for God with the Gospel of Jesus.

Set your heart on God’s work through Christ in your heart every day. Set your mind on things above. Set it on the cross. Meditate upon Jesus’ amazing death, that He took the punishment of our sins upon Him. Marvel in that! Never ever grow dull in our thinking about what God has done and accomplished for us through Christ Jesus. Wonder at His amazing grace. Wonder at the power of His resurrection. Elevate our view of this great Triune God who called us out of darkness into light. Enjoy God every day as you open up God’s Word not out of obligation, but out of joy, saying, “I want to know You more.” That’s the greatest way to begin to provide a foundation for missions in your own personal life, but also in this church. Feed our zeal for God with the Gospel of Jesus.

2. Sing! Sing to the LORD! Sing!

It’s thrice commanded here in these first two verses. Sing! Sing! Sing! In other words, give voice to your joy in God. Do not be a muted Christian. Do not be one who says, “I’m not really comfortable singing out loud.” A Christian who doesn’t sing out loud is a disobedient and endangered soul. We feed our joy by expressing our joy. That’s always the way it is. God uses singing to strengthen our faith and deepen our joy and to increase our love for Him and for others. I would urge you, don’t everfeel guilty about taking time to pursue your joy in God. That is always time well spent. It is always time that pleases the Lord. “Oh, I gotta get busy doing this or that.” No! It’s okay, and it’s actually more than okay. It is great and a fantastic practice to say, “You know what? I’m just going to take some time to enjoy the Lord right now, today.” Our Sunday gatherings are for coming together and pursuing our joy in God together to the very fullest measure.

I love the picture of the redeemed of God in heaven rejoicing in God’s grace and salvation in Revelation 5. Let me just read that to you.

**Revelation 5:10-14** Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

Can you catch that great sea of people? That’s our future. And if we enter into this singing now in our joy in the Lord, we’re catching just a glimpse of heaven and the thrill that heaven will be for the redeemed of God. This picture leads us to the second idea in Psalm 96.

**II. The Scope of Missions: God’s scope of concern is total.**

***1*** *Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!*

***3*** *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*

***7*** *Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!*

***9*** *Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!*

***11*** *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;*

Do you see why Martin Luther called this a missionary psalm?

Remarkably, this was written in David’s time. And at that time, no nation as a nation, had embraced the LORD as God. Not one! And yet this whole psalm is envisioning not just one little nation, one neighboring nation, but all the nations of all the earth gathering around to sing to the Lord. How could they have a vision like that when it had not happened yet? We sort of have a vision for that happening now when we look up and we see all the missionaries and all the places they’re at, because it’s happening. It is currently happening! But these folks had no pictures of missionaries that are going to foreign places. And yet, David has this vision. How? It’s on the basis of God’s revelation. God told Abraham that through him, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And they believed that.

Of course Luke, in recording the birth of Jesus, who is the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 96, both His first coming and His second. Here’s how Luke would describe the angels and their message.

**Luke 2:8-10** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Now these are Jewish shepherds. What did they care? They understood that God’s promise was that all the peoples of the earth would worship the Lord. The Lord is worthy of that. This is a message of great joy because right now, it’s happening. The nations now are going to be affected. This Person is going to be the Savior of all peoples. And here’s the reason why?

**Luke 8:11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Here’s the principle. Let us not shrink God to make Him fit our small scope of concern. We have naturally, a small scope of concern. We have tunnel vision about our own lives and perhaps even about the church. We say, “Here’s what I care about. Why can’t we take care of this and not be concerned about all that is around me that we can’t see, feel and touch? Why can’t we shrink the scope of our concern down to what is present in front of us right now?” And here’s the answer: God is too great of a God to be shrunk to such a lowly place. He says, “It’s impossible for My people who understand Me and the value that is Me, to shrink their scope of concern to just only be satisfied with a few people sitting around in a small building to worship the Lord.”

God did not make His Gospel known to me and my family alone. God did not make His Gospel know to our small community, our small nation or to our ethnicity.God sent His Son with a view that all the nations of the world, all the ethnicities, would find joy and life in Him. That’s God’s scope of mission. We make God too small when we are content that our church or our people or our own country would hear the Gospel.God’s heart is that all the earth would rejoice in Him.

There’s a danger, as there always is in the world, to believe false ideas about God and about His will. The doctrine of our age teaches us that it is arrogant for any people to take a spiritual truth to another people and tell them that they must, or that they need to believe it. And if indeed, spiritual truth were created out of our own cultures and out of our own minds, and out of our own reasonings, then it would be arrogant. If we created our own truth, that doctrine that is so pervasive in our world would be accurate. But Beloved, this truth doesn’t come from our culture. It doesn’t come from our own hearts. It doesn’t come from our own reasoning. It comes by way of revelation from God Himself. And there are no other gods other than the God who revealed Himself in His Son, through His Word. If any people is to know God, they must hear about Him through the instrumentality of His Word, communicated through God’s people.

The Christian church must not be cowered by this doctrine of demons; thisworldly, demonic belief that condemns missions and evangelism as somehow being arrogant, rude and bigoted toward other ethnicities. There is no other Savior who loves these people. And they will die without ever singing because they will die without ever knowing. And they will die without ever being saved, being rescued from their own sins. If any person from any nation is to know God and be forgiven of their sin, it will not be by worshiping at the altars of false gods. They have to know who the true God is. And they have to know the path through which this true God is open for us to be forgiven of sin and for us to know Him.

Please keep in mind that Jesus is not merely the white man’s Savior. Jesus was born a Jew, not an American. He is the Savior of all peoples! That was announced from His birth.Nothing is more central to God’s heart than His love for all the nations and His call for all the peoples to come and find joy in Him. God has made us for something much bigger than our little families, our little church, and our small communities.God has made us for something as big as His world.

Listen to J. Campbell White. J. Campbell White was the first secretary of the Layman’s Missionary Movement in the early 1900’s. This movement was born of businessmen who were captured by a holy ambition to get behind God’s vision for the world and to spread the Gospel. And here’s what J. Campbell White said: “Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within His followers except the adoption of Christ’s purpose toward the world He came to redeem. Fame, pleasure and riches are but husks and ashes in contrast with the boundless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of His eternal plans. The men who are putting everything into Christ’s undertaking are getting out of life its sweetest and most priceless rewards.”

In other words, people look at their lives and say, “Did I really live for something big?” Most men aren’t satisfied. If any Christian ever says, “Boy, I think my life is not as full of meaning and full of purpose as I want it to be,” what he’s saying is, we need to adopt Christ’s mission. That’s why it’s important on a GO Conference to spend some time with some of these men and women, because I think that’s what you’re going to hear. We need to hear that to say, “No! That’s really the way it works!” Here’s the application.

I would urge you to connect in some significant, meaningful way to God’s global purposes. In other words, don’t miss what God is doing in this world. Find a way to be part of God’s sharing this life with other peoples and other nations. Take some time to pray with your spouse if you’re married. Pray with your children if you have children. Pray together over, “God, what part would You have us to be involved in calling the nations to sing in joy to You?” We will live a large meaningful life if we connect to God’s purpose for His world through missions.

**III. The Duty of Missions: God gives His people three duties in our relationship with the world.**

Let’s read verses 2-10 and I’ll pick up these duties as we read.

***2*** *Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.* ***3*** *Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!*

**1. Tell of His glory and salvation.**

Declare His glory among the nations. God has given us a message to declare. It’s not a dialogue about how we can obtain truth. It is a message that is revealed by God, through His Holy Spirit. It was sent to us through His Son, written down in His Book so that we could declare that message, that truth, that is life-giving, that is rescuing. This message will often not be received with a warm welcome. God told us that. It’s happened to every prophet who gave the message to their audience. It happened to Jesus, God’s own Son. But this is our stewardship. It is to tell the message.

Please understand that telling or declaring is not the responsibility of pastors and missionaries only. Declaring this message to others is every believer’s privilege and stewardship. Nothing in all the world, I believe, could be more joy-inducing than being used of God to tell another person about Jesus. And that is regardless of their reception. Many protest: “But I’m too weak. I’m too feeble.” I understand that. I feel that. I feel that every week as I stand before you. But here’s my encouragement. Jesus said:

**Acts 1:8-9** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

God says, “Declare Him! I will empower you to do just this. Declare Him!”

**2. Invite the nations to join in joyful worship.**

Invite! Not just declare, but invite.

***7*** *Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!* ***8*** *Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!* ***9*** *Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!*

That’s the invitation. Come together and we’ll get to worship the Lord together.

It’s not enough for us to simply declare the message. Sometimes we stop there. We say, “I’m looking for an open door to share the Gospel.” That’s awesome, first of all, because many believers never share the message. But then once we share the message, we sort of stop there and we don’t make the invitation. We don’t say, “Is there anything that would keep you from embracing Jesus as your Lord and Savior today? Is there anything that would keep you from rejoicing right now in God, who revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus, this moment?” When was the last time you invited someone to receive the grace of God through Jesus Christ? That’s part of our responsibility. It’s part of our stewardship as recipients of this great news that God has given us.

I like the story of Henry Ford. He had a good friend…One of his best friends sold life insurance. One day, Henry Ford told his friend, “I just purchased life insurance from this guy who came to my office.” The guy said, “What?! How come you purchased life insurance from him and not from me? I’m your friend.” Ford said, “Because you never asked me, and he did.” In other words, you never invited me to purchase life insurance from you, and this guy did. He asked me a question. I said, “Sure. Why not?” I wonder how many people who’ve never ever heard the invitation have been waiting with another believer in their presence saying, “I’m waiting for a response. If it’s not now, I’m going to continue to pray for you. I’m not trying to push you or twist your arm, but I’m asking you.” This is the call that God has given us. It is to make an invitation.

**3. Warn the nations of God’s righteous judgment.**

***4*** *For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.*

He’s not set alongside other gods.

***5*** *For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.*

Skip down to verse 10.

***10*** *Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”*

Verses 12 and 13:

***12*** *Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy* ***13*** *before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.*

This is a vision of Jesus’ second coming. It is impossible to preach God’s love and grace if we also do not warn of God’s righteous judgment. Warning of God’s righteous judgment, that uncomfortable part of the message, is also vital to our work, to our calling as witnesses of this great God.

So here’s the application. Ask God to open one door this week to declare, invite and warn with the Gospel. I don’t believe we can have a joy in the Lord without engaging as well in this call, this responsibility, this stewardship. These work hand in hand. As we have joy in the Lord, we tell. As we tell, we have greater joy in the Lord. Here’s what Theodore Williams of India said: “We face a humanity that is too precious to neglect. We know a remedy for the ills of the world too wonderful to withhold. We have a Christ too glorious to hide. We have an adventure that is too thrilling to miss.”

**IV. The Aim of Missions: Joy in God is the aim of missions.**

***11*** *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;* ***12*** *let the field exult, and everything in it!*

He’s closing the same way he began. Did you notice that we ended where we began? We started with the foundation of missions. What’s the fuel of missions? Well, it’s joy in God. But then we ended with the goal of missions. Where are we all moving toward? After we have this fuel ignited, to what end are we pushing toward, pressing into? Well, it’s joy in the Lord. So both the motivation for missions is our rejoicing in God, but the end, what we all desire, this is what God is calling us to do, is to gather people in so that they would rejoice in God. That’s the aim. That’s the bulls-eye of missions. That’s what we’re chasing after. God is glorified when nations are glad and rejoice in Him.

Here’s what John Piper writes. I’ve gleaned so much from him in regard to this foundation, this aim of really all of life and particularly of missions. This is what this beloved pastor writes: “A God-centered theology must be a missionary theology. If you say that you love the glory of God, the test of your authenticity is whether you love the spread of that glory among all the peoples of the world. Or another way to say it is that worship is the fuel and goal of missions. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. God’s passion is to be known and honored and worshipped among all the peoples. To worship Him is to share that passion for His supremacy among the nations.”

That’s kind of convicting, isn’t it? If worship existed throughout all the world, we wouldn’t need missions. But it doesn’t exist throughout all the world, and that’s why we present the Gospel. It’s so that people will be drawn into the worship of our great God. So the applications, and I’ve given you several. I would urge you to grab hold of some of these, won’t you? And ask that God would transform your heart and your family and our church. Here’s the ones I want to close you with, and then I want to share a story.

1. Set aside time and energy to rejoice in the Lord each day.

It’s another way of saying an application I made earlier. Set aside time and energy to rejoice in the Lord every day, to sing to the Lord a new song.

2. Make it your life’s ambition to lead others to sing with joy to the LORD.

If you’re a husband, make that an ambition. “That’s what I want my wife to be, and I want to help her.” If you’re a wife, “That’s what I want my husband to be. That’s how I’m praying for him.” If you’re a father or a mother, “That’s what I want my children to be.” That’s the only thing I really care about. As a dad, that’s the only thing I really care about for my kids. That’s the only thing I care about for little Malachi Alexander. The one thing I care about is not whether he’d get a certain college degree, get a certain stable job, and live in a certain neighborhood. I care that he would sing with joy to the Lord. That’s it! And if that happens, then everything is wonderful. And if that doesn’t happen, then everything is dark and sad for me.

3. Ask God to give you His vision for His world.

I want to talk to you about one of the couples that was up here, as we close—David and Carol Beakley. I call them the founders of the modern missions movement at Bethany. I call them that because this church had not sent out any missionaries, at least in my reading of its history, had not sent out any missionaries for fifty years. That’s a long time not to send anybody out. There was a Sunday that God brought Dave and Carol. Carol would say she was an unbeliever when she came. Dave would say, “I was far from the Lord.” And they came, and the first time they didn’t like it. There was actually a missionary speaker from Africa. They didn’t like anything about this church. They left and were never coming back. Then about a year later, they decided to come back. It was their neighbor that kept pestering them. “Come to church with us.” They still came. She was an unbeliever. He would say, “I think I was a believer, but I was far from the Lord. I had no connection practically, on a daily basis.

They had four kids. And Dave’s life was going great by every outside way of thinking. He had this great job. He was his own boss. Nobody bossed him around. He was the owner of his company. He lived out in northwest. He was the only guy. He was in charge of the whole factory. He was making a great salary. It was a company that was growing. It was moving. There were only good things for him. But as he came, he heard the Gospel and God just struck his heart. And he opened up his heart to the Lord, and Carol did together. God did this transforming work, and they were hungry to know God.

They would come to an early morning Bible Study. They’d come to other Bible Studies. They would talk to everybody in the church they knew that could help them and encourage them. And many people did. Shortly after that, Dave said, “Ritch, I think God’s calling me to go to Seminary.” Now again, at that point, our church had not supported anyone to go to Seminary. And so, when he said, “let’s talk over this,” after talking, we confirmed that we think that’s what the Lord would have for you. And our church then said, “Dave and Carol, we believe it’s our responsibility to help you because we believe God has called you to this.” It’s the first time our church did this. It was a big hurdle, but that’s what this church decided to do. And they went off to Seminary. And here’s what their prayer was. “Lord, anywhere but Africa.” (Congregational Laughter!)

They went through Seminary, and you know the story. At the end of Seminary, God called them to Africa. They got part of such a great ministry, a Seminary for nationals. And I can’t tell you how many nationals have been really transformed and would say, “My life is totally different because Dave Beakley is here. And my ministry is totally different.” One of the things that the Seminary students would do after the first year of sitting under Dave and some of the other professors, is they would repent over their sermons. They would repent with tears because they would say, “We didn’t know any better. We were preaching false gospel and we didn’t know it.” And God worked in their heart so now there are dozens and dozens and dozens throughout Africa, who are preaching the true Gospel and people are coming to know Christ.

About ten years ago, two little boys knocked on Dave and Carol’s house. They live in a pretty big city. They knocked on Dave and Carol’s door. These two little boys snuck across the border from Zimbabwe. They had no food. They had nowhere to go. And they happened upon Dave and Carol Beakley’s house. And they said, “Could we have food?” “Of course! Come on in.” Dave and Carol continued to offer them their home. One of them, because he had already lived the street life, he stayed there I think about a month, and then he left because he was still drawn to the allure of street life and being independent and all that was part of that. I think he was only about 14. This other boy I think was 11 or so.

They kept this young man, and this young man’s name was Handsome. His name was Handsome because he says, “The only thing I remember anyone saying to me was, Handsome.” He doesn’t know his real name. He has no papers. So Dave and Carol loved him. They couldn’t legally adopt him because he had no papers. It would have been illegal to try to do so. They homeschooled him. They guided him. They counseled him. Over the past few years, Handsome though, as he’s grown into manhood, has wandered from the faith. And just a couple days ago, Dave wrote me. I’ll see if I can get through it. He says:

“Sadness is draped over the Beakley household today. This morning, I received a phone call that informed me that Handsome was killed in a motor accident last night (Friday). We don't know the full scope of the details, but I went with Joseph Mahloala…”

This is one of the guys that Dave discipled through the Seminary. He’s a pastor now and is an amazing guy!

“…this morning to the forensic unit at the Public Hospital and identified the body. To be sure, it was Handsome.

There is much to contemplate, and Carol and I really tried to involve Handsome without life, or even "push" him to a Gospel-centered life. There have been many difficulties, and the young man battled with bitterness towards life (it was tough for him) and he isolated himself a lot.

Life is momentary and yet we still secure ourselves to our long term plans right after we make them. The Gospel is always first and foremost, despite our daily difficulties in the ministry. The fearsome wrath of the Lamb should ever be before us in all our interactions with people who are either completely lost, or spiritually shortsighted and blind.

Please pray for Carol and I as we go into Sunday morning's service tomorrow. My heart is heavy yet also reflective on the meaning of a Savior who has overcome death, sin, and the devil. What a joy when the real import of that victory becomes realized and the hated realities of life on this earth which burdened the apostle John are evacuated from the planet by over overcoming and a worthy champion. Until then, we preach Christ, and Him crucified.

David”

So knowing the grace of God and knowing the fear of the Lord, we proclaim Jesus. Sowing seeds, knowing not what the Lord would do with them, but knowing that He is worthy. So we sing to Him a new song. And we say to all the earth, “Come! Sing with us because He’s worthy.”