**Proclaiming the Gospel, Part 1**

**Romans 15:14-33 (ESV)**

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We’re going to be reading from Romans chapter 15 today. We’ve been studying this great letter for over two years now, and we’re coming to the close. We have this section and then the last chapter. Paul is kind of reviewing his testimony to them of his ministry in the Gospel. And by reviewing his testimony, he is urging the saints in Rome and us today, to be involved; to commit ourselves to Christ’s work. So Paul, again, is testifying of his own personal experience in ministry for the Lord.

***14*** *I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.* ***15*** *But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God* ***16*** *to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* ***17*** *In Christ Jesus then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.* ***18*** *For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,* ***19*** *by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;* ***20*** *and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation,* ***21*** *but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”*

***22*** *This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you.* ***23*** *But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you,* ***24*** *I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.* ***25*** *At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.* ***26*** *For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.* ***27*** *For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in their material blessings.* ***28*** *When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.* ***29*** *I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.*

***30*** *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,* ***31*** *that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints,* ***32*** *so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.* ***33*** *May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

We’re going to pray and ask that God would help us receive His Word by faith this day. God’s Word is powerful every time we hear it, but it needs to fall on good soil. And that good soil is a heart that is humble, a heart that is ready to receive by faith. Without that, the power of the Word will lie dormant in our lives and in our church. I pray for you, I pray for this church, I pray for my own heart. It’s through that we can see God’s power at work in us as a church family and in our own lives.

In 1983, John Scully was the President of Pepsi. He had spent most of his life turning this company into one of the world’s most popular brands. He was riding the wave of his successes when a 28 year-old college drop out asked to have a meeting with him. This young man had recently started a company, and he wanted to ask Scully to quit *PepsiCo* and join him. Can you imagine the courage, the boldness to even ask such a thing of such a successful man? But this young man was convinced that Scully was the man for his company. So he asked Scully, “Will you come join my company?” Scully said, “No, I won’t.” It happened at least twice. Finally, this young man made his last pitch. He famously asked, “Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?” Well, Scully left Pepsi that year and joined Steve Jobs at a start up company named *Apple*. And *Apple* did end up changing the world.

What happened in John Scully’s heart to make him take such a risk? He realized that investing his life in something important is far more significant than investing his life in something successful. He wanted to be part of something meaningful. Success and significance are not the same. This story reminds me of another one that happened 2,000 years earlier. It’s recorded in Matthew 4.

**Matthew 4:18** While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

That was their vocation. They owned a small business. They were doing fairly well in it.

**Matthew 4:19-20** And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

When Jesus calls us to follow Him, He calls us to do something with our lives that is eternally significant. It’s not merely a call to come to church or to pray a prayer or to join a group. It’s a call to be about His mission. Jesus’ calling upon us is far more significant than leading a company that sells tasty sugar water, or even leading a company that sells really, really cool and helpful computers, I-phones, tablets and watches. These endeavors do impact people’s lives every day in this present age. But these endeavors affect only the part of life that is passing away. We must not place our meaning, our purpose in our life, to things that are passing away.

When Jesus calls us to be “fishers of men,” He calls us to a mission in life that transforms the deepest part of human experience now, presently, and forever. It’s a calling to help others experience eternity with God. There is no calling that is more significant, that’s more worthy of our full devotion, of our full commitment, than the one that Jesus gives to us. What does it mean to become a “fisher of men”? I think Jesus explains this word picture at the end of Matthew’s Gospel. At the end, He gives this commission to His disciples.

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

I want you to observe that Jesus gave this commission to the whole church, not just to a few talented believers. Every one of Jesus’ disciples are called to be fishers of men! To be a fisher of men, according to Matthew 28, involves two actions. First, it means that we as a people would present the Gospel to unbelievers; that would be part of our life. And secondly, that we would be a people who would teach the Gospel to believers.

To fish for men means that we share the Gospel with people who don’t yet believe in Jesus. That is, that we boldly present Jesus as Savior, as Lord, as King to people around whom God sets us; our family, our friends, our coworkers, our classmates, waiters, waitresses, soccer coaches, grocery checkers, doctors, nurses, clients, teachers, any one else who God sovereignly ordains to enter into the circle of our life. God says, “Fish for men! Share the Gospel with them. Make sure that if they touch your life, they hear about Jesus.” That’s the issue.

To be a fisher of men also means that we encourage and teach other believers whom God brings to us. After a person comes to faith in Jesus, we continue to “fish” for them; to help them grow until they come to completion in Christ at that future Day. Every believer needs the ministry of other fishers of men in their lives in order to grow in Christ; in order to overcome sin, in order to persevere under trials, in order to fulfill Christ’s mission. As we fish for men, we call other believers to live their lives in obedience and worship to God.

So when Simon and Andrew listened to Jesus’ call, they immediately dropped their nets and followed Him. They left their vocations in order to labor toward the mission of Jesus 100% of the time. Jesus does not call every disciple to leave their vocation to follow Him. But, the call to commit wholeheartedly to fish for men, is universal among His followers. In fact, God has most of His believers to stay in their vocations. But in those vocations, they still say, “My main priority in life, my purpose in life, my mission in life is to glorify God by fishing for men.” To be a follower of Jesus means that we actively embrace Jesus’ call to fish for men. That’s what it means to be a follower. Jesus does not call every one of His disciples to change their vocation in life, but He does call every one of His disciples to change their mission in life. So we have to ask ourselves the question: Am I a follower of Jesus? And is my mission the mission to which Jesus calls me? And really, those are two of the same questions.

Paul begins this letter to the church in Rome by announcing His zeal for proclaiming Jesus. He says in Romans 1:

**Romans 1:15-16** So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

So that’s how he begins his letter. And then all through this letter, we’ve seen how he has expounded upon this Gospel and proclaimed it and applied it to our lives. Now at the end of this letter, Paul talks about his work in serving Jesus in Gospel ministry. I think he intends, by talking about his own testimony of his work in Gospel ministry, to motivate the believers in Rome to grab hold of the vision, a vision that God has given them for ministry, a vision for fishing for men.

So a practical question that we may ask ourselves is simply: Am I devoted to fishing for men? Are my priorities in my life aligned with this eternally significant mission? You see, we as believers have to wrestle with this. We certainly want to say that we are. But this is where we either are truly connecting to eternal significance or we are losing out on eternal significance and we are living for things that are passing away.

I don’t ask this question for the purpose of creating guilt. Guilt is not a helpful motivator, I don’t think, in most cases. I ask this question because I want you to experience the joy of a life filled with significance. I see that as much as I connect to this mission, my life is filled with significance. And I see it in others when I see others grab hold of this mission of fishing for men, of sharing the Gospel with unbelievers, of teaching believers how to walk with God and worship God. Their life is filled with significance. They don’t ask these despairing questions. They say, “I know what my life is about now.” The quest has received an answer. Significance in our lives flows from serving our Lord Jesus with faith and zeal. “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) That is the motto of every active follower of Jesus. For me to live is Christ, and to die is only going to be gain.

Today, as we open up our Bibles to Romans 15, we learn seven central qualities of a person who is connecting their life to Jesus’ mission. I trust you’ll be encouraged by these. God’s workers are

**1. Equipped by God for Gospel work. (15:14-15)**

God is the one who equips them. He calls them, but then He supplies them with everything they need.

***14*** *I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.* ***15*** *But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God*

Paul says, “I realize I’ve said some things that are really strong in this letter. And you might be a little irritated with me about it, but it’s only out of love for you.” Paul is encouraging these Roman Christians in their work for the Lord by commending them, encouraging them with this commendation in the work that God has already done in their assembly, in their own church. He wants them to remember that God is the one who prepares them for the daunting task of Christian ministry, of Gospel ministry.

Here, God mentions three ways that He equips us as His people for ministry to the Lord.

1. God gives us grace so that our hearts may now be “full of goodness.”

Until our hearts are full of goodness, we won’t want to be fishers of men. It’s the goodness of our heart, goodness that’s pure toward the Lord, but also a goodness with a desire for the benefit of others that fills us with a motivation in order to connect to Gospel ministry.

Remember that in Romans 3:12, Paul taught that “no one does good, not even one.” And so now he’s saying that God has filled them with all goodness. Well, how is that? He’s talking about the regenerating work of God’s Spirit. God Himself has given them a new heart. Their lives are not full of goodness because they’ve decided for their lives to be full of goodness. Or because they’ve worked hard in order to attain goodness. No, their lives are full of goodness because God, in His grace, has supplied goodness. He’s put it in their hearts to want to build Jesus’ church and to want to bless other people.

These are people who don’t need their arms twisted in order to be involved in Christ’s mission. They are people whose hearts have a desire to glorify God. Their hearts have a desire to show mercy to the poor. Their hearts have a desire to welcome the outcast, to teach God’s Word, to encourage those who are hurting, to pray for their brothers and sisters. And so we ask the question: Has God equipped my heart with such goodness? That is what the Holy Spirit does in the life of His people.

2. God gives us grace so that we may now be “filled with all knowledge.”

Both a new head and a new heart are needed for doing the work of Christ. This knowledge that we’re filled with is the knowledge of God Himself. It is a right and clear perception of who God is and what is important to Him. We attain this knowledge through the gift of God’s grace. We attain this knowledge through the Word that God gives us, through the Spirit that brings clarity and applies it to us and helps us understand God’s Word. Christian ministers of every kind, from nursery workers to elders, need knowledge from God in order to serve Him, in order to be a part of Gospel ministry. Without this knowledge, our service to God becomes idolatry. We’re building our own little kingdom. We’re doing it for ourselves. We’re painting a picture of God that’s not real, that’s not true, that’s not accurate. And so we need to be filled with all knowledge in order to be equipped. And God says, “I’m equipping you. I’m giving you everything you need to know in order to do My work in this world.” So again, we ask ourselves the question: Am I filled with all knowledge because of the gift of God’s Word?

God says that He equips us not only with goodness in our heart, not only with understanding in our minds, but notice He says

3. God gives us grace so that each one of us may be “able to instruct one another.”

That’s interesting! Everyone in God’s church is called to be a teacher in some way or some form, to one another. God designs His church in such a way that there is not one brother or sister inside the church who is not called to speak truth into other people’s lives. And God equips us for that. Now some, He gives a specific gift of teaching. But to everyone, He gives us a competence and ability to instruct one another with the Gospel and its application. We need one another. We need other people to speak into our lives. Every one of us does.

Now, the order that God sets in front of us here in verses 14 and 15 is very important. God gives first a heart of goodness, and then He gives a mind of understanding, a mind filled with knowledge, and then we’re competent to instruct. Then we’re competent to counsel others in their walk with God. So God is saying something remarkable! He says to this church, “Y’all as members who God’s grace has worked to change your heart, who God’s grace has worked so that now your mind is filled with clarity and understanding about who He is and what’s important to Him. God has given every one of you as members of this church, the ability then to instruct others.”

That word “instruct” is interesting as well. It’s much stronger than simply the word “inform.” It’s a word that means to correct, to admonish, to counsel. God equips not merely the elders of the church for the work of admonishing, correcting, teaching, counseling, but also the members of the church. Now, this ministry requires courage and love. Today, the church is often weak and worldly. It’s overrun by sin. It’s apathetic and filled with unbelief. It neglects love among the membership. And one of the reasons is that we aren’t ministering to each other the way God has designed us to minister to one another. If your heart has been filled with goodness and if your mind has been filled with an understanding, a knowledge of God, then God says you’re able to instruct, to correct, to admonish one another. And that’s what He calls us to. Too often in our sort of privatized world, we say, “Well that’s none of my business,” when we see another brother or sister straying away from the Lord into some disobedience. But God says, “No. If you’re part of the church and they’re part of the church, it is everyone’s business. It’s the business of the worship of God.”

One obstacle that many believers have in getting involved in Christian ministry is that they don’t feel very competent to do it. And God is simply telling us that though we’re not adequate in ourselves…That is an absolute truth. None of us are adequate to be able to minister to other people, to do God’s work in this world, left to ourselves. He’s saying, “But brothers and sisters, I am equipping you by My grace. I’m equipping you in your heart so that your heart is full of goodness and love. I am equipping you in your mind so that you have something true to say about Me. And I am giving you the ability, and I’m unleashing you to share and speak into one another’s lives so that together we might grow into this Holy Temple unto the Lord.”

So God’s workers are first equipped by God for Gospel work. And secondly God’s workers are

**2. Zealous to worship God. 15:16-17**

***15*** *But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God* ***16*** *to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.* ***17*** *In Christ Jesus then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.*

The word picture that Paul is painting here in verses 16 and 17 is very powerful. The term “minister” is not the normal word for “servant” or “minister” that is often applied in Scripture. Instead, it’s a word that is descriptive of a priest serving God in the Temple. Paul here considers the work that he’s doing for Christ as a sacred labor, a labor that is similar to the labor that a priest offers when he offers sacrifices in the Temple, prayers to God in the Temple on behalf of the people.

So if Paul is a minister and if we’re ministers of Christ, we’re priests, doing a priestly work, a priestly service, what are our sacrifices? What do we offer to God? It’s interesting because the word picture that Paul follows is, I don’t offer grain. I don’t offer animal sacrifices. What do I offer to God as a minister? What do we offer to God in our service to Him? He says, “What I offer to God is the lives of the Gentiles. The people who are being influenced by the Gospel work that I’m involved with. They’re my offering unto the Lord. They’re the ones whom God has sanctified to be an offering.” So He’s cleansed these new believers so that they are acceptable to God.

Now Paul is not taking credit for their spiritual transformation from being a sinner who is not acceptable to God, to becoming a saint who now is acceptable to be offered to God. Any person’s conversion and new birth is wholly a work of God. It’s what God does. But Paul is rejoicing that God is using him to do this miracle. And he celebrates that he is able to give this offering to God in worship. As a result of God using him, here are some Gentiles who have come to know Christ and are learning how to walk with Christ. And he says, “This is my offering unto God. It’s the people who provide me with an ability to worship God through this priestly service that God has called me to.” He considers his sufferings, his labors, his sleepless nights, his heartaches, his headaches all worth it, so that he could offer to God the people whom God allowed him to help into a relationship with God. That’s the picture.

Paul loves that he can offer to God such an offering. He says, “There’s nothing like it.” It’s fun to offer God a song. When we sing together and we really mean it; we don’t just sing like we mean it, we mean it. There’s a difference! That is an offering to God. When we offer a prayer that is filled with zeal and fire and hope and faith, that’s an offering to God. That’s a wonderful offering to God! When we offer a service of helping someone who is poor and destitute and helping them with material things, that’s an offering to God. It’s a wonderful offering to God! But here, Paul says this is the greatest thing of all! It’s to influence people so that they connect with God. “God has used me in this and it’s part of my worship. God is worthy of this and I want to be part of this. And I want y’all to be part of this kind of priestly service, this kind of worship to the Lord.” A zeal to present offerings to God that are pleasing to Him motivates our commitment to minister the Gospel to others.

Why do you spend time in the nursery? Why do you spend time welcoming people into this church? Why do you spend time in Awana, teaching kids? Why do you spend time being a Sunday School teacher? Why do you spend time out at the Connection Café just talking to people? Why do you spend time down at the Southside Mission? Why do you spend time in counseling to men and to women? Why do you do that? Why? Here’s the motivation. He says, “Because I want to offer to God an offering that is worthy of Him. And I get to influence people. They’re my offering. God, here it is! Thank you for using me.”

Any true ministry is first to God and then to people. So we don’t do this primarily for people. Yes, we love people as we do ministry, but ministry is first to the Lord as a priestly service to the Lord. This becomes our primary goal. We minister to the Lord for the same reason a priest in the Temple did in Old Testament times. It’s to simply honor the Lord, who is worthy of our worship. This is our passion!

So we ask ourselves an application question. Who am I influencing for Jesus through Christian ministry?Who am I helping to come to know Jesus as Savior? Who am I helping to walk with Jesus and worship Him? Every believer is given a special call and privilege and opportunity to influence others with the Gospel. God has equipped us. He’s given us every resource we need for this work. We don’t need special talents. We just need to use what God has given us and depend upon His Spirit and be faithful to His work. When God does use us to influence others for Christ, we are able to present those people to God as offerings of praise.

My wife was born again through the VBS ministry of a church in Rockford, IL. The VBS leader who taught her the Gospel is able to present my wife to God as an offering that is acceptable to God. My wife was then discipled early after her conversion by a Christian school teacher in Rockford. At that time, her home was not a Christ-centered home. That school teacher is able to present my wife to Godas an offering that is acceptable to God. She is sanctified by God’s Spirit as a result of the instruments that God used. What a privilege!

God’s workers are equipped by God to do His work. We are zealous to worship God. And God’s workers are, third

**3. Dependent on God’s power. 15:18-19**

***18*** *For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me…*

In other words, it’s not me. So, even as I boast about the work that God is doing through me, it’s not me. It’s all Christ. He’s the one doing the work. He’s the one accomplishing anything good.

*… to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed,* ***19*** *by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;*

We don’t boast about anything we accomplish. We know that any fruit that flows from a ministry that we’re involved in is born by the power of Christ. Jesus is the vine. We’re the branches. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. (John 15:5) So Paul says

***18*** *For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me…*

And he goes on to say it’s by the power of the Spirit of God that these things are accomplished. The people whom God uses to win the lost and build up the saints, we are jars of clay. That’s what we are. We’re just vessels. And we’re not even great vessels. We’re frail, cracked, unworthy vessels. That word picture is used in 2 Corinthians 4.

**2 Corinthians 4:5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord,…

That’s our message in its simplicity!

**2 Corinthians 4:5-7** …with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay,…

What’s the treasure? It’s the treasure of the Gospel. It’s the treasure of the knowledge of God. We have this treasure in jars of clay. It’s like capturing the Hope Diamond in a tattered cardboard box. He says that’s what this is like. It’s inexplicable why God wouldn’t put His treasure in something that is more impressive. But He doesn’t. We’re just simply jars of clay. And why does God do that? Here’s the reason why.

**2 Corinthians 4:7** …to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

We’re not very impressive. We’re not great orators. We are not people of great power. But here’s what we have. We have this treasure. And that treasure is a power unlike anything that this world knows. Because it’s a power not only to influence people on this horizontal plane, it’s a power to transform a soul, to make a person who is dead to God, alive to God. So we are people who are completely dependent upon God and upon His power.

I like the story that’s in Matthew, Mark and Luke’s gospel. It’s also in John 6. And it’s a very famous one. There’s a large crowd. They’re outside of the Sea of Galilee. And there’s nothing to eat.

**John 6:5-14** Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

Now, we know the end of the story, but imagine yourself being in the beginning of the story. Imagine yourself being a hungry little boy. And you’re the only one who had the wisdom to bring any food to the place. “Hey, can I have your lunch,” Andrew says. “What do you mean ‘have my lunch’? I brought my lunch for me. Why didn’t you bring a lunch?” (Laughter!) But this little boy had seen Jesus do miracles. He had heard the message of the Gospel. And I believe his heart was touched by it. He said, “If Jesus needs my lunch, let Him have it!”

Now, would we say that that young boy fed 5,000 people that day? No! But if that young boy hadn’t have given his five loaves and two fish, we don’t know what would have happened. He gave five loaves and two fish. He gave what he had. It was meager and small in comparison to the need. But God did something amazing with it! I just want to tell you that’s true of your life. You may only have five little biscuits and two little fish, but if you give them to the Lord, He’ll multiply them.

And what of those people who were impacted spiritually that day? Those whose lives were changed by the message of the Gospel that Jesus preached and the miracle that Jesus performed? What of them? That little boy is able to say as a priest in a temple, “Here God. Here’s an offering.” And he’s able to experience the joy of offering to God these who have been influenced by his service. God takes our weak efforts and He uses them to do miracles in the lives of His people.

In Christian ministry, we’re not trying to accomplish the very best that we can humanly accomplish. Too many churches are caught up just in that. In Christian ministry we are trusting on the power of the Spirit of God to work through us to accomplish what we could never achieve. So I want to ask you: Do you believe that God would do miracles through your life if you just simply offered Him what you have?

We’re going to take the rest of these qualities next week. But I want us to close with a take away. And it’s going to be a take away we’re going to think about next week. Will you invest your life in the greatest work ever offered? You’re given a job offer. God says, “I want you to be fishers for men.” We have to make a decision! If you’re a follower of Jesus, you either say, “Yes, Jesus. Where do I show up and at what time, and what would You have me to do specifically?” Or you say, “It’s a nice offer, but I think I want to invest my life somewhere else.”

We often neglect answering that question, and so we can kind of live with the comfort of not having rejected what Christ our Lord and Savior is calling us toward. But Jesus presses this to us. He presses by His Spirit and by His Word. And He does it, again, not to twist our arms into doing something that’s going to be bad for us and is just going to cost us. He does it to offer us life. He says, “I’ve come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly.” And I can tell you that there’s no one who connects with God and becomes a fisher of men who afterwards says, “Man! I wish I wouldn’t have done that.” Because this is a life of eternal significance. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Or course, if you don’t know Jesus as your Savior, if your eyes haven’t been opened to the great treasure that He is, and the great treasure that God is in all of His glory, really, none of this that I’ve said is for you. God is not calling people who He hasn’t changed, who He hasn’t equipped, who He hasn’t transformed, to serve Him. Instead, He’s coming to you as this loving God who wants to bless you. And He says, “I’m giving you my Son and I’m offering Him to you so that you can connect to Me and you can worship Me and you can know Me.” So if you’ve never received that gift, that’s where it starts. It’s not with something you do for God. It’s something you first receive from God as a gift. And that’s where to start. Just call out to God today and say, “God, I don’t have a Savior right now, and I need one. I know you sent your Son, Jesus to die on the cross for me. And I know He rose the third day. He’s the only one who is the Son of God. He’s the only one who I can call on to trust to take care of the sin that I have in my heart and in my life. And today, I want to embrace Him.” And if you call out in faith, God simply says, “You will be saved!” You will be called God’s child! Won’t you do that?