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SUNDAY SERVICE

NOVEMBER 17, 2013

We can sing with all of our souls and hearts and minds to how wonderful and majestic and powerful and beautiful you are this morning. Thank you for everything that you give us, thank you for giving us voices to shout praise ...

First off we have some guys heading out to Africa in the next week, a bit of an Oooh!

Marvelous, firstly Steve Sieger is he here? Give us a wave Steve? Are the dates up there, is it the 29th? 26th. So off to Botswana with Youth for Christ, and I think we were learning fairly recently that Steve has got Africa on his heart and I think that came, when he was a little youngster, probably half the size that he is now, in this church. God can take our young people and can flick the switch, can't he? Ignite the passion, and Steve is a Godly man of passion going off to help in Botswana.

The Youth and Children's team, Alan, Helen Douse, Helen Ray and Carlos, I think they are all here today, are heading off to Burkina Faso this Wednesday for a week or so, to help with kids club there. So that is awesome isn't it? To help you, Mark and Cheryl, the good work going up there. Let's lift these guys up in prayer, there will be more prayer for them tonight. Let's lift them up in prayer right now.

Father we bless you, for hearts sacrificed and submitted to you, that you have put a passion in these folk to serve you, to share the good news, to bless people with your gospel. We pray for great travelling mercies, we pray for good health throughout these trips Lord, and we pray for fruit for their labours as well. In Jesus name, Amen.

I mentioned earlier on about the Philippines, we prayed for that, maybe we can put the slide up? It's on the front of the insight today, that there is the opportunity to give to the Philippines, we're proposing that we team up with Tear Fund there, on your insight there is a web address so that you can give on the web. However, next Sunday morning -- it's family time across BEC when we go to Harris, there is going to be a special offering, so you have a week to think and pray and prepare for that, and there are these little envelopes that David Cawler has kindly prepared, out in the foyer on the welcome desk, for gift aiding your offering. So if you are a taxpayer your money can go further, it can multiply by at least 25%, or around that, if you gift aid it. So that's an opportunity to give to the Philippines next week.

Can I introduce you to somebody you know and love and that is Rachel Smith. Now, Fred and Rachel have been serving with doing the shoe box appeal for a whacking great 23 years! Give them a clap! (applause)

I have my able assistant with me this morning! Right, it's 38 sleeps till Christmas! Yeah! You're more excited than the first service anyway, they went urgh!

Who is excited about Christmas? Yes, lots of hands. Only Carol Smith was excited in the first service, so there you go. Yes, it's an exciting time isn't it? But you know there are some children who won't have any presents at Christmas, some children don't even know it's Christmas. But we're going to help them to know that by sending them shoe boxes this year. And I just want you to watch this video, some of you may have seen it before, but it doesn't hurt to be reminded.

Our shoe boxes from Rugby and district are going to the Ukraine this year, so we'll be bringing the boxes out shortly, so just sit back and watch the video, get your tissues at the ready.

(video)

Technical issues right now, so my proposal is that actually we bring out the shoe boxes now, so if you have got a shoe box and it hasn't already come out to the front, why don't you do that. Let's get the children to - if you've got your shoe boxes ready, give us a wave and we'll get some of the children to come out and get them -- some of you guys want to come ...

Let's make an enormous wall of shoe boxes here. Fred was telling me that each year about 3,000 shoe boxes are in his house, that came from Rugby, which is fantastic. Then we join with, I think Nuneaton and then in Lemmington they are being collected as well. Across Warwickshire there are 21,000 shoe boxes going out this Christmas, which is fantastic, are we ready to rock and roll? Okay, good.

(video plays)

They bring so much joy don't they? Now Katie is going to read a poem which we found in a consignment of shoe boxes that came this week.

There is someone called Santa, that's what I've heard
but he doesn't come here, we're in the Third World,
he visits children with presents for Christmas Day,
all over the land, that's what people say,
and the children write letters saying just what they'd like,
a doll or an engine, a teddy, a bike,
and I've heard that they get what they asked for, and more,
I guess that's this Santa must have a large store.
These are the stories that have been handed down,
but I'm in the Third World and he has never been around.
Then only last year a big plane flew in,
it was making a loud noise, a terrible din.
Then a man with something held to his face,
shouted to villagers to meet at this place.
men and women were there to greet us with smiles,
their plane was full of boxes, piles upon piles.
They were covered in paper, all lovely and bright,
silver and gold, red, blue and white

Do I get a whole box? Is there one for me?
Has someone sent us magic for free?
I hope that I'm not too old to be given
a beautiful box of my own... I'm 11,
I looked around to see how the happy faces glowed.
Bare feet dancing in the muddy road
and into every outstretched hand a precious box was placed,
the children shouted thank you, and home again they raced.
I received my parcel and shed a tear of joy,
as it said upon the label 'for an 11 year old boy'.
There is someone called Santa, that is what I've heard,
but now I know he is out there, I believe every word.

We also know that there is someone bigger and much better than Santa, and that's Jesus, that's the one that we want to share with the children who receive our shoe boxes. Every child who receives a shoe box gets to hear about God's love, that's the magic of the shoe box really, that we can take them into all sorts of places, and tell people, boys and girls and men and women that God loves them and that's what Christmas is all about.

So Fred and I are going to Romania in December to give out shoe boxes, so that will be very exciting. I said our shoe boxes from here are going to the Ukraine, so we're going to pray now for that work. Thank you.

Heavenly father, we do thank you that you give us so much, we thank you for all the blessings that we enjoy here in Rugby, our homes, our food, our families, our friends, a lovely building to meet in. We thank you for so many blessings that you bestow upon us. We would think of those in Eastern Europe, who haven't got these facilities and these blessings, and we pray Lord that as the shoe boxes come to these communities that they will bring so much joy, but most of all that these people will come to know you as their saviour. We thank you for each one who has come to know you in the past, through the shoe box campaign. We pray for all those checking and packing boxes at the moment, we pray for the lorries as they travel the long distances across Eastern Europe.

We pray for all those who distribute them, the boxes to. We just thank you for everyone who will receive a box. And we would pray too again for those in the Philippines, no doubt they will receive boxes from Australia, and we just pray that they may be a blessing to them as well. So we thank you in Jesus name. Amen.

Great, we'll ask the worship group to come back up again now, we are going to take up our offering through this next song, which normally the children help with as well, which is fantastic. Then at the end of this song the children can leave for their activities.

Shall we stand together?

Song:

You lived among the least of these

The weary and the weak.

And it would be a tragedy for me to turn away

Because all my needs, you have supplied, when I was dead you gave me life

How could I not give it away so freely?
And I ... I follow you into the homes that are broken
I'll follow you into the world
I'll meet the needs for the poor and the needy, God
I'll follow you into the world.
Use my hands, and use my feet
To make your kingdom come.
Through the corners of the Earth, until your work is done.
Because faith without works is dead
And on the cross your blood was shed
How could we not, give it away so freely
And I'll follow you into the homes that are broken
I'll follow you into the world
I'll meet the needs for the poor and the needy, God
I'll follow you into the world.
I'll follow you into the homes that are broken
I'll follow you into the world
I'll meet the needs for the poor and the needy, God
I'll follow you into the world ...
And I give all myself
Yes, I'll give all myself
Yes, I'll give all myself
To you ...
And I'll give all myself
Yes, I'll give all myself
Yes I'll give all myself
To you ...
And I'll ...
I'll follow you into the homes that are broken
I'll follow you into the world
I'll meet the needs for the poor and the needy, God
I'll follow you into the world!

Lord God, thank you for your provision to us as a family, thank you Lord for the money that people have given this morning, in the offering bags. Father God, I ask that you would help us to spend that money wisely, for your kingdom come, Lord. And Lord, I want to thank you for the shoe boxes, I thank you that we have so much, that we can give just this small shoe box to one child, it will change their lives forever. That it will make them feel loved and Lord to do that is a very special things. I pray Lord you wouldn't let us grow complacent about that, that Lord we wouldn't forget about how much just a little bit can change somebody's life.

Lord God I want to pray for the children now as they go out to Glow and to Wizkids and to creche, Lord thank you for our children. Thank you Lord that you have them in your hands, thank you Lord for their leaders. Thank you God that you have them in your hands. Thank you that they are leading our children into a life and a relationship with you and Lord, we ask you to bless them this morning, and father God, as Roy

comes to speak to us, Lord let that be a challenge to us.

Lord I know what's coming and it's already been a challenge to me, so Lord I ask that you would really speak to us this morning through Roy. Amen.

So children it's your time to go out to your groups.

As I introduce Roy, we talked a bit about family early on. There is a very important event happening in Roy's family fairly soon. So I think when we welcome Roy we should call him ... hello Grandpa Roy! Welcome Roy.

There's lots of things we can say about that! Let's just pray, Lord I thank you that you have gripped this man of God from a very young age Lord, and you've used him amazingly to share the good news of Jesus. And Father I just thank you what's happening with hope, through this land, the churches uniting together, and reaching out in word and deed. So Father, just pray that you come, give Roy a special anointing now, Lord we pray that we'll be good soil to hear the word and take up the challenge in Jesus name, Amen.

Good morning, it's great to be with you, thrilling to have the opportunity, it's just a challenge when you do three, I feel bad whenever I go to Cawston, you breeze in, they've already started, you talk, drop a bombshell or something, then leave! And that's always a challenge, but the good news is, and it also means that from here this morning as well, I can say certain things and they talk about it, but you get to challenge me afterwards! Because I'll be here.

But it's a great joy to be with you. I'm picking up -- Paul asked me to speak on the evangelistic gift to the church, flowing out of the mission agenda that we're looking at and what it means to be mission. You've covered Apostles?

Paul was getting a little nervous at that point! You've also covered Prophets? And this is now evangelism is and is what we're speaking, and I can't believe he asked me to speak on that!

I'm really excited to have this opportunity to share with you, then you are going to pick up on the teachings. It all flows out of Ephesians 4, we're going to look at the master apostle evangelist, Paul, we'll also look at Philip and Stephen who declared to be evangelists and we're going to look at an admonishment that Paul gives to Timothy to do the work of evangelism. But before we start, if I was to mention "evangelist" what's the name you immediately think of?

Billy Graham, what an amazing man of God! Phenomenal, he was 95 on the 7th of November. And on his 95th birthday he is still, probably 70 years of Ministry, on his 95th birthday, they produced a DVD, 29 minutes long, Billy Graham sitting in his armchair, very deliberate speech, and then they had two stories, a girl who was suicidal in a challenge and came to faith in Jesus Christ, and a guy, as a back drop to the story.

They were going to put it out on Christian TV in the States, then they thought no, this is Dr Billy Graham, so they went to Mr Murdock and said we'd love you to put this out on Sky and Fox in the States, right across, coast to coast. And he said I will, because it's Billy Graham.

Billy Graham is a statesman par excellence for the gospel. He was absolutely phenomenal, he is still alive, just, but he is still alive. And he was true to his calling right down every decade that he served Jesus.

He provided a focus for the church. But there were a number of things about Billy Graham's Ministry that you need to understand. He never distracted from the gospel. He never got into other stuff. If you like he was a purist for the gospel.

The other thing about Billy Graham, was that he was an evangelist that would always call people -- he was known for it. I want you to get up out of your seat, okay, you come now! And literally hundreds, thousands, millions of people got up out of their seat.

He would normally follow it by "The buses will wait" but I can give you church leader after church leader after church leader who say that was the moment where they encountered Jesus Christ. That's what the evangelist brings. And the evangelist within this plurality team that we see in Ephesians 4 is a very important part of the team, because what it brings is the edge to everything we do. It says yes we can be missional, but are people coming to Christ?

It often gives targets -- when Moody came to this country, a well known evangelist, he said within a year I want to see 10,000 people run to Jesus Christ, but church leaders had never used that statement, they said we do it all to the glory of God, we're not really certain about numbers; 10,000? He said how will I know if I have been successful? How will I know? If I'm an evangelist, I want to see fruit. Then Finney and a number of these people that engaged and had the evangelistic edge was constantly being brought to the church of Jesus Christ.

There were a few other characters that were part of this thing, you may not know Palou, very significant, Nicky Gumbel, and Alpha has been phenomenal, Rico Ties -- but they have all kept the edge of saying yes, it's process, yes it's journey, but there must be a crisis, there must be where we call people for response, that's what evangelists do.

And that's why we encourage a rhythm of mission so the church does that as a part of its calendar of mission. So that we are known, yeah we can be known in the community for doing great things and terrific things. But we also proclaim a gospel where Jesus died, risen, he can forgive, he can set free, it's a brand new life. Amen. So we have to declare it. There is no escape from declaring it. So that's what we are going to look at.

Just before we get into Paul, Philip, Stephen, there is another guy who was a businessman in the North of England, he is called Arthur Rank. And Arthur ran a flower company, it was mega, really big, making millions. But he was also in a Methodist Chapel and every Sunday morning he ran a Sunday School class, he was there every single Sunday, running the class. But he was an evangelist, and he said what we're doing here, what we do in church isn't working, we've got to find new methods, we have to find new ways. When I took over Youth for Christ, after it had been around 50 years, it was at a bit of a low ebb, I read a book called Built to Last, it looked at top companies that remained top of the league for 50 years. I thought surely there is something we can learn from that?

In one of the chapters, there were various chapters, but one chapter that actually said all these companies maintained their core but they innovated at the edges. There was constant innovation. And I think sometimes when we see innovation in the body of Christ we think we've lost our core. We haven't lost our core because the core is the gospel. But the methods that we use must be contextualised in the context in which we now live, Amen.

That's what we have to do, remain true to this, but let's have innovation. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work, it's not the end of the world! It will just give us a great memory. Do you remember when we tried that? What a disaster! Let's try something else. The Salvation Army started growing again, because it's given permission to the church leaders to fail. To have a go. To just have a go.

So Arthur Rank, he thought we're not communicating in the way we do church, let's use films, so he created a couple of films and went to the film company that owns the rights to the cinemas -- in his day some people weren't certain about "sin"-emas, but what happened was he went to them -- come on let's get with the programme! (laughs)

And then, what he did was went to see them and say; I've produced a movie, it was a very good movie but it did have a Christian value and ethos. The company said great, we've seen the movie, but actually we're not going to show it in our cinemas.

He came out of the meeting, he had gone with a financial director, he came out of the meeting and said to the financial director, why don't you see how much they're worth? He then discovered how much they were worth, within a month he had bought them out. So he said you're going to show my film now! He set up the Rank Foundation. He set up the film company, the guy with the gong! Why? To communicate the gospel. That's an evangelist. Then he said this is great, but we can't show these films in cinemas only.

Some of them were shown in Methodist churches, he thought that's not working either, he said we need a central hall that is known for celebrations for parties, and can also show our films. So every Central Hall that's a Methodist Central Hall that you would have seen, he funded it, so that the gospel could be preached.

You see if you have a passion, as an evangelist you will do whatever you can to get this message out. And he had means. And because he had means, he used that for the proclamation of the gospel. We're littered with this, that's why I say as we look at this, of the church of Jesus Christ, let's understand that the edge that we bring to everything that we do; and one Thessalonians 4 says we do good, of course we do, we love our neighbours, that's what we do, that's a given. But we also communicate the gospel, but how do we do it in the context that we find ourselves?

Turn with me to Acts chapter 8, we are going to look at one of these people. We're going to look at Stephen and we're also going to look at evangelist Philip. Most people don't bring Bibles, have you noticed that? They always think it's on the screen. I think that's -- I don't know what I think about that, interestingly! Maybe you have all got it on your iPhone, probably, but let me tell you also, the Bible is coming out on the 30th November. What? Yeah, on Channel 5.

There is a series on the Bible. Channel 5 have bought the rights to it. It was shown in America and 100 million people watched it. It is absolutely amazing. It's authentic, it's real. It's powerful. The episodes within, it talks about creation, talks about bad choices, then it talks about gospel and Jesus Christ. It kicks off at 9 o'clock, the reason is that it's right and authentic, but it's gospel and brilliant. What I am saying to people is you can use this, you can embrace what's happening, invite your neighbours around, discuss it. You know what else? Channel 5 they are in the Express Newspaper, Hello Magazine and various others, so they are going to promote the Bible in those magazines. How cool is that?

And then they are going to make the Bible available with the same cover as that in Waterstones, WH Smith, right across where everyone can access the Bible, they contacted us, why? Because we do Bibles, apparently!

Just a quick aside; on our Diamond Jubilee Bible, where we sold three quarters of a million, we were the second highest selling book in the UK in 2012! Beat only by a certain other book, called Shades of Grey! (laughs)

So they said can we put your logo on the back of this, because we think it will link with church and connect with community. God will do amazing things when you push out, and we have an opportunity with the Bible.

So you now have your Bible in front of you, Acts chapter 8, let's read together, I'm just going to look at this, but before we do, in Acts 8 let me give you a context, in Acts 6. Philip and Stephen are commissioned to do the gift of evangelism and also care for people. Let me give you a context of what's happening in Acts 6.

In Acts 6 the church is growing. Any church that grows is also a context for complaining. Always. I have not been to any church that has grown where it hasn't provided a context for complaining.

I used to remember ... when I knew everybody that went to church ... I liked it when we had one service ... now we have two! And I don't know people ... we had a small cell group and then we grew and they moved us ... I don't like it now!

Growth is always a context for complaining, isn't that good news, Paul? (laughs)

If you go into it knowing that you'll have less problems. But, the context for complaining, then people bring stuff to the leadership team, what they bring to the leadership team is really helpful, because every leader has a blind spot. All leadership teams have blind spots. So what happens, I was driving up the M1 yesterday from Bedford (audio lost)

So listen, they won't have the whole picture, so sometimes you need to bring to them issues, because there is some blind spots. So they bring the issues from Deuteronomy, you are not caring for widows and orphans. The leadership team say oh yeah you're right! Oh no, you're right, thanks, brilliant. We'll now develop a strategy and what we do in that strategy is delegate, find new leaders, that's the way you grow. You move into a new season.

So they said okay we're not going to do it, we know our calling, so they find other people, they find these two characters, Philip and Stephen. They say Philip would you please sort out the widows and orphans? Yeah, we're up for that, that's good. Following the Holy Spirit, look at the end verse in 7 Acts 6, what's the context? The church grows again! So we're meant to be growing. Amen.

That's what we're meant to do.

We're not just a group that meets. We are growing, we are impacting others with the gospel. So in 8, this is where we read, he then realised he has been commissioned as an evangelist, the church is scattered, Philip in Samaria, those who had been scattered he preached, wherever they went. Philip went to Samaria and preached the messiah, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, impure spirits came out, many were paralysed, lame, imperfect -- and there was great joy in the city.

I wanted to ask Philip two questions -- first was, what did you preach? Well he preached Christ crucified, he preached forgiveness, that Jesus Christ was alive, the Holy Spirit was at work, there were supernatural signs and wonders, but what words did he use? How did he get his audience? Because that's what I struggle with. Some of the words and language we use is the language of Zion and people that are outside of Zion, outside of the community of faith don't get it. Does the sin word work? I don't think it does, most people I speak to don't think they are sinners, maybe we need a new word, maybe selfishness, that helps. How do I communicate, what's the context? I want to know what was behind this?

First of all he had a passion and he preached, but secondly what was the language, what did he do? And this revival was kicking off, it was phenomenal. And I just love some of the elements that we see in here, what he's preaching, because there is non-Christians in the audience, they are shrieking, spirits, all sorts of things kicking off. They wanted to be in a meeting like that? I don't, I'm scared when I am in meetings like that! But God is clearly doing something amazing in this Acts.

So then, we see it grow. And it grows and grows. And then he is called and he is called out of there to go alongside a chariot, and Philip and the Ethiopian, this is the tail end of the chapter, this is a gift to an evangelist, to anyone. Because as he is going along, he discovered that the guy in the chariot is reading the scriptures. This is a gift! Hey listen, there are people in our community that are ripe, they are asking some big questions. They don't get it. But they are asking how do I get significance? How do I sense purpose? I feel alone, I feel isolated, some of them even turn to the Bible and read it.

We need to be there -- so as he comes along side this chariot, he then says I can explain that to you. Now a teacher would do that, but the evangelist says, hang on a minute, once I've done this teaching I'm going to move to the next level, that's what evangelists do. So he says it's great all this teaching, but you need to do something. Here's water, what about getting baptised? That's what evangelists do. They provoke, it's great all this teaching, but what are you going to do? That's what we do. We provoke that response. That's what Billy Graham does when he says get up out of your seat.

I was preaching at a Youth for Christ gathering, there was about 500 young people there, it was an amazing gig. I turned up a little bit late and I did a 20 minute talk. I don't know that I was particularly brilliant, but at the end I just said if you want to give your life to Jesus Christ I'd love you to come forward, 150 kids came forward. What an anointed evangelist! No, I just do what the greatest gift has given me to do. That's what I do.

This youth leader was there, he came up to me, he said I'm really angry with you! Isn't it interesting? People don't have any problem with nice teaching, but once you call for response, that's where it all changes. That's where Billy Graham would say when he stood back and said I want you to come -- he said that's when I feel most vulnerable. Just presenting the invitation, that's what the Holy Spirit does. And if it's narrow you don't have a catchall appeal, some people have catchall appeals, you know, if you are alive come forward -- don't do that, it's a very narrow, very specific.

So he said I'm angry with you. I said why? He said well 30 of my youth group have come forward. I said surely that's good news? He said it is, and they are all praying, God's spirit all over them, they are coming to Jesus, it's amazing, he said. But I've worked for a year and I haven't seen one of them give their life to Jesus Christ. You follow that with a very simple question: Have you given them an opportunity? Answer? No!

I said well smell the coffee! You have been sowing and sowing, but you haven't been able to reap. Maybe this is the reaping moment, but maybe you should put into your youth calendar reaping moments. Maybe that's where you need to understand that you do call people to decision. That's where you need to realise that this does demand a response.

So this evangelist Philip said here's water, what's to stop you being baptised? That's what we do. And we do in the most gracious loving way, but we do call people to make a decision, why? Because the gospel says you must be born again.

There is a journey, I'm not opposed to journey, but we've also got to say yeah, what are you going to do? When, how, what, let's keep that edge. Let's keep that edge in all of our ministries. It's great doing mission but it's not enough without the proclamation of the gospel, and that may be an exploration, but still with decision. Amen.

We've got to do that. We've got to do that. Then he says okay, what's to stop me being baptised? And he's baptised. So this evangelist is in the revival but he is also a personal witness, it flows out of him, he recognises that the spirit is at

I don't walk around Draycote as much as my wife, but she walks around it often. This one day I was walking around and there was a fisherman there -- I don't fully understand fishermen, a bit strange -- some go and spend the night there in this tent, obviously don't have friends, I don't know! But they just spend all night there, they watch this float bobbing up and down, I'm like what's the deal with these fishermen? I have also learned certain things, there are certain things you don't do; I walked up to one and said excuse me, have you caught any fish? Now, I now know you don't say that to fishermen!

He said I haven't caught any fish, I said that's a real shame. But he said I've influenced a lot! (laughs) I'm like, what? What he meant was, they've taken my ground bait, taken my maggots, but I haven't caught one. Hey, I don't want to be a church that just influences. I want to be a church that wins people. That has actually got, how many people have come to faith this year? Yeah we've influenced, we've got good things, great, great, great, bring it on! Love the community, do it, do it, do it! Increase the fringe, bless them, bless them, bless them.

But, let's find those that are being caught in the gospel, that's what we need. And that's what the evangelist does. That's what happens in leadership team meetings, that's what happens in team meetings, what are we doing, how many people are coming to faith, how much is it costing us and what's the end game? If you were in business that's what you do, those would be the questions you ask.

So that's Philip. Stephen we haven't spent a lot of time with because he kind of moved on, but we'll look at the master evangelist, Paul. Turn with me to Corinthians, but before we do, let me give you an understanding of Paul the evangelist and apostle, but he was also a pretty good teacher, but isn't it interesting, every bit of his teaching had an edge.

It wasn't just to tickle the ears, because he says to Timothy, teach, in season and out of season. Then he says endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist. So Timothy, I know you're prone to just teach and be nice, but

keep your edge. There is an evangelist heart there, put on you by your grandmother Eunice and the laying on of hands, so keep that gift alive, because the easiest thing for any church to do is to lose that, to lose why we're in the game.

It's like watching the rugby match yesterday, and everybody saying let's just do scrums, I love a scrum. No, you do a scrum because you want a try. You don't get a holy huddle, the end game is we're going there. That's where we're going. Are you in? Are you on? Because we need all of you if we're going to get there. That's where we're going. That's what the evangelist does in bringing direction.

When we were asked about hope, we're looking at 1500 areas that did something in 2008, we're now going for 5,000 areas in 2014. That focuses you and we're doing word and deed mission and then saying how many people will come to faith through that? That just keeps it, knowing why we do what we do, the end game is what we're after.

Paul was that. But let me tell you something about Paul's life that comes out of Romans. You know the story because in Romans 8 he talks about nothing will separate us from the love of God. But in Romans 8 what we read in verse 15 is that I have now removed slavery and be free to serve Christ -- let me tell you what that means, it means up until you become a Christian the only person that is central to your world is you.

When you encounter Christ you're free of all that, to love others. That's what the gospel does. So it's not you, it's not me, me, me. I've been a slave to Christ to love the community. That's what Paul saw. He says I'm no longer the centre, now I can give myself to others because I'm not threatened. I can give myself to ministry because it's not all about me. In Christ I'm free! Do you understand this? That's what caused him to do what he did, because his identity was no longer the issue, that was in Christ.

And that's why in Romans 8 it says these groanings, he says I'm linking with them in my new identity in Christ and nothing will separate me from the love of God. That's why I do the mission of God. Do you understand? So no longer am I looking me, me, me and how do I look and what do I think. No, you just give yourselves to the mission. Just give yourself to your calling, that's your new identity. Isn't that good news? I think it's good news.

Then 1 Corinthians 9, this is where we see the motivation -- my time is gone, sorry about that -- but I just want to highlight a few things that he understood in the gospel. And the first thing this amazing evangelist did, verse 19, picking up on the Romans thing, though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone. Why? To win some. This has been so transformational. This gospel is so good news that I have to win some. That's why I was born.

So then he says I've made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to those under the law I became like those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law. I'm not free from God's law, but under Christ's law so it is. To the weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all possible means I will win some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel. That I might share in his blessing.

Some people criticise us joining with certain events, because they think you've compromised the gospel. No, you do it to win some. You innovate to win some. Because that's your call. Paul said you may criticise me

because you think I've become a Jew and compromised, no I haven't. My call is the gospel. But these people need to hear it. And sometimes when we go into communities and reach those communities we may have to build a church community within their community because they won't cope with this culture, is that not okay?

And then the body of Christ grows and blesses and expands. Because this gospel is what we're about. But he then concludes it, this is where I conclude and land.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run. But only one gets the prize. Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training, they do it to get a crown that will not last. But we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly. He said in Philippians -- when you look at the scale of the ministry, he did so much, but he said of his ministry, this one thing I do. How could he say that when he did all this other stuff? Because it all had one arrow, it was that people would be saved. That was -- when he evaluated every ministry, is that happening? If it isn't, why are we doing it?

This one thing, that focus. And then he says this, therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly, I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it a slave so that after I have preached to others I myself will not be disqualified from the prize.

So what he is saying in essence is, we're all in this. I'm going to recruit you to a mission. And that mission needs you. It may need you in finance, it may need your prayer, but we're all in it together. Because if we do, we then evaluate everything we do, we evaluate Men's Ministry, Monday Club, Cells, we evaluate how are we doing? This is the grid we evaluate by. Because then, if it's not, then we refocus. Because there is an urgency, there is a desperation, and this gospel is so amazing, so awesome, so brilliant, so overwhelming that we want to draw people to encounter this Jesus. Amen.

That's why in Ephesians 4 it equips you for maturity, why? Because Proverbs says this: He who wins souls is wise.

So if you want to get a bit of wisdom, win some people. That's not me saying that, that's the word of God. If you're up for that, and we're up for that, and I've just sought to do what the scripture said, then let's go for it. But let's also realise that all the facets of this ministry together, we have a focus, and it's to bring people to Jesus. Why? We don't want to exclude anyone. We won't push anyone out. We love the world. But, we know one who died and is alive to transform lives.

If you're up for that, and you want to be in the team, and run the race and focus, and I don't know what that means for you as the Holy Spirit speaks to you, but I'd love you to stand with me, and then we're going to pray. And this will impact everything. Why? Because in the end the goal of the prize is not what you get here, I don't care what you get here. You may have a good car, good house, it means nothing. There is a crown that we work towards, that's what we live for. That's what drove Paul. And that's what we're about in this ministry in BEC. Amen?

If you're up for that, stand with me and let's pray together.

Father, we stand before you, a bit fearful. But Father when we encountered you we realised that there was a purpose for our lives. And that purpose is to love those that are lost and broken, but love them in such a way that we tell them the truth. Love them in such a way that we do share the words of Jesus that bring life, that

bring healing, that bring forgiveness. That we bring the presence of your spirit and that Father, wherever you place us, help us realise that our focus is you. We run a race with you. And so Father, as we stand before you, just an ordinary group of people, we pray that your kingdom would come in greater measure than we've ever seen. We pray that you would do immeasurably more than we can ask, dream or imagine. But we pray Lord that we won't back off, from at moments just communicating with you and drawing people, inviting people to this amazing relationship.

And Father if anyone here has never done that, I pray today, may they encounter your love and your forgiveness. Thank you for your presence, we go in your presence to a lost and broken world. But we go together. Supporting, believing, looking out for one another. So that we might win some, and see the crown in heaven. In Jesus name.

And all God's people said? Amen.

Thank you.

>> Tina said it was going to be a challenge, didn't she? We're going to worship some more now, but what's just struck me is this story about the fishing, and I'm not a fisherman, but Jesus said come follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men. And I just wonder whether, not only is there a collective mission, but that God is calling some specifically to this journey to be an evangelist? I just wonder about that.

And if that is you, if you are dissatisfied with your witness in this area, look, why not come down the front and Roy -- I'm just going to get him to earn his money -- will pray for you.

The other story about the fishing that just came to me was the disciples had fished all night, hadn't they, and caught nothing. Are you a little bit down, you've tried, you've caught nothing. Jesus said go out again. Don't give up. Go out again. Again if that's you, come on, make a declaration today that you're serious about this stuff and come down and we'll pray for you. Okay?

Song:

... Jesus what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a king
Saviour what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of your name, for the things you have done
All my words could not tell, not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed, by this thankful heart
You deserve my every breath, for you paid the great cost
Giving up your life to death, even death on a cross
You took all my shame away, then defeated my sin
Opened up the gates of heaven, and have beckoned me in
Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a king
Saviour what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of your name, for the things you have done
All my words could not tell, not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed, by this thankful heart
what can I give, what can I bring

What can I sing as an offering, Lord ...
What can I give, what can I bring
what can I sing as an offering, Lord ...
What can I give, what can I bring
What can I sing as an offering, Lord ...
It's just a debt of love that is owed, by this thankful heart
It's just a debt of love that is owed, by this thankful heart
It's just a debt of love that is owed by this thankful heart

Just while folks are coming forward to be prayed for, if you want to come forward please feel free. I just want to pray something over us.

I think the devil lies to us, when he says kind of, and hear this, evangelist is really hard and we are barely going to see people get saved. And I just don't believe that is God's intention. I'm not saying we have not got to be faithful and I'm not saying it's not hard, and sometimes we look stupid owning Christ, but that's what we are called to do.

Here's the thing, as Roy said it's God's heart that people get saved. He is not willing to let any perish. And just that little thing around the rugby, I felt there was something in that. We are not called to be a holy huddle, by and large we are not a holy huddle actually, we are trying to be out there. But in rugby a try is followed by conversion. So we are called to try. We're just called to try. We're just called to put it out there and be faithful and God will bring the increase. God gives us the increase.

I just want to pray over us, that in all relationships and as a church in a growing fashion we'll be optimistic, people are going to get saved.

I'm going to say that again, I just feel like an evangelist, people -- God's heart folks, is that your friends, your relatives, that person you have been praying for, my dad, my rugby playing brother, get saved. That's God's heart. So you think right now, you can probably think five or six, there is one or two people you've kind of had conversations with, because they are kind of nice and you are not intimidated by them, but there is another ten or other -- I play football with John -- I loosely play football, John plays, with a bunch of lads, footballers, I believe God's heart is they come to know him. Who are the 5, 6 or 7 that God wants to save that you know? Because start believing they are going to get saved. Go with that approach as opposed to this is really hard! And, no one is going to listen to me! He is mighty, he is almighty and he wants to save. So I'm going to pray that over us.

Father I just ask, bind now the lie that people aren't going to get saved, that we are not going to see fruit in western society, materialistic society. I bind that lie in this place and in the hearts of these people gathered here and us as a church. And we lose the kingdom, we lose kingdom optimism.

And Father God, I pray, put in our spirits an optimism that believes we are going to see our friends, relatives, husbands, wives, children, work colleagues, uncles, aunts, family, saved. And I pray, as we start to believe that, it will cause us to change our behaviour where we try, where we try. Where we try to share our faith, where stumbling words though there are, you come in with your Holy Spirit and bring the increase. Because folks we can't do anything by ourselves anyway, news flash. You can not do anything by yourself, but the Holy Spirit anointing your fumbling, feeble, halting attempts to explain the gospel, can.

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So Father I pray that you would release in this place, a group of people totally faithful and optimistic to share the gospel that are going to see people saved. And I pray this for Christ's glory. God said if the son of God be lifted up, that's what we've got to do, however pathetically we may think we do it. If the son of God be lifted up, he will draw all men and women to himself, it's not the leader's responsibility, it's all of us.

Let's just say thanks again to Roy for sharing this morning, shall we, let's say thank you to him and give him a round of applause. (applause)

Right, let's just say the grace shall we and then I'm sure we'll have a bit of music as we go out. It's been fabulous, as we commit our way to the Lord, just remind ourselves, we have talked about things like Philippines and stuff like that, God doesn't look at the scale of what we give, he looks at the scale of the sacrifice. And so let's give, let's bless our community, let's take that risk, let's take that risk to point people to Jesus and not just be nice.

Let's say the grace together: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, ever more, Amen.

See you at 6.30 tonight where we're going to be commissioning some of those guys going off to Africa. Bless you.

End of service.