

Committed to the B.E.S.T. Highland Park in 2020

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 January 2020

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] Today we're going to be in Acts chapter 2.

Next week we'll go back over to John chapter 3 and continue our study there.! But today is an important day for our church as we talk about the mission for our church in 2002.

So Acts chapter 2, it says there this sermon is going to be on 42 through 47, but I'm going to start reading earlier than that.

Let's begin at verse 37. And will you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off.

[1 : 15] Everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. So those who received his word were baptized and there were added that day about 3,000 souls.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? In 1666, a massive fire left a mass destruction in its wake in the city of London.

St. Paul's Cathedral was one of the many structures that the fire had laid waste to. Christopher Wren, who at the time was the world's best known architect, was commissioned to rebuild this great cathedral.

[2 : 51] One day in 1671, as construction of the cathedral was underway, Wren was out inspecting the work and he noticed three men laying bricks in close proximity to one another.

He approached the first man and asked him, What are you doing? And the man replied, I'm a bricklayer. I'm laying bricks. Wren moved on to the second man and asked him the same question. What are you doing? The second man replied, I'm building a wall. Wren moved on to the third man and asked him the same question.

What are you doing? And the man replied to him, turned to him, and replied to him, I'm a cathedral builder. I'm building a great cathedral to the Almighty God.

Of those three builders, whom do you think worked with the greatest effort and the greatest sense of fulfillment? It's pretty obvious, isn't it?

[4 : 03] The third builder. Why? Because he was able to see the big picture that the other two builders were not able to see. He saw that his task was to lay bricks, just like the first builder did.

He understood that the bricks that he was laying formed a wall, just like the second builder did. But what set him apart was his ability to see beyond those things, to see that the wall that he was working on was a part of a much greater whole.

That vision gave his work greater purpose. He didn't see his work as something to do merely to earn a paycheck. He saw more than bricks and mortar, more than a small wall.

He saw his work as playing a significant part in the construction of this great cathedral. So if you were going to promote one of these workers to lead the others, you'd pick the third worker, because he shares the vision of the architect.

And in that, he finds joy and fulfillment, even in the simple task of laying bricks.

[5 : 27] Brick after brick. He does his job. He plays his role. He commits to his work because he can see the big picture, the completed work.

And so he commits himself totally to his task of laying bricks one at a time, knowing that he is contributing to a project that is much greater than himself.

He's not building for himself. He's not building for Christopher Wren. As he says, he's building for God himself. The attitude of that third builder is the attitude that Christ has called his people to possess.

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1. The encouragement there is this, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely.

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. And then over and over again, Jesus urges us through his word to live with the big picture of eternity in view.

[6 : 43] To see our efforts as more than just moving bricks around, but contributing to the building of his church. To put sin to death. To pursue holiness.

To take up the cross every day. And to run. To endure. And to fight the good fight for the faith.

When I came here in view of call, I preached from Matthew 25, verses 14 through 30, the parable of the talents.

Many of you weren't here on that day, but many of you were. If you remember, I've expressed then and I've expressed it since that this parable, this passage, is my model for ministry.

In the parable, if you remember, the master represents Jesus and he entrusts talents which were a considerable sum of money to his three servants. Two of them, if you recall, take it and they make investments and they double what the master has placed in their hands.

But the third servant took what the master had given him and he buried it and hid it, unwilling to commit himself in the same way that the two others were because as the parable reveals, he didn't really know the master.

[8 : 13] He didn't really trust the master. The other two servants risked what the master had given them and as a result of that, they were rewarded for their faithfulness.

What's interesting is that Jesus finishes that parable and then he goes right into a next statement about the final judgment. That day when he returns in his glory with all of his angels.

I want to read that account to you in Matthew 25, 31 through 46. Jesus' statement immediately after sharing that parable. He says, when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right hand but the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food.

[9 : 31] I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink?

And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothed you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the king will answer them, truly, I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food.

Lord, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. Naked and you did not clothe me.

Sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they will answer saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you? Then he will answer them saying, truly, I say to you as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did

not do it to me.

[10:55] And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life. And so the question is, why would Jesus tell the parable of the talents just before speaking of the final judgment?

Well, I believe it's because he's imploring us, imploring us, urging us to not waste our lives, to make the most of every precious opportunity that we've been given in this life to serve him, to use our lives totally committed to building his church.

Believers are supposed to find incredible, world-shaking confidence in God. This confidence, this faith is grounded not in who we are but who he is and he is great.

His greatness, his victoriousness should propel us forward to be bold in action and to risk. God's awesomeness should propel our faithfulness.

but if our fundamental calculus in life is safety, then we've tragically misunderstood the Bible.

[12:28] God doesn't save us to baby us or to coddle us. He doesn't give the gift of his beloved son so that we can hide away safe and secure from a sinful world in its challenges like the wicked servant in the parable of the talents did.

God makes us his own so he can unleash us to be vessels of his mercy. He saves you to make you a comet in the sky, a vessel of righteousness, a citizen of the kingdom, a warrior who fights the good fight, a fearless worker who has one hand on the trowel and another hand on the sword. Building, fighting, defending the church in truth. With the big picture in mind, what you do here is important and Jesus urges you, don't waste your life.

Growing up, I was a sports junkie and as you can tell by my announcement time, I still am. But especially baseball. That's my game. That's my favorite sport.

I played it all the time. I didn't play other sports so that I could play it more because I loved the game. Still do. I was saved at a young age in the church.

[14:00] I attended regularly. I believed. I was somewhat obedient. But definitely, I wasn't totally committed.

That all changed for me my junior year of high school. It was tryouts. Everything had gone well until the last day of the tryout and I don't know what happened to me but it's like I completely forgot how to play the game and I had a terrible day but I thought that, you know, I've made the team before. Coaches know who I am. No problem. I've got this. Well, it was incredibly heartbreaking and at that time to me, world shattering when my name was not on the list of those who had made the final cut and I remember going into our JV coach's office and sitting in his chair.

He had me sit down and I was crying. I left school and I went home because my world had been taken away from me, I felt. My identity was gone.

I didn't know who I was anymore. I felt completely and totally lost. What was I going to do after school now? I didn't have anywhere to practice.

[15:17] I wasn't, I didn't belong in that environment anymore. All I wanted to do was play baseball. My priorities were out of whack.

And so God in his grace used that time to help me see that when you put anything else as the center of your life, your life is wasted.

And it was during that time that God revealed to me that there are more and greater, greater and more important things in life than baseball. Sure, I tried out the next year and I made it and I eventually was able to go to college and play but I knew all along this is just a game.

And life, there's so much more to it than playing a game. It matters. But sometimes we're guilty of doing that, don't we?

Making something else the center of our life besides God himself. And when you do that, you lose sight of what truly matters. This happens a lot in churches.

[16:32] Churches can lose their way. Churches have a tendency to make small things central. And when they do that, they lose sight of the big picture as revealed to us in Scripture.

They get lost. Sometimes they get trapped. You know a church is trapped when you hear the utterance of the seven deadly words. the seven words of doom.

Do you know what they are? Be careful because these words have known to send pastors running. They are we've never done it that way before.

I forgot my thumb. We've never done it that way before. Now sometimes it's helpful to know how churches have done things before and how they've responded to certain issues in the past and that

can be very helpful.

But often time these words signify that to that church they have chosen to cherish their past more than they've chosen to cherish the future.

[17 : 49] and when that happens it makes an idol of the past. Seven simple English words but when strung together they unleash devastating impact on the church.

And so for that reason many churches in our country are lost and or trapped. And so that's why I believe it is important that churches continually thoughtfully and prayerfully evaluate themselves. Performing a sort of check up. Putting ourselves up against scripture up against God's word and seeing what scripture says about the church and asking ourselves does what scriptures say match what's going on here?

Who we are and what we're supposed to be doing? And if it is the case that things don't match or they're not being achieved to the level that they should be according to God's word then it's time for the church to rethink reorient and get untrapped or unstuck because what we do here matters.

Do you feel or does it seem that all we're doing is moving bricks? or does it feel like what we're doing is lending part in the construction of a great cathedral?

[19 : 23] Part of my job as your pastor is to keep us focused on the big picture. I know that the Bible says that there will come a day where I will stand before the Lord and I will give an account for each and every one of you.

So I'm going to spurn you onward and don't let me catch you trying to bury your talents. Right? And so the vision for our church is the four E's.

Remember engaging, enlightening, encouraging, equipping. Well how are we going to achieve that? Well through this mission for Highland Park Baptist Church in 2020 which is to be committed to the best Highland Park Baptist Church this year and honestly we always want to be the best that we can be for the Lord.

And so there are many gifted people in this church and whenever I'm feeling like I am ill-equipped to handle the issue I will turn to you and I will ask for your advice.

This came about through a conversation that I had with Jeremy Burton and so I was just laying on my heart some of the things that I know that God is calling for our church to do but I couldn't figure out how to put them down right so Jeremy and I spent a morning and an afternoon going through this and then I presented this to our elders and they are fully on board as well.

[21 : 02] This is going to be our mission for our church this year and so here's the main idea. In 2020 Highland Park Baptist Church will strive to be its best and give its best for the glory and honor of Jesus Christ.

And so there are four components to this. Four building blocks that are biblical and will result in our commitment to being and giving our best to Christ and his church and why shouldn't we?

Look at Jesus' words. Don't waste your life. What you do here is matter. It matters. It's important. It has eternal impacts.

And so he gave his best to us didn't he? Sending his son dying on the cross in our place for our redemption. Ascending to the heaven after raising from the dead as proof that we have eternal life. That this world is not our home. We're passing through. So we ought to give our best to the one who gave his best to us. So the first thing we've seen using Acts chapter 2 as a text of a church that man this church was great.

[22 : 18] This church was awesome. What made them so great? Well first thing we see is that they built community. The first block. Build community. Community was important to the Acts chapter 2.

Their community as we've read was established by the teaching of God's word. It was God's word that knit them together. They were very devoted to the apostles' teaching and as a result of that too they were devoted to their fellowship with one another.

In verse 42 again there it says and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and worship and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

How was their community built? Well it was built upon the teaching of God's word. That was foundational. This wasn't a country club founded by social and economic status.

Their community was built upon their worship. They were breaking bread and they were praying with one another. Their community was built around the worship of God.

[23 : 21] Having church, being preached to, taking communion, praying together. You can build community without these things but if you do what you're building is not a church.

Building community means that we worship together. Understanding that our worship isn't about personal preferences or agendas but about the God whom we are worshiping. Their community was built on worship. Their community was built on unity. Verse 44, and all who believed were together. They had all things in common. Listen, you can't spell community without unity.

This verse advocates, doesn't advocate I should say, for socialism. It wasn't that they were redistributing everything they had equally but that they held their own possessions lightly. Not grasping but whatever God's given me he has the ability to take or to give as he sees fit. So they held their possessions lightly, ready to use whatever they had at a moment's notice to help someone else.

[24 : 30] The things that they had in common was the mission to go make disciples, not their personal agendas. because it didn't get in the way of their mission.

Their community was based upon their unity and it was also based upon their love. Verse 45 and verse 46. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as had need.

And they were breaking the bread in their homes. They received their food with glad and generous hearts. So what we see here is a picture of people who loved each other.

Love builds community. Everyone in this church was benefiting. So how can you build community here?

Well, first thing obviously is to be present at worship. Hebrews 10 24-25 speaks about how we should be present for worship.

[25 : 38] How important that is for the church. And I'll tell you this, as a pastor, I appreciate words of encouragement. I appreciate different things that the church does, but nothing I don't appreciate.

There's few things I appreciate more from the church than people showing up. That means more to me than just about anything else is your presence here.

So come to church and when you do, let's love one another well.

That means that we care about each other in the pews. That means that we know each other's names, that we know each other's families, that we are interested in each other's lives, that if there is a burden that somebody is bearing, that we take interest in, how can I help you bear that burden, and I'm willing to do whatever I can to help you.

That builds community because it shows how much we genuinely care about one another and how much we understand just what Christ has done for us in bearing our ultimate burden.

[26 : 56] What about if you're a Sunday school teacher or some other kind of ministry leader?

Seek to build community where you're at. Reach out to those who are in your class or in your study if they're missing, if they're not present.

Invite new people to come in and take part. Let's go out to eat with one another after church. If you see a new person, it might feel weird to them, but I'll tell you that they'll appreciate you even offering to ask.

A problem with churches today is we have this feeling that church is a place where you come anonymously and leave anonymously and that's the way it should be. Look at Acts chapter 2. That was not the case.

These people lived with one another. They didn't just go to church with one another. They lived with one another. They cared about one another. Little things like making people feel welcome goes a long way.

a long recently. Recently, we were back in Kansas City over Christmas break. And so one of the things I thought would be neat is underneath my bed I had this tub of just my treasures as a kid.

[28 : 09] Baseball cards, autographs, video games, little video games, different things. These were my treasures as a boy. And so I thought it would be neat because we left Jack and Hazel with my parents for Danny and I's vacation.

If Jack would have the time to look through it. So I pulled it out and I opened the lid and I said, hey, buddy, these are the things that I thought were neat when I was a boy. You take out of this thing whatever you want.

And one of the things he brought home that I had forgotten about was a postcard that I had received from my youth pastor when I was in high school. Just a little postcard.

But on it, words of encouragement. And I remembered receiving that and I remember how I stuck that in my Bible. And I remember how much that meant to me because I wasn't at youth group. I hadn't been there for a while and he didn't get on to me for the fact that I hadn't been there. He just said, hey, I want you to think about some things to think about and I want you to know that I care about you and I'm praying for you.

[29 : 12] And that meant a lot to me. And then to see it again and think, wow, this little postcard that maybe took him five or ten minutes at the most has lasted years for me and had an impact for me.

It's little things like that that build community but God can use them to accomplish great things. So we are going to be committed to building community at Highland Park in 2020.

Not to say that that's not happening but we can excel still more and we will strive for that. Secondly, equipping believers. Equip believers. How are we going to be the best Highland Park in 2020? Build community and equip believers. The beginning of verse 46, it says there in day by day attending the temple together. In order to be equipped, you must come to church to receive equipping.

Churches are good at building community but if the focus is only on building community and not taking people more deeply into the word of God then the church becomes more like a moralistic social club than it does exemplify the church of Acts chapter 2.

[30 : 19] So as a church we must strive for more than fellowship for fellowship sake. We must strive to help each other grow up in Christ Ephesians 4.

12-16 testifies to how important this is to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ until we attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by human coming by craftiness and deceitful schemes rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow in every way and to him who is the head into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love so how do we equip the saints well you've got to be here again to be equipped which means you're ready when you come you're ready to be taught or you're ready to teach

I wonder how many of us pray for for Sunday's service during the week pray that that people will come pray for me pray for Pastor Dan pray for yourself pray for our church that when we come together on Sunday that the spirit would move in us making us more like Christ that we would be reaching our community that we would be going and making disciples not just on Sunday but everything that we do throughout the week pray for Awanas be a part pray for youth group be a part for the men's and women's studies that meet on Monday night the Bible study that takes! on Wednesday be present ready to be equipped to take the knowledge received and to apply it to your life and as leaders we need to help in doing that thirdly build community equip believers share Jesus how are we going to be the best Highland Park in 2020 we've got to share Jesus verse 47 praising God and having favor with all the people and the Lord added to their number day by day those who are being saved so when people come to our church they must hear the gospel they must hear it consistently and persistently when we host engage events when we go out in our community the gospel must be articulated in our with our words more than just with our deeds those events create opportunity but if we aren't sharing the gospel in word then we aren't truly fulfilling the great commission again

Matthew 28 18 through 20 what should be our mission on the church sharing Jesus and Jesus came to them and said all authority in heaven on earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and the son of the holy spirit and it doesn't end there teaching them to observe all that I command you and behold I am with you always to the end of the age and then 2nd Corinthians 5 20 therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God we teach Jesus so that means when when people are coming to our church that means when kids come to VBS or or to youth group when people are coming here we can't just assume that they know the gospel or that they have heard it before so this is why it's important even people who have been going to church for years realize that they weren't saved right so this is why it's important that we share

[34 : 37] Jesus all the time wherever we are at in Sunday school we share the gospel at VBS and Iwana in Wednesday night studies and Monday night studies when I'm preaching on Sunday morning we share Jesus Christ consistently and persistently expressing the truth that salvation is by grace and so we talk about sin we talk about forgiveness we talk about the cross and the resurrection regularly because everything ties back to the gospel build community equip believers teach or share Jesus and then fourthly teach the word verse 42 and they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching for the church in Acts 2 the teaching of the word was foundational and so the acronym going from top to bottom

B-E-S-T the bottom is there because teaching the word is foundational teaching the word results with our sharing Jesus results with our equipping the saints results with our building community so we can't let teaching the word be replaced with popular opinions of society 2nd Timothy 4 1-12 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is the judge the living and the dead by his appearing in his kingdom preach the word be ready in season and out of season reprove rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching so we must teach the word by teaching people how the word applies to them God's word is foundational to everything that we do it orients our path it guides our direction our course it shines the light it reveals what is true and we teach it all and we do so uncompromisingly we uphold to the inerrancy of scripture it stands in authority over us it is the foundation upon which we stand it is the rock upon which we build our church our community this is really important to the

Lord it's very important to me some time ago before coming to Highland Park I had a Sunday away from my church and so Danny and I chose to go to my home church I loved it there that's where I was instructed equipped that's where Jesus was shared with me that's where I was taught the word people there my age older older people who were invested in my life who cared about me I loved that place and our church was the I don't know the word the booming church we had about 400 500 people at one point just down the road maybe half a mile or less was another church

I had a friend who went to that church and it was a small church not to knock small churches I don't want you to get the wrong idea that's not what we're!

building for a dying church and it was dying for a reason because I remember going in to church with him one Sunday morning and it felt like going to a funeral you know and I remember going you know and I would think back to my church when you would enter the church there was like a buzz that buzz was people talking before the service began it was people caring about one another it vested in one another's lives it was people who knew each other well and loved one another very much and when we come in to worship it was a joyful time of worship and afterwards you still hear that buzz but I remember going in there and I just felt like you know did Jesus raise again from the dead or is this like a continual funeral for him it was odd it wasn't anything like what I was used to fast forward years later okay so to the point where

[39 : 30] Danny and I are going back to my home church and we drove down past that church I talked about that church where it felt like it was a funeral and it was crazy what I saw there was the parking lot was packed there was a new sanctuary being constructed people were coming in and out people of all ages of all races coming in and out of that church talking with one another they were in between church services and I thought wow that's not at all like what I remember and I was interested I got to find out what's going on there and I did later on and kept driving down the street and pulled into the parking lot of my and it looked abandoned and I remember walking in the doors and there was not that bus there wasn't people there to greet there wasn't any chatter and the service kind of felt the same not really sure why we're here but this is what we do

Sunday after Sunday so we're just continuing with that tradition but there was no mission there was no purpose and it broke my heart there's a lot of reasons maybe why I think that happened it doesn't matter for this story but just to say that that's the state of a lot of churches in our country today in a state of decline in a state of death and so why do so many churches hold on to the past and worship it because to them that was the best it was that's the best it's ever going to be the Lord will return in the meanwhile we have work to do and it broke my heart because you know one of the reasons why I found that a lot of seminary students are more eager to church plant than they are to pastor traditional established churches is because they feel like that path is easier because then we don't have to deal with past issues we don't have to deal with sacred cows

I can start things my way I can do things my way right and so I don't have to deal with those things so I'll take this easier path and it's tragic because churches are in desperate need of someone

coming in or pastors coming in and breathing being used by God to breathe new congregations because God is not through with them yet and so I hope and I pray that we take this mission to heart we're not seeking to be the best for bragging rights we're not seeking to be the best as compared to whatever happened in the past we are seeking to be the best because why shouldn't we be why shouldn't we be you're going to stand before the Lord on that day of judgment and what's truly going to matter is that you gave your best to him that you knew him as Lord his Savior and that you didn't waste your life and that you didn't waste your opportunity and let me tell you I believe that just as God has done great things through Highland Park Baptist church we have every reason to believe that he's going to continue to do great things through this church in our future and my hope is out of my control is that when the Lord returns this church is still here this church is still a light that shines brightly in this community that could be hundreds thousands of years away or it could be tomorrow but our hope and our prayer is that what we do here we know that it matters we're going to give the Lord our best because one day he's coming back we've got to prepare and we've got to equip our younger generations we've got to make sure that we defend the truth we're building community that we're equipping believers that we're sharing Jesus that we're teaching the word that this church would continue to be a place where God uses to go and to make disciples what we do here matters it matters greatly Thank you.