

Totally Committed (Part 1)

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[0:00] Would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

! John chapter 3, beginning in verse 22 and going to verse 30. Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing.

John also was baptizing at Anon near Salem because water was plentiful there and people were coming and being baptized, for John had not yet been put in prison. Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.

And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look, he is baptizing and all are going to him.

John answered, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.

[1:17] The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is now complete.

He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way.

He who comes from heaven is above all. God had a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? You know, the beginning of a new year is often a time in which we reflect upon and reevaluate our lives and resolve then to make changes to them.

We call those New Year's resolutions. These resolutions mean making new commitments, like resolving to commit to exercising and losing weight or resolving to either start or finish a task that had been long put off.

We hope that these resolutions will make this year exceptional. However, the period of time between February and March serves as like a graveyard where most of our New Year's resolutions go to die.

[2:43] The commitments or resolutions we made are often short-lived. Why is that? Well, I think there's a lot of reasons for why that is, but for one, we don't really have that much control over our own lives.

Things happen that alter our plans. Another reason is that perhaps it's exciting for us to make these commitments because they they create within our minds an image of the task already being completed.

And so we envision ourselves having already arrived at the destination. We're better. We're happier. Life is all that we wanted it to be.

But we soon realize that the journey to the destination is much harder than we had anticipated.

And so it isn't long before we give up on the pursuit altogether. For example, those of you who go to the gym regularly will notice, if you haven't already, an influx of people to your gym that you hadn't seen before.

[4:05] But then come February, March, April, numbers will dwindle down to about where they were before.

Those people got excited to get in shape, to get into a shape that they had envisioned in their minds when they made that resolution. But that requires a lot of effort, and the results don't come quickly enough.

So they quickly become disillusioned and decommitted, thinking that maybe they'll have better luck next year. Our society has become less and less interested in long-term commitments.

Younger people are waiting longer to get married. And an increasing number of them are choosing to not marry at all. Not wanting to make that long-term commitment.

In fact, statistics show now that half of marriages in the United States of America will end in divorce. Additionally, people are less committed to their place of employment these days.

[5:15] The average American changes jobs every five years. For younger generations, that number is between two to three years. Our society is increasingly becoming opposed to any kind of long-term commitment.

We like the option of being able to quickly cancel whatever commitments that we've made with no strings attached. Sociologists say that we are living in what they've described as a cancel culture. For example, Facebook gives us the freedom to cancel our friends.

With a few clicks, you can unfriend your friend, block your friend, or hide your friend from appearing in your news feed.

Streaming services have also picked up on this desire that we have for short-term commitments. Offering month-by-month services instead of year-long commitments like many cable providers offer.

[6:23] Twitter also provides a platform for people in our society to encourage one another to cancel either a person or a business. Or anything that has been someone who has said or done something that they deem to be offensive or too insensitive.

So we pile on. Let's cancel that. Let's get rid of it. And you know the church isn't immune to the effects of a lack of commitment either in our society. On average, senior pastors leave between five and six years.

And worship and youth pastors leave between two to three years. In the pews, church attendance and baptisms have been steadily declining for years. In 2006, the SBC had 16.3 million members. Today that number has dropped below 15 million. In 2007, Southern Baptist churches went from baptizing 321,000 to 246,000 in 2008.

20 years ago, a church member was considered active in their church if he or she attended three times a week.

[7:41] Today, a church member is considered active in the church if he or she attends three times a month. Cancel culture has also seeped into the way the church does other things.

If the music isn't to your liking, if the message is deemed to be too long, if the pastor wears jeans, if something changes or refuses to be changed, then Christians choose to cancel their church and go shopping for a new one.

We all know it's true. And we should all see how inconsistent this attitude is with the Savior whom we claim to follow.

In John chapter 6, verse 38, Jesus says to the multitudes gathered around him, For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

Our Lord came to earth for one purpose, to perfectly obey the will of the Father who sent him. Jesus declared to his disciples in John 4, 34, My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

[8:55] Later, he added in John 5, I can do nothing on my own initiative because I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me. In John chapter 14, verse 3, Jesus says, I do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father.

And then that same evening, on the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus prayed with his disciples, and he said, I glorified you on the earth, having accomplished the work which you have given me to do. What was that work? What was the Father's will for Jesus that he was so committed to, that he accomplished?

John 10, 17 through 18. Jesus says, For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord.

I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. Luke, in chapter 9, verse 22, records, Our Lord is saying, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

[10:19] You see, Jesus was totally committed to the Father's will for him, and he calls all of us who follow him to be totally committed to that will as well.

Luke 9, again, continuing in verse 23, he says, To all, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. Then in John chapter 12, verses 24 through 26, our Lord says, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also.

If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Too often, though, our commitment to following Christ doesn't measure up to what he's asked of us.

[11:31] Whenever I read Matthew 26, in the account of Jesus' final moments with his disciples before he was arrested and later crucified, it makes my stomach churn.

It's gut-wrenching. Here our Lord is coming to grips with the reality that his moment had come, that he'd endure a torturous death, but far worse than that, he who knew no sin was to become sin. He'd be forsaken by the Father. But he was totally committed, though he'd be totally crushed, substituting his life to atone for our sin.

That night, he made a simple request for his disciples to pray for him, but they lacked even the commitment to do that.

He'd die for them, but they couldn't stay awake to pray. I want to read that encounter with you again this morning. Matthew 26, 36 through 46.

[12:46] Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, sit here while I go over there and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.

Then he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. And he came to his disciples, and he found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, so could you not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak. Again, for a second time, he went away and prayed. My father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

And again he came back and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away, and he prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

[14:00] And he came back to his disciples and said to them, sleep and take your rest later on. See the hour is at hand. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going.

See, my betrayer is at hand. I was once again disturbed by this passage in my study this week. Convicted that if I had been there, I would have been fast asleep. And then wondering how truly committed I am to the one who committed it all to save me.

This passage that we've read this morning in John 3 has been troubling me. because I see such a lack of commitment in myself and in the church to Jesus Christ.

Not to say that we aren't committed at all, but totally committed like Christ was committed, like John the Baptist was committed.

[15:17] Last week, we were on vacation and we were driving through some neighborhoods on our way, excuse me, to eat on the plaza.

If you're familiar with Kansas City, you know that part of town. Its full name is the Country Club Plaza. And so, there's a lot of businesses, restaurants, places to shop and whatnot.

There's also a lot of churches. And Danny observed as we were driving that one of these churches had taken the name Country Club Church, which makes some sense considering its location, but she observed, what a terrible name for a church.

And I totally agreed. Because a country club, you know, nothing against country clubs. They're not bad things, but they're not what a church is supposed to be.

However, so many Christians treat their church as they would a country club. That membership is about paying your dues in order to be a part of a club that then grants you access to all its exclusive amenities and promising you top-notch quality service in return.

[16:38] Country clubs aren't bad things again, but they aren't the church. But that hasn't stopped many Christ followers from treating their churches as if it was a country club.

Let's be honest. Church members these days are often treated as if they were customers. And church staff is treated as if they're merely employees.

The focus is on the people in the pews, on you, on your needs, on your position, on your comforts, on your preferences. There's also an attitude of exclusivity.

Long-term members treat new members as outsiders or maybe even threats, wanting them to know that they've paid their dues, that they've earned their spot.

I had a friend of mine in ministry recently tell me, a pastor, about a Sunday in his church where, for whatever reason, they had a lot of visitors that morning.

[17 : 38] And he was really excited about it until after church one of the older ladies in the congregation who had been a long-term member came up to him and said, who are all these strangers here this morning?

Nothing like feeling welcome to a church when everybody views you as a stranger. I believe that the weakened position that the church is in today in our nation is due to the fact that when it comes down to it, we just aren't that committed to Christ and his church.

And something has to change. The Lord asked for total commitment, but I believe for me, and I think if you're honest with yourself, you would say for you, that like his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, we've fallen asleep.

So this year at Highland Park Baptist Church, our focus, as I mentioned a couple weeks ago, is going to be on commitment. And the passage of Scripture that we've read in John 3, 22 through 30, establishes the type of commitment modeled by John the Baptist that we are going to strive for in 2020.

To understand the setting of these words, we must first recognize the fact that John the Baptist had achieved a great deal of popularity to this point as a result of his preaching.

[19 : 17] Luke tells us that multitudes were going out to him. Matthew tells us that people came to him from all Jerusalem and Judea. The whole region of the Jordan was coming out to hear John preach.

And not only were they coming but all different kinds of people were coming to him. Pharisees and Sadducees, tax collectors, soldiers, the rich and the poor. Everybody wanted to come out to hear this man preach.

In time, his popularity came to the palace of Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee. Herod called for John. He wanted to listen to him preach.

And Mark tells us that when John went to do that at the beginning, Herod heard John with gladness and he responded favorably to what he had to say until John's message started hitting a little too close to home for him.

John pointed out that Herod was living with his brother's wife, Herodias. And Herodias was so angered that John would dare bring that up that she eventually succeeded in having him arrested and later beheaded.

[20 : 27] But to this point, in John 3, 22 through 30, John the Baptist was still free to preach. However, the large crowds that had once followed him were now detaching themselves from his ministry and they were going to follow Jesus.

And this very much troubled John's disciples. They were worried. They didn't want to be in second place. They wanted him to say something.

They wanted to say something to him. How could he not notice this? But apparently they were waiting for the right time to broach this subject that very much troubled them.

So finally, through the context of a discussion about the proper procedure for various Jewish rites of purification, his disciples raised the subject that had been worrying them.

One of them said, Rabbi, he who is with you across the Jordan to whom you bore witness, look, he's baptizing. All are going to him. This was the same as saying something like, that new church plant, it's snatching up all of our people.

[21 : 44] You gave your endorsement to Jesus and now he's taking away from your ministry. You've got to do something. Say something. Reverse this trend before we're put out of business for good.

However, instead of feeling sorry for himself, instead of being concerned that his crowds were dwindling, instead of feeling threatened that his place was being occupied by another, he rejoiced greatly in the popularity of Jesus Christ, this newcomer whom his disciples saw as a stranger.

and a threat. John's response reveals to us the kind of commitment that is desperately needed in our churches today. It's a total commitment, not based on personal preference, but eternal consequence, seeking God's glory and the betterment of others.

John the Baptist's legacy isn't defined by large crowds that he preached to or to the number of people that he baptized, but by his level of commitment that he had to Jesus Christ.

And like him, all of our lives will ultimately be defined by something at the end of your life. The way that you lived, the words that you spoke, how you treated other people will give testimony to how you spent most of your life and what you committed it to here on earth.

[23:14] life. It's a privilege for me whenever I'm asked to do a funeral service for a believer.

It's a privilege because it's a time of celebration. Celebrating a life that was changed by God. Giving glory to him through this person in what I, I don't want to say love, but what I appreciate about a funeral for a believer is that oftentimes unbelievers attend.

And what a great testimony to give to them. Hey, you knew this person. You knew this person was special. You knew this person loved in a supernatural way and cared in a supernatural way.

And to be able to explain to them why that is, because this person knew Jesus Christ. Why were they so committed to these things? Why did you see such a great difference in them?

Why did their life have such a great impact for you? Because of Jesus Christ. So here's the main idea for this morning's message. Christ calls his followers to commit to him totally.

[24:29] And a life defined by such commitment to him will be a life worth living because it sets you free from jealous comparisons and has eternal implications for you, for others, in the church.

The house that you live in and the possessions that you have within it, the money that you have in your bank account, the job that you have, all of it will one day belong to someone else.

And eventually, it will fade away into oblivion. But whatever you do in service to the Lord lasts forever.

Let's live our lives here totally committed to Christ with eternity in mind. So what does it mean to be totally committed to Christ?

Well, we're going to see two principles today. Next Sunday, we'll see the others. First of all, total commitment to Christ means being fully committed to God's plan.

[25:40] Being fully committed to God's plan. Verse 27, John answered, a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.

So John's words here show us the necessary ingredients for achieving this same level of commitment to Christ in our own lives. John didn't see Jesus' success as a threat.

He wasn't jealous that his light was being outshined. He understood that all of this was according to God's sovereign plan and in verse 29, he reveals that by rejoicing greatly in the fact that Christ had come, that Christ's popularity was increasing even though his was decreasing.

John was thankful for the role that God had assigned to him. He wasn't coveting Christ's place. He didn't try to divert from God's plan. Instead he was thankful for what he had been given and he rejoiced that Christ was receiving what was due to him.

And he welcomed this change. Oftentimes God's plan means change. It certainly does at the moment of salvation.

[26:56] and then all along the Christian life as God is changing you, making you more Christ-like. God's plan often calls us to change.

When God called Abraham he changed his name Abram to Abraham. He then changed his location. He moved him out of Ur, away from his family.

When Abraham would find himself in trouble it was due to the fact that he had tried to divert from God's plan and such has been the case for everyone else. God's plan does not often lead to greater comfort but to greater sacrifice.

But the thing about that is that the more you sacrifice the more thankful you are for God have calling you to be a part of his plan.

You see your place in his plan. And that is a thrilling thing. It's why Peter, James, and John left their nets behind. Why Matthew gladly abandoned his profitable position as a tax collector when Jesus called.

[28:08] It's why the woman at the well left her jar of water behind, thrilled to tell the people in her town that the Messiah had come, though she'd been living her life to that point in fear and guilt.

Christ changed all of that for her. It's why Zacchaeus let go of the fortune he dishonestly gained when Jesus calls you and you see your place in God's plan, you rejoice. Life makes sense. There's reason to hope. All the longings of your heart are satisfied. The heart hungers for the infinite and that is why it will ultimately disappoint with anything merely finite. the infinite had come to them and they welcomed the change, thankful to commit themselves totally to God's plan.

But as time goes on, we can tend to forget our excitement when we first understood God's plan of salvation and God's plan for our lives.

[29:12] Maybe we think we should be given more or maybe we're clinging too tightly to what God has given us, thinking that this belongs to me now.

In college, we would begin baseball practice the second week of school. And sophomore, junior, senior year, that was always a tense time because we didn't know who coach had recruited.

We didn't know what positions he was looking to fill. And so we would meet and we'd kind of eye one another out. Okay, looks like maybe a catcher.

That's okay. Oh, he looks like maybe a pitcher. Got to keep my eye on that one, right? And we were all competing for these positions. And there's healthy competition, but sometimes it would get to the point of unhealthiness when the season came and it was time for us to be playing together as a team.

We win as a team. We lose as a team. But sometimes it could be tempting for us to see somebody in our position, maybe who's playing more than we were, and not just have a little part of us think, man, I hope he messes up.

[30:43] Right? Just, I want to win, but if he doesn't play a part in the victory so that I can be in his place next time, I'd be alright with that. But you know, when those attitudes fester and harbor within a team, it's like cancer.

And what it does is it creates division. And a team that suffers from that kind of division won't be much good for anything.

Sometimes we have that same attitude in the church, with the people who sit next to us in the pews, with new people who come in potentially. Maybe there's a little bit of fear.

They'll take my friends. They'll sit in my pew. They'll play my instrument. They'll serve on my committee. You name it.

A church like a team that is divided with each person pursuing their own agenda and plan will fall apart. It's hard for us as Americans to fully realize that whatever you've received has been given to you by God because we don't like feeling like we're charity cases.

[32:06] But truly, everything that you have is God's and it truly belongs to Him.

Even the oxygen that you're breathing right now, it's not yours. It belongs to God. And without it, you would cease to be living.

Being totally committed to Christ means rejoicing in God's plan even when that plan takes a turn that you didn't anticipate. Whatever we do here at Highland Park, we do for God's glory.

And if that means that change takes place, if it's a change that helps us stay centered and focused on Christ, then all of us should say, so be it, with gladness.

And if God brings revival to the church down the street, our question shouldn't be why them and why not us? We should rejoice.

[33:11] Thank you, God, for what you're doing in your church through the lives of your people, that you would be glorified. And so we rejoice.

That's what it means to live in total commitment to our Lord and to his church and to his plan. Not in competition with one another, not in competition with his church, together.

Totally committed to God's plan, no matter what the case, knowing that God will be glorified in it.

Second principle, total commitment to Christ means being fully committed to God's calling.

verse 28, John tells his disciples, you yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.

John was totally committed to Christ because he was fully aware of who he was and what it was that God had called him to do. John understood that he was not the hero, but that Jesus was.

[34:20] He understood that he was merely a supporting actor in God's plan. And what made him so great in his role was that he understood also how unworthy he was for the task that he had been given.

I haven't been a pastor for as long as others, but I have seen my fair share of newly appointed leaders within the church. And without question, those ones who serve the best are the ones who see themselves as being unworthy for the task.

So for example, the body will say, you know, such and such a person would be great as a deacon or as an elder or as a Sunday school teacher or you name it.

And when you approach that person and say, you know, hey, people in the church would like you to consider being a part of the church serving in this role.

And whenever their response is with a little bit of fear and trepidation, I can't, I don't feel like I'm worthy for the task. It's like automatically you know that that person is going to be great because they feel the weight of it, they're aware of themselves, and they know that this is a major thing.

[35 : 47] This isn't something that I should take lightly. And they do so well in that role because they have a sense of their unworthiness in it. John the Baptist wasn't fully committed to himself.

He didn't try to make the church about him. He wasn't interested in cultivating his own following for his own glory, looking for political or social or career advancement, not looking to be noticed, but to give the attention and to direct it all to Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul was also a man totally committed to Christ's calling, and he, like John, called others to do the same, Romans 12, 3. For by grace, by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

In this verse, hidden in our English translations, is the Greek word *phroneo*. Paul uses that word in this verse four times. This was a word used to describe a person who was in their right mind, or who was thinking in their right frame of mind.

For example, when someone is writing their will, they may begin by saying something like this, being sane and in my right mind, I hereby bequeath such and such to so and so, to this person, or to that person.

[37 : 18] This Greek word is preserved in our language in the words frenetic and phrenology. Both words have to do with the brain, referring to the mind.

So with that definition in mind, Paul is saying something like this, do not indulge in an insane estimation of yourself, but rather be sane.

Be thinking correctly about your estimate of yourself. Make sure that it's sound and right. If we claim to be committed to Christ and claim to be committed to His calling us as His followers to go and to make disciples, but we're seen instead bickering with one another about the color of the carpet or the food at the potluck or different Bible translations.

In fact, I once seriously heard about a church that split over the piano bench. Seriously. These attitudes are motivated by self-centered ambition, not Christ-centered exaltation.

And when we bicker like this in divisions are created and splits occur, the world laughs. The world makes fun of us because we look insane.

[38 : 52] We look like we're out of our minds. Being totally committed to God's call means having a willingness to serve, to serve Him by serving others.

A desire to glorify Christ in that and a grasp of your unworthiness for the task. To me, it's the difference between living your life with a clenched fist and living your life with palms open and up. Asking the Lord to put in whatever He wants, take away whatever He wants. Because ultimately, you must increase, I must decrease.

Whatever I have is a gift that I've received from you, according to your plan and according to your calling me.

You may have heard this sermon with gladness or you may have heard it with trepidation thinking, oh no, He's going to change everything now.

[40 : 16] I promise you that I will be fully committed here to God's plan in God's call. And I ask that you would do the same.

There are things that each of us is desperately grasping onto that God wants us to let go of.

Self-centered ambitions, holding on to maybe the past, not wanting to let the past go.

Maybe past things that happened here at Highland Park Baptist Church, not wanting to let that go.

But remember what Jesus said, no one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

Because a plowman who looks back makes crooked paths. Perhaps it's the future that you're grasping onto. God's That maybe you're realizing that God has a plan for you that is not the plan that you had envisioned in your mind.

You're not willing to let that thing go, whatever it may be. Maybe you're refusing to put your hands out, content to giving little for fear of what God might want to put there.

[41 : 49] Maybe you haven't trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And you realize your need for him now.

And so maybe it's your life that you're refusing to surrender to him, but God's revealing to you that it's time. That today's your day of salvation.

Whichever the case may be, I'm asking us as a church, if you feel comfortable to come to the altar this morning. If you feel more comfortable then I encourage you to pray in your pew.

And this may seem corny, but I think that it helps. That as you pray, you put your hands out like this. God, with an attitude of God, I want you to increase in my life.

And I'm willing to decrease. Whatever you call me to do, whatever your plan is, whatever you place in my hands, I will be totally committed to that.

[43 : 06] Until that plan changes, or that calling changes, if it doesn't, I'm willing to serve you open-handed. Asking that in 2020, whatever you ask for me to do for your church, for your people, that I will be fully and totally committed to that in service to you for the betterment of others and for the benefit of your church.

church, that we would be building community here, equipping the saints, sharing Jesus, and teaching the word. I'm going to change things up a little bit.

Dan, if you want to, in the praise team, you want to already head up and start playing, I'm going to pray. And as I pray, I encourage you to come to the front, if you want to come to the altar, with the commitment that in 2020, Lord God, may I serve you with a commitment like I haven't before.

Totally committed to your plan. Totally committed to your calling. Whatever you ask me to do, I will do it. Wherever you call me to go, I will go.

That we would live for you, knowing that one day our day will come. And we don't want there to be any question or any doubt that I lived my life.

[44 : 41] Totally committed to Christ. That he would be glorified. If you're willing to do that, I encourage you to come forward. If you feel more comfortable, pray in your pew.

Would you please do that now? to do that? I would I to!!!! Heavenly Father, we are so thankful to know a God who didn't hold anything back from us.

We have sinned against you, Lord God. We have sought time and time again to pursue our own path, to go our own way, to pursue our own agendas.

Forgive us, God. Forgive us that we have not been totally committed to you as you've called us to be. That you declared that every day we are to follow you, to pick up our cross daily, to be fully committed and devoted to your plan and to your calling for us.

And so, God, we come to you together this morning as your church to confess that like your disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, Gethsemane, too often, when you call us to be attentive, when you call us to be serving, when you call us to be going, when you call us to be living our life for you, that we are asleep soundly.

[46 : 37] Lord, wake us up. Lord, stir within us an understanding and a greater desire to live our lives for you from this moment throughout this year in 2020 and onward to be totally committed to you.

To know, God, that this world is not our home, that we are foreigners. This is not the place that you have for us, but that what we do here, how we spend our lives here is important.

You've called us to be a light that shines brightly in a world of darkness, that people would see you, that they would see you through us, that they would see their need for Christ, understanding their sin, understanding his sacrifice.

Lord, you've called us to go and to share this message, and so, Lord, I pray that we would understand that this is your plan for us, this is your calling for us, and that we would go.

Lord, I pray that for each and every one of us, that our attitude beginning today and stretching out through the rest of our life would be the same attitude of John the Baptist, that you must decrease, that we would gladly decrease to see you increased in our lives and in our church, no matter what that may mean, no matter what the cost, no matter how uncomfortable it may feel at first, knowing

that whatever we do for you has eternal implications, and that no life spent committed to the Lord will be wasted in any way whatsoever.

[48:30] And so, Lord, we come to you with our hands lifted up, our palms out, asking, Lord God, that you would have us do whatever you want us to do as your church, as your people.

Take whatever is keeping us from doing that, Lord. Help us to let it go, knowing that ultimately all things belong to you, that we are yours, that we are yours to command, that we are yours to obey. And, Lord, I pray that this day, moving together as our church, that we'd be more aware of our need to build the body, to equip one another to live the Christian life, to share Jesus Christ, to teach your word, that we would be used by you to make a difference, to bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ, who is totally committed to us.

Lord God, may we be totally committed to you. And we ask that you would help us through the power of your spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

We pray and we ask this in the name of the one who is totally committed for us. Amen. Amen.

[49:52] Thank you.