

Resolute

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[0 : 00] So, it's good to be back, and it was a great trip, and tonight, during the evening service, I'm going to share with you all more in depth about our week in Latvia, the things that God has done.

What God is doing there about our partnership with Agenskons Baptist Church, and I know on Sunday morning, we've been going through the book of Hosea, and we will continue to go through that next Sunday, but I want to pause and take a break from that this morning to share a message with you that God really laid on my heart through the week and our time there in Latvia.

So, if you have your Bible, go ahead and turn in those to Luke chapter 9, verse 51. If you do not have a Bible with you this morning, that's okay. There are some in the pews, and you are welcome to take one of those.

And as a matter of fact, if you don't have a Bible, you are welcome to take that Bible home with you as our gift to you. Luke chapter 9, verse 51. And will you stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word together?

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

[1 : 26] May God add a blessing to the reading of his Word. Would you please be seated? My very first job in ministry, the very first position that I ever had in a church organization where I actually received a paycheck, was working as a food ministry intern at the House of Prayer Rescue Mission in Chillicothe, Missouri.

I was about 26 years old when I began working there, and it was only for the summer. And again, it was my first ministry position, and I was living in Kansas City at the time.

And prior to that, I had been working at a company. Danny and I both worked there, as a matter of fact. I was promoted from my warehouse position into the office once I graduated from college, and I had made all these plans of all that I was going to do in this company and the bright future I had there, ignoring God's call to ministry for my life.

And finally, when I got in there and I started working in that cubicle, and I was confined, and I hated it, and I knew that this isn't what God had for me. And so one of the scariest moments of my life was walking into my boss's office to tell him that I was resigning my position, because I didn't really know all that God was calling me to in ministry, just that he was calling me, and it was something that I had to do.

And so I put my two weeks notice in, and then three weeks later, actually a week later, I should say, I was enrolled at seminary. Again, knowing that I had been called to ministry, but not knowing what that involved.

[3 : 06] But I knew one thing for certain. I was not going to be a pastor. I was not going to be a pastor. I was not going to be a youth pastor. And so I thought, hey, this is a deal that I'll work out with you, God.

You're calling me to ministry. That's kind of like the framework, and I'll fill in all the details. And so one thing I thought would be really cool to do was to be a chaplain in the Navy.

And so that's what I would tell people in seminary whenever we would go around and introduce ourselves, and people would talk about where they were in church or why they were there. I'd be like, yeah, my name is Mike, and I'm here because I'm going to be a chaplain in the Navy.

And so much so was I committed to this that I even bought a shirt, a Navy shirt with a Navy insignia on it, and wore it around at home primarily because I had a lot of respect for those men, right, and I didn't want to wear it not having earned it.

But that's what I was committed to doing. That's what I thought was fair. God, you call me to ministry? Okay. Well, then I get to determine what that ministry is.

[4 : 12] And I thought that me and God had this deal worked out. It was certainly a deal that I was comfortable with. Obviously, as you can tell, this is not a spoiler alert, that deal didn't work out quite the way that I thought it was going to.

So with one semester of seminary under my belt, I began looking for some kind of position in ministry. Obviously, again, that didn't have anything to do with those ministry positions that I wanted nothing to do with.

And so this opportunity was found by Danny, my wife. And so I began pursuing, I should say, this ministry opportunity at the House of Prayer Rescue Mission in Chillicothe, Missouri.

Now, here's the thing. When I applied for this job, as Danny and I were talking about it, we thought that it was in Claycomo, Missouri. And Monty's laughing because he knows the Kansas City area. Claycomo is about 10 minutes from where we lived. Chillicothe is about an hour and a half from where we live. And so not knowing that this was the case, I did get a call from them, from Greg Hughes, who was the director there, and he set up an interview.

[5 : 28] And so he told me the address, and I go into MapQuest at the time because we didn't have smartphones with GPS on them, even back then. And I looked it up, and I was telling Danny, this says it's an hour and a half away.

But I didn't have any other prospects. Poor seminary student, I needed something to do, so I prayed about it. And Danny and I decided, you know what, we'll go out there just to see what it's all about. And so I remember driving an hour and a half out there and meeting Greg, the director, and he took us around town. He took us through this little tiny rescue mission in the community that it was in. He told me his vision for the place, and we just fell in love right then and there. And he's like, well, what I need you to do is I need you to meet with our trustees tonight, and we'll interview, they'll interview you, they'll have some questions, and then we'll probably make our decision at the end of the night.

And so he said, I'm going to go in there, and you guys just kind of drive around, and the meeting starts at such and such a time, and we want you to come in. So Danny and I did not drive around. We were spies.

[6 : 32] And so we drove around the corner, and I kind of wanted to watch who these trustees were. And so as they were walking into the building, they were rugged farmers.

It was the best way that I could describe them. They had their overalls on, tough guys. And I thought, I'm a city slicker, and I'm about to walk into the lion's den. They're going to eat me alive. They're going to say, well, does this city slicker know anything about planting a garden, right? And so I was very intimidated, sitting in the car and thinking, Lord God, what in the world have you gotten me into now?

And so I walked into that building, very unsure of this call to ministry, certainly very unsure of myself. And then I began answering their questions.

I began sharing my testimony with them. And these tough old farm guys started crying. They started crying. Because, you know, all I can say is just the spirit was moving in that meeting, and certainly I left knowing that this is what God was calling me to do.

[7 : 40] And I got to the car, and Danny said, well, how did it go? And I was like, well, I made them cry. And she goes, you made them cry? And I was like, well, it's just I started talking, and they started talking, and it was just this really powerful moment.

So needless to say, I was offered the position. It was only for three months, but, man, that summer was one of the greatest summers of my life. And even as I think back on it now, it moves me. Because through it, I learned something about God that I wouldn't have learned otherwise. And I'll tell you about Greg, that director. I still talk to him frequently.

We only met for three months, and in every position that I've applied for, including this one, he's been one of my references. And I learned very valuable lessons from the Lord that summer. And the first one was this, that God will call us to do things that make us uncomfortable. He will call us to do things that make us uncomfortable. Secondly, I learned this, that when God calls, your answer must be yes.

[8 : 53] God will call you to do uncomfortable things, and when he calls you to do those uncomfortable things, your answer to him must be yes. And so that brings me to this Latvia trip.

And I'll tell you that I had no intention of going on this trip this year. Dan had gone, and I thought, that's great.

You know, that's, Dan, missions, awesome. He did it. He knocked it out. He found that partnership. He did a great job. I don't need to go. Maybe at least not for another year, but Monty was here. And that night, and Monty afterwards, he came, and he told me, hey, there's a vision trip that we're going to go on again in the fall, and I'd like if you thought about going.

Okay, you know, okay. I told Monty, okay, I'll pray about it. That's the answer that we like to give, right? When we're not really sure about something.

[9 : 49] And so, I did pray about it. But there was so much going on here. And I thought, you know, God, this is really where my time needs to be invested, especially in this first year, being at Highland Park Baptist Church.

But it was in the back of my mind. We went down to the convention in Dallas. And on the last day there, everybody, everybody in the hotel that was connected to the convention hall, it was a madhouse.

People getting their stuff, getting their stuff to the cars, valets, taxi drivers, back and forth, back and forth, checking out of their hotels, this really busy lobby. And Danny and I were going there because I was looking for a place to go to the bathroom.

And so, we're weaving through all these things. I'm thinking, this was a bad idea. This is a bad idea. And out of all of these people, out of all of this madness, I hear somebody say, hey, Mike. Now, Mike, as you know, is a pretty common name.

But for some reason, I turned around, and sure enough, the person who called it out was calling for me, and it was Mike Hand. You remember, Mike Hand was here back in March, and he spoke.

[10 : 55] Mike works with the BGCO, and his job is to partner churches with missionary opportunities overseas. And so, Mike puts these trips together.

And so, I saw him, we visited, and he said, hey, you know, we have another trip going up, going on, and I was wondering if you would be interested in going. And so, I told him kind of the same thing. Well, I'll be praying about it. And then, when we were done talking to him, you know, me and Danny went on our way, and she said, I think you are supposed to go on that trip.

And I said, yeah, I think that you're right. because I don't believe in coincidences. And this was something that I knew that God was calling me to do. And as I've learned in my experience, when God calls you to do something, your answer must be yes.

And so, part of my concern with traveling so far was, one, not only had I never been this far away, and I loved the United States of America. I'd been to Toronto.

[11 : 59] I'd stepped foot in Mexico. I had never been far from home. since Danny and I have been married. We've never been a week apart. And with young kids, there was that concern.

And one of my fears, I confess to you, is the ocean. I love the ocean. The ocean is beautiful. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons why I wanted to be a Navy chaplain was so that I could be by the ocean.

So, I don't have a fear of the water. I don't have a fear of the ocean. I have this awesome respect for it. And that I know that mankind cannot survive on his own in the ocean.

Because there are creatures in there who can. And many of them have big, sharp teeth. And so, I know that if something happens to that plane, and I'm in that ocean, I'm in an environment where I can't survive long.

And so, that was my fear. Thankfully for us, we had aisle seats, so I didn't have to look out the window. But I can tell you that that was part of my concern.

[13 : 04] But yet, I knew that God was calling. And when God calls, the answer must be yes. So, Latvia.

Why, of all places in the world, Latvia? Like many of you, I probably, you were like me before going, thinking, I think I've heard of that place.

I'm guessing it's over there somewhere by Russia, Eastern Europe. I didn't know next to anything about Latvia. And so, I think for you guys, you've now had both of your pastors go over there, and you're probably still wondering, why Latvia?

Of all places in the world, why is God having us partner with them? Well, throughout that week, I got to talk to Mike Hand. I got to talk to Monty.

I got to talk to the men who are serving there in churches, in Latvia. And the one thing that I came away with, was that this is where God wants us to be.

[14 : 05] This is where God wants us to be. And so, if this is where God wants us to be, then this is the place where we must go. This is the place where we must be invested.

In the infinite mind of God, He has determined, I am convinced, that at this point in time, in redemptive history, it is His will that churches from the BGCO partner with churches from Latvia with the goal to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

That's what is happening. Now, I'll say, I don't know fully what's to come from these partnerships. I don't know fully what's to come from our partnership. But I do know this, that God knows what I don't.

And I'm convinced, and I'm confident, that this is what He wants us to do. And I also know from His Word that He calls us to walk by what? To walk by faith, not by sight.

But I believe that as we are partnering with Agenskons Baptist Church, as we are partnering with other churches in Latvia, I believe that we will do, we will see God doing things that we didn't dream possible.

[15 : 25] And by the end of this partnership, we'll look back and we'll say, of course, Latvia. That makes obvious sense. So now my question, or the question I think that you might have at this point is, so what does this mean for me?

What does this have to do with me? Well, here's the thing. We have a Savior who calls us to serve Him. And who challenges us to get out of our comfort zones.

We have a Savior who doesn't ask us to do anything that He wasn't willing to do Himself. When you understand what Jesus was willing to do for you, it will be hard for you to ever say no to what He's calling you to do.

And so this is the point that I hope to drive home to you this morning. This is what I hope that you will see, or this is what I hope to remind you of today, that Jesus Christ calls all of us to be disciple makers.

Every single one of us. We are called to make disciples. And that will mean that we will go to places that we would rather not go.

[16 : 45] That means that you will be involved in things that you'd rather not be involved with. But when you say yes, when you go and you share the gospel, I promise you, you will come alive.

You will come alive. A spark will be lit inside of you. The Holy Spirit will blow that into flame. There will be an unquestionable burning within your bones. This is what I was made to do.

This is what I get to do. You will experience God in such a way that you will never be able to deny Him. And you will be changed forever.

I promise you. So when you understand what Jesus was willing to do for you, you must be willing to say yes to whatever He's calling and asking for you to do.

In Luke 9, 51, that we just read, Jesus has set His face towards Jerusalem. Meaning, that He set His face towards the cross that He will soon die upon.

[17 : 58] The innocent one. The innocent one would die for the guilty. He would be stripped of His clothes. He would be stripped of His flesh.

He would be pierced with nails. He would die as a substitute for you and for me. In our place. Condemned He stood.

The Lamb of God. The sacrifice for sin. And our sins would be attributed to Him so that His righteousness could be attributed to us.

He justified us. He cleansed us by shedding His blood. And it was by His wounds that we've been healed. Forever.

So what I want you to see in Luke 9, 51 is that Jesus knew that these things would happen. He wasn't caught off guard. He wasn't surprised. He knew that they were going to happen, but He didn't shy away from them one bit.

[19 : 03] He did not hesitate at all. He did not have any second thoughts about this. He knew that this was His Father's will for Him. And so He was resolute to suffer and die on that cross for you and for me to secure our salvation.

He went to that uncomfortable place. So let's not act as if this was some kind of a cinch for Jesus. Let's not act as if God the Father was asking His Son to perform some kind of a simple task like taking out the trash. No, this was much, much more.

He would stand in the place for sinners and experience hell for us as God's wrath toward our sins was unleashed upon Him fully.

We see just how uncomfortable a thing this was that God the Father was calling His Son to do in the Garden of Gethsemane. Let's look again at that time in Luke 22 verses 39-44.

[20 : 13] Moments before He would be led to His trials and to His crucifixion. It says, And He came out and went as was His custom to the Mount of Olives and the disciples followed Him.

And when He came to the place He said to them, Pray that you may not enter into temptation. And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw and He knelt down and prayed saying, Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me.

Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours be done. And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him and being in agony, He prayed more earnestly and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.

This is a condition called hematomidrosis. You sweat blood. And what causes it is severe stress and anxiety.

So much so that the capillary blood vessels within your forehead, they burst. And you begin to sweat blood. Man, I've been stressed before, but I've never been stressed so much that I sweated a drop of blood.

[21 : 40] And I know that yesterday was a bad day for OU football in Oklahoma State. You know, it was a stressful time watching those games, but none of y'all were sweating blood. Or if you were, then you like Oklahoma too much.

And so, there is a part in the passion of the Christ. There's a moment where this garden prayer is captured.

And now, that's a movie. And obviously, they've taken creative liberties with that. And they've taken creative liberties with that moment. But man, it's a powerful movie.

And I think this scene of all the scenes in that movie is my favorite. If you've seen that movie, you remember Jesus is in the garden. And he's praying and he's sweating blood because he's realizing what he's about to do.

And in this movie, Satan is pictured as being there whispering in his ear as our Lord is down on his hands and his knees and he's praying.

[22 : 48] And the devil says to him in the movie, do you really believe that one man can bear the full burden of sin?

No one man can carry this burden. It is far too heavy. And after those words are spoken, a snake crawls out from underneath the devil and it makes its way over to where Jesus is praying.

You remember what happens next? This is my favorite part of the movie. I could watch this over and over again. Man, it gets me pumped. Jesus stands to his feet and he crushes that snake's head.

Just crushes it. Kills it. And I love that scene because it depicts the resoluteness of our Savior to do what the Lord, what God the Father had called him to do.

Nothing was going to get in his way. And so I believe that that scene again, it pictures how resolute our Lord was. You see, going to the cross for him wasn't some kind of a half-hearted effort.

[24 : 05] He wasn't praying and saying, you know God, what if I only just shed a little bit of blood? Maybe just like 10% of my blood. Wouldn't that be sufficient? He's not arguing.

He's not bargaining with the Father for a lower price to pay. He didn't shed a portion of his blood. He shed it all. He gave his entire life.

He gave it all for us. Let's look at Philippians 2, 1-11. So therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ and comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit and affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

And this is what I really want us to see. Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form.

[25 : 19] He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Do we see? Do we understand what Jesus was willing to do for us? So my question now, hopefully that you understand what he was willing to do for you, is this.

What has God called you to do? What has God called you to do? Maybe he's already called you to do it and you're serving in some capacity towards doing what he's called you to do.

And my question to you then is how committed are you to pursuing that call? How much of it are you giving? How much time are you sacrificing for it?

Are you putting those lessons if you're a Sunday school teacher together at the last minute? Having not prayed at all for those who you're about to teach to those who you're about to lead and give instruction.

[26 : 43] You see, when we say yes to God, it must not be a half-hearted yes. Because we don't serve a half-hearted Savior. We give him everything because he gave us everything.

We must be resolute. Give the Lord your all. Give his church your all. Give this church your all. Whatever you do for him, it has a lasting and eternal impact. You never waste your time in the house of God. You never waste your time serving him. Never.

You never waste your time in prayer. You never waste your time sitting in these pews. You never waste your time going to Sunday school class, teaching Sunday school class, helping kids in Awana learn their verses.

It's never time wasted. That is time that is invested in eternity. And there's nothing like it in this world that you will spend doing that will have such an eternal lasting impact.

[27 : 47] So be resolute to do what God has called you to do. Isn't this what Scripture commands us to do? Let's look at some verses together. Luke 9, 26, Jesus said to him, No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

No looking back. Keep going forward. Matthew 16, 24 through 26, Then Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?

Or what shall a man gain if in return for his soul? So you see, Jesus is calling us to risk it all for him. And he's saying that when you do that, there will be a great reward that will follow.

1 Corinthians 9, 24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run but only one receives the prize? So run that you might obtain it.

[28 : 57] Give it your best. Matthew 28, 18 through 20 And Jesus came and said to them before he ascended into heaven, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

What are these verses asking us to do? They're asking us to give God our best. Give God your best. So again, I ask you, what is he calling you to do today?

Give it your all. What is he calling you to do? If you don't know what that is, resolve to know it. Be praying. Come and ask me.

Pastor Mike, I know that I want to do this or I'd like to be involved with this. What can I do for this church? Man, I'd be blown away if somebody came and asked me that question. Here's the thing.

[30 : 02] No matter who you are, no matter your age, no matter your physical health, everybody can do something because everybody can pray. And sometimes we put off prayer as if it's not that big of a thing.

Man, there is power in prayer. The very least that anybody in this church can do is be a prayer warrior for what is going on in this church. Pray.

But perhaps, perhaps, you've heard all this and you're still unconvinced. And you say, you know what, Pastor Mike?

I see what you're saying. I understand where you're coming from. But I don't think that you're being realistic. Look around.

Look at all the empty pews. Look at the finances. Look at what is. Are you being realistic and calling us to do so much?

[31 : 14] I see what you see, but I see something more. When we were in Latvia, one of the pastors there on our first day meeting with them presented us with an object illustration.

that I want to share with you today. What do you see? An apple. Duh. Right? There's no trick question here. That's an apple.

And so a lot of times when we look at that, all we see is an apple. Not thinking about where it came from. Not thinking about what it contains inside of it.

What is in an apple? Seeds. What do you do with seeds? You plant them. What happens when you plant seeds? Yeah.

A tree will grow and it will produce more apples with more seeds to be planted. And then you have more trees and then guess what happens? As we see in the next picture, you have an orchard.

[32 : 20] When Jesus saw people, he didn't just see who they were at the moment, but what they would be.

You understand what I'm saying? Case in point, the woman at the well. Remember her? She'd been married and divorced multiple times. She was living with a man who wasn't her husband. And this was back in Bible times. You know, that's scandalous now. You can imagine how scandalous it was back then. And so anybody who knew her, all they saw was a filthy, dirty, loose woman.

What good could be done through this person? And she had been told that so many times that she came to a well at a point in time where she was expecting not to see anybody because she'd heard it over and over again.

But you know what Jesus saw? An evangelist. He shared with her. He shared the gospel with her. That woman went back into her town and she led more people out of that city to meet Jesus Christ where they were saved too.

[33 : 31] Jesus saw more than the apple. How about the apostles? Fishermen? You know, past their prime, maybe that's all they're going to do.

They're just dirty. They smell like fish. What good can come from them? Tax collectors, cheaters, people that were despised in that time. These were the apostles.

The apostle Paul who was the enemy of the church who was persecuting Christians, seeking to put them to death. Jesus saw a man who would be the greatest evangelist, missionary, and church planner in the history of the world.

Nobody else saw that. But he did. He did. So, what do you see when you look at Highland Park Baptist Church?

What do you see? I'll tell you this. If all we can see is the apple, if all that we can see is what is, then we know what the results will be.

[34 : 36] The same thing. But, if we're able to see the orchard, oh man, the things that God will have in store for us to do, it'll be amazing.

We'll glorify Him for it. I want to conclude by sharing with you a quote from C.T. Studd. What a great name. C.T. Studd.

Man, if ever I could have chosen a name, if God gave me that option, I'd be like, Studd is a great last name. I'll go with that one. C.T. Studd. Man, he was a stud for the Lord. This is what he said. Before the whole world, before the sleepy, lukewarm, faithless, namby-pamby Christian world, we will dare to trust our God. We will venture out all, we will venture our all for Him.

We will live and we will die for Him. And we will do it with His joy unspeakable, singing aloud in our hearts. We will, a thousand times sooner, die trusting only in our God than live trusting in man.

[35 : 48] And when we come to our position, we realize the battle is already won. And the end of the glorious campaign is in sight because we will have the real holiness of God.

Not the sickly stuff of talk and dainty words and pretty thoughts. We will have a masculine holiness, one of daring faith and works for Jesus Christ.

So, let's not be namby-pamby Christians. Amen? Amen? It takes us all.

All of us doing and giving all that God has called us to do. Will you do it? Will you do it?

Will you do it?