



EXTEND

Advancing the Kingdom

Devotional Guide



CHRIST THE KING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



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Advancing the Kingdom

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

When I think of the word “extend” my mind always goes back to watching Michael Jordan participate in the NBA slam-dunk contest. I remember watching in amazement as he smoothly dribbled the ball up to the free throw line and then took off toward the basket. He seemed to be carried along by an invisible conveyor belt that ran from the free throw line to the basket. He was palming the ball with one hand, his legs were spread wide apart, and his tongue was hanging out. When he floated far enough, he reached full extension and sent the ball through the rim with a flourish. I distinctly remember saying to myself, “That’s just not possible.”

Some of you may be whispering that phrase to yourself right now as you contemplate the goal of building a permanent facility for Christ the King on Silber Road. It is such a mammoth undertaking as to seem impossible. Yet we believe the Lord is calling us to this task – specifically that he is calling us to “extend” in order to “Extend.”

The purpose of Christ the King Presbyterian Church is to worship, know and serve the King so that he is honored and his Kingdom is extended in Houston and beyond. We believe it is important that everything we do as a church – including purchasing property, hiring architects, drawing up plans, and constructing a facility – furthers this purpose. In other words, we must not build a monument to ourselves. We must not think we have arrived as a church when we move into the new facility. We must see it as a “Kingdom-extending agent” – a way to honor the Lord through beauty and artistry, as well as a refuge for the nations gathered in Houston. It is a place to be refreshed and also a place to be renewed for the privilege of being Kingdom witnesses in Houston and beyond.

This is a privilege indeed, but it is also a daunting project. That is why we must “extend” in order to “Extend.” In order to accomplish this goal, we are all going to have to extend ourselves spiritually as well as financially. As the Bible makes clear, these two aspects of our lives are inseparable. It is the purpose of this devotional to get every person involved at Christ the King to consider what it means to extend ourselves for the sake of extending Christ’s Kingdom.

May God be glorified as we Extend – for the sake of advancing the Kingdom.

Clay Holland
Associate Minister
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October 15



Read:

Genesis 1:1-2:3

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

Reflect:

Embedded within Genesis 1:1 is one of the most controversial phrases known to Western culture: "God created." For many people, these are fighting words because they teach that man is not the measure of all things. This is potentially offensive because it places human beings in a subordinate relationship to a higher authority.

It is easy for those who believe these words to scoff at those who struggle with them. Yet if you allow yourself to meditate on the implications of what it means that God created all things, you may find that you have more in common with those who are offended by the Bible than those who claim to believe it but do not take it seriously.

If God truly is the creator of all things, we cannot claim ultimate ownership of anything. This means that we must hold the things of this world with a loose grip – a grip that recognizes that we are the creatures and not the Creator. It is only when we recognize and treasure the Creator/creature distinction that we can be truly free and fully human.

Apply:

1. What in your life do you hold onto tightly? Why is your grip so tight?
2. How might meditating on Genesis 1 help free you from the tyranny of holding too tightly to things you did not create?

Pray:

1. That you will more fully recognize and own the Creator/creature distinction in your life.
2. That the Lord would use Christ the King to proclaim the message of God's kingship over all creation and that many would submit to his rule over their lives in Christ.



Read:

John 1:1-18

"...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

Reflect:

When we think of the Creator, we often think only of God the Father. But in introducing Jesus, John teaches: "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." This is a bit of a cumbersome sentence, but it is repetitious for the sake of making sure we all hear one message loud and clear: "Jesus made everything."

Not only does this passage point to the mystery of the Trinity, it also teaches us something that should be encouraging: The Creator of the universe loves us so much that he came to earth to dwell with us. This is the point of John 1:14, and it tells us that the same Jesus who created us came to earth to save us. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." God accomplished the redemption of his physical creation and his physical creatures through a physical Christ.

As you think about what is important in your life, think about it through the lens of who Jesus is and the lengths he went to in order to reconcile you to God. If you are worth this much to God, how much is he worth to you?

Apply:

1. Read and re-read John 1:12. Have you believed in the Name of Christ in order to become one of God's children? If so, how does being a beloved child of God re-orient your priorities?
2. Meditate upon how valuable human beings must be to Jesus for him to leave the comforts of heaven in order to dwell with them. Does your life demonstrate gratefulness to the extent that you evidence a similar level of devotion to him?

Pray:

1. If you have not done so, admit your need for a Savior and pray to receive Christ that you may become one of God's children.
2. That the Lord would use Christ the King to spread the life changing message that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.



Read:

John 3:1-15

“Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Reflect:

In our culture, we come up with all sorts of requirements for the “good life.” It consists of some version of having or doing the right things. I came home one evening to hear the following lyrics playing (loudly) in my daughter’s room:

“Iced tea imported from England, Lifeguards imported from Spain, Towels imported from Turkey, Turkey imported from Maine.” (Who says brilliant songwriting is dead?) These are the requirements of Sharpay of “High School Musical 2” who needs “all things fabulous.”

Jesus also talks about a requirement, but it is not for the “good life” as our culture defines it. It is for something far better: Entrance into the Kingdom of God. The requirement, however, is one we cannot meet. When Jesus says you must be born again, he is saying that the Lord himself has to perform heart surgery by removing your heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh that beats with love for him.

If you have received this gift, which theologians call regeneration, it should have the affect of changing your priorities from the moving target of the “good life” to the fixed target of seeking first the Kingdom of God. A priority change of such magnitude will re-focus all of our lives, from what we do with our time to where we spend our money. The Kingdom of God extends only where this message is present and presented. Is it present among us and presented by us?

Apply:

1. How influenced are you by our culture’s definition of the “good life?” Have your priorities changed over time as you recognize more and more the gift you have been given of a new heart?
2. In what ways have you dedicated yourself to presenting the regenerative message of Christ to those in your spheres of influence? In what ways have you dedicated your financial resources to this same end?

Pray:

1. That the Holy Spirit would work in Houston to cause many more people in Houston to come alive in Christ.
2. That you as an individual and we as a church body would re-prioritize our lives in order that the message of regeneration would go forth from us to a world in need.



Read:

Read: John 6:22-59

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

Reflect:

Food is a powerful controlling influence in our culture, and it was not much different during the time of Christ. Not long before Jesus taught the crowd the words in John 6:22-59, he performed a miracle involving food. He fed over 5,000 people using only five barley loaves and two fish. He had become, for a large crowd, their own personal magician – someone who could provide them what they desired on a moment’s notice. This, the crowds decided, was a good person to have around.

Jesus refuses to be anyone’s personal good luck charm, and when the crowds brought up the issue of food in John 6:22 as a way to entice Jesus to give them some more bread to eat, he offered them himself instead. Jesus is the bread of life. He is what we need. Everything else we could ever possess in this world pales in comparison to the incomparable gift of being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

You may have plenty of bread to eat, metaphorically speaking, but without Christ you are still starving. On the other hand, you may be lacking what others around you seem to possess in spades, but in Christ, you are full. This is the mystery of the gospel, and it reminds us that often the things to which we assign the most value are of very little value, whereas in Christ we possess all.

Apply:

1. Are you ever tempted to view your relationship with Jesus as a “quid pro quo” – that if you are faithful he owes you material rewards? How does this passage challenge this approach to Christianity?
2. How does Christ being the bread of life help refocus your attention away from the things you strive after in order to fill you?

Pray:

1. That you would be filled with Christ as the bread of life and stop trying to be filled with other things that will eventually leave you empty.
2. That Christ the King would freely offer the bread of life to our city and world through Word and deed ministries.



Read:

John 11:1-44

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Reflect:

Unless Jesus returns first, all of us are sure to die. This is a striking statistic given the lengths we often go to in order to pretend we can enjoy life on this earth forever.

Jesus himself recognized this fact and the pain of it when he wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus. He was not weeping because he was powerless; Jesus knew he had the power to make Lazarus alive again. He wept because death is the ultimate reminder of everything that is wrong in the world. Death is the result of our rebellion against God and, as such, it is the enemy Jesus came to conquer. As the Apostle Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 15:26, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

Only Jesus is able to defeat the enemy of death, and he does it, ironically, with his own death. When Jesus died on the cross, he paid the price for the sins of his people, and when he rose again on the third day, he validated his victory over death and promised eternal life to all who believe in him.

The question for all of us is the same question he posed to Martha at Lazarus' grave: "Do you believe this?" If you do, is it your life's mission to make it known throughout your spheres of influence?

Apply:

1. Do you avoid thinking about the reality of death? If so, why? How do Jesus' words to Martha in John 11:25 comfort you and give you a mission?
2. If it is true that only Jesus can overcome the problem of death, why do you fear sharing this message with others? How can you most effectively utilize the financial resources the Lord has given you to help ensure that as many people as possible hear that Jesus is the resurrection and the life?

Pray:

1. For anyone the Lord brings to your mind that is apart from Christ who either fears or ignores death.
2. That the Lord will powerfully use Christ the King to spread the life changing message that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.



Read:

Matthew 4:17-24

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Reflect:

When I ask people why Jesus came to earth, they almost always say, “To save me from my sins.” This is undoubtedly true; in fact the passage we considered earlier from John 1 teaches this. However, when Jesus himself announced why he had come in Matthew 4, he said he came to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God had come because the King had come. In Jesus, nothing would ever be the same again.

According to verse 23 he proved this by participating in two main activities: teaching and healing. He taught people what it meant to live in God’s world and how to be reconciled to him through the death Jesus himself would die. He healed diseases to show that he had the power to repair what is broken in the world and to offer a precursor to life in heaven, where there will no longer be any suffering or disease.

It is the middle part of this passage that often gets lost. Jesus did not want to undertake this ministry alone, so he called disciples to go with him, learn from him, and eventually carry on the ministry he began. Now here we are in Houston in 2007 trying to construct a physical structure on Silber Road. Why? It must not be as a monument to ourselves but to carry on Jesus’ two-fold purpose of extending the Kingdom of God by proclaiming his Word and practicing redemptive mercy.

Apply:

1. People often refer to the two-fold ministry of extending the Kingdom as the ministries of Word and deed. Are you committed to following Jesus as his disciple in extending his Kingdom in this way?
2. How can the resources God has given you – including your abilities and your financial resources – be used to most effectively extend God’s Kingdom in Word and deed?

Pray:

1. That the Kingdom of God would take root in your own heart and that you would commit yourself to following Jesus in the ministries of Word and deed.
2. That the construction of a permanent facility on Silber Road would be used as a Kingdom hub for ministries of Word and deed in Houston and beyond.



Read:

Matthew 5:13-16

“...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Reflect:

In the ancient world, light was literally a life-saver. For travelers wandering through the vast Palestinian plains after dark, the only way they would be able to find shelter for the night would be to look for the lights of a city. It would be the height of cruelty for a city to have the lights to direct travelers to safety but to hide them or try to horde them for their own use.

Such is the case, according to Jesus, with the life-giving message of the gospel. It would be the height of cruelty to assume that we should horde this gift and use it only for our own encouragement. Individually and as a church we must place the light in a prominent place and keep it lit for all who are lost and wandering to find.

As a church, we can be effective in letting our light shine before others without a permanent facility, but one way to characterize the structure we intend to build on Silber Road is as a lighthouse. It will not exist only to serve as a gathering place for us; it will exist for those who have not yet gathered among us. It will, in other words, make us more effective light-bearers in Houston. If this truly is the case, it is a project worth pursuing and sacrificing for.

Apply:

1. In your own life, do you let your light shine before others or do you tend to hide your light? If you answered the latter, why, and how can this passage encourage you to be a more effective light-bearer to those around you?
2. If you have been longing for a permanent facility for Christ the King, why? Are your reasons consistent with the message of this passage? If not, why not?

Pray:

1. That you would be a more effective bearer of the light of the gospel in your family, workplace and neighborhood.
2. That Christ the King's permanent facility on Silber Road would serve as a lighthouse to those who are wandering in darkness in Houston.



Read:

Matthew 6:1-4

“...when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Reflect:

The journals of Mother Teresa reveal that, at the height of her worldly fame, she felt the most spiritually depleted. She would lament day after day that she felt like she would pray and no one would hear; that she would listen and hear nothing. She wrote these journal entries immediately after she had received the Nobel Peace Prize. While the entire world was celebrating her as a humanitarian, she was struggling to live in peace with God.

Many of the experts who have reviewed her journals speculate that she was suffering from depression, but I also think Mother Teresa was able to write honestly in her journals because she did not put her trust in what everyone else was saying about her. When the world said she was great, she admitted that she was weak and needy. This is a stark example of taking seriously the teaching of Jesus in this passage. No matter how famous she became for her legendary generosity, Mother Teresa never celebrated herself.

In some respects, generosity is as dangerous to our souls as greed. Jesus says that giving should be a matter between you and the Lord. Just as Jesus gave himself up on the cross out of obedience to the Father and for the good of his people, we should trust him and follow him by giving generously for his glory and not our own.

Apply:

1. Why do you think Jesus says it is spiritually dangerous to let our generosity be seen by others?
2. Note that Jesus says “*when* you give to the needy” and not “*if* you give to the needy.” He is assuming that we will be generous, but he challenges us on our motives. In thinking of your own pattern of giving, is this a safe assumption? Why or why not?

Pray:

1. That the Lord will make you generous as his follower.
2. That the Lord will protect your heart from giving to receive praise from others rather than out of thankfulness to Christ.



Read:

Matthew 6:5-15

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Reflect:

Like many of you, I learned the Lord’s Prayer when I was very young. I could say the Lord’s Prayer in church while simultaneously wondering what our family would do for lunch and counting the number of pipes in the pipe organ. That is to say, I often *said* the Lord’s Prayer, but I rarely *prayed* the Lord’s Prayer.

If I had truly prayed the Lord’s Prayer, I would have wondered what Jesus meant when he told us to pray for the Father’s “Kingdom to come...on earth as it is in heaven.” I believe what Jesus is teaching is that we should be prayerfully expectant that the Lord will do what he promised to do – redeem his creation from sin and its effects. Therefore, we should pray that he would bring his promise to fruition.

But how does he do this? One of the ways God promises to extend his Kingdom is through us. This partly explains the very difficult teaching he gives in verses 15 and 16 regarding forgiveness. One of the things that should characterize us if God’s Kingdom has penetrated our hearts is forgiveness. Forgiveness is “un-natural” – we are predisposed in our fallen nature to harbor bitterness and not to forgive. If we are able to forgive, it shows the reality of God’s Kingdom – that it has come to us and that we are able to extend it to others. This is something worth praying about. It is also something worth pursuing with all our energy and resources.

Apply:

1. When you pray the Lord’s Prayer, do you really expect the Lord to answer you? Why or why not?
2. Do you actively pray for and work toward the expansion of God’s Kingdom in Houston and beyond? How can Christ the King’s permanent facility be used as an instrument of expanding God’s Kingdom?

Pray:

1. That God’s Kingdom would invade your own heart first – making you able to forgive others and be zealous to work toward the extension of his Kingdom.
2. That God would use Christ the King (and particularly our new facility) to extend his Kingdom in Houston and beyond.



Read:

Matthew 6:19-24

“You cannot serve God and money.”

Reflect:

Money is a cruel master. It is cruel because it is inconsistent and toys with you if you allow it to. If money is your master, you are elated when it allows it, but you are devastated when it desires. The irony is that we accept this abuse from money in a way that we would not from any other relationship we have.

That is why you cannot serve both God and money. While money is inconsistent, God is the “rock of your salvation.” While money is fickle, God “never leaves you or forsakes you.” He is a consistent and kind master even when money leaves you high and dry. If you are placing your trust in him, you will not be arrogant in times of wealth, nor will you be completely devastated during times of want.

This is true freedom, and it frees you to stop laying up treasure on earth, which will not last and will not be sufficient to provide you with strength for your soul. It also frees you to be radically generous, laying up treasures in heaven for the Kingdom of God to advance so that more and more people would serve the one true and good master – the Triune God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Apply:

1. Think about all of the ways you serve money as your master. How and when has it let you down? What lessons should you learn from this?
2. In what ways can you lay up treasures in heaven? Is this a struggle for you? How does the freedom you have in serving Christ alone as your master encourage you in this?

Pray:

1. That you would not serve both God and money but God alone.
2. That God as your good and gracious master would free you to lay up lasting treasures in heaven that his Kingdom might advance through your generosity.



Read:

Matthew 6:25-34

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life."

Reflect:

For many people, this is a familiar Scripture passage. In fact, our family has at least three different versions of musical groups singing it. However, there is one important word that is easy to skip over, but if you do, you do it to your detriment. That word is "therefore."

The rule of thumb in interpreting the Bible is "whenever you see a 'therefore' you have to ask what the 'therefore' is there for." The "therefore" is there for the purpose of reminding us to trust in the true Master and not the false master of money. In other words, if you put your trust in God, and he rules over you, you will be free from the anxiety that comes from worshiping money and constantly wondering when it is going to disappoint you.

Freedom from anxiety through faith in Christ leads you to freedom not to be tied to earthly possessions. You can give generously because you do not have to worry about tomorrow. God is in control of tomorrow, and he is a kind and consistent master.

Apply:

1. Do you tend to be anxious about money and possessions? What does that suggest about whom you may be serving as master?
2. What practical steps can you take to be less anxious and, therefore, more generous?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would free you from financial anxiety through trust in him.
2. That, as a church, we would express our freedom through radical generosity.



Read:

Luke 12:29-34

“Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Reflect:

What is your greatest fear? Is it losing your job? Is it never getting married? Is it falling ill or having a loved one fall ill? These are the kinds of fears most of us have and most of us express. What would your life be like, though, if your greatest fear was not inheriting a place in God’s Kingdom?

That is the fear Jesus points you to in this passage. He assumes that your greatest fear is to miss out on citizenship in his Kingdom. But how many of us truly have that fear? How many times do you stop during the course of worrying about all of your other fears to even give this one a second thought?

The good news is that you do not have to fear whether or not you will inherit God’s Kingdom if you are a part of his “little flock.” This means that you trust in the leading and ultimately in the sacrificial death of the shepherd, Jesus. God promises that his Kingdom will come and that he will fill it. This is a great promise indeed, and extending God’s Kingdom is the greatest privilege in the world. Seek first his Kingdom. Seek to extend it with all of your resources. There is no greater promise, privilege or task we could ever have.

Apply:

1. What does it mean to seek first the Kingdom of God? In what ways can you practically do that on a normal day-to-day basis?
2. How does being a part of Jesus’ flock free you from worry? Do you see extending God’s Kingdom as the greatest privilege and task you have? Why or why not?

Pray:

1. That the Lord will continually teach you what it means for you and for Christ the King to seek first his Kingdom.
2. That the Lord will use you and Christ the King to extend his Kingdom and thus increase the size of his flock.



Read:

1 Corinthians 4:7-14

“Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich!”

Reflect:

Often, these verses are read and applied to pertain to our material blessings. It is true, as many other passages point out, that all that we have with respect to material things comes from God. But this is not our greatest gift. Our greatest gift is the gift of the gospel – the good news that, even though you are far worse than you would ever dare imagine, you are far more loved and accepted in Christ than you would ever dare dream.

Do you believe that? If so, using the language of Paul, why would you ever boast as if you did not receive it as a gift? All of our service to Christ, from our life of prayer to our life of generosity is motivated by this one fact – we have received more riches in Christ than we could ever receive on this earth. We can, therefore, be more generous than the people around us who have not received this gift.

Apply:

1. When you think about your life as a Christian, how often does the word “gift” come to your mind?
2. If you truly believed that the gospel was the greatest gift you could ever receive, how would that motivate you in your generosity and life of following Christ?

Pray:

1. That you would see the gospel as the greatest gift you could ever possess.
2. That the Lord would be pleased to use this church – individually and corporately – to spread this good news to every corner of Houston and even to the whole world.



Read:

Luke 12:13-21

"...one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Reflect:

The New York Times reported that recently deceased hotelier Leona Helmsly left \$12 million to her favorite dog and absolutely nothing to two of her grandchildren. I don't know the circumstances surrounding this oddity, but I'm pretty sure of two things: First, the dog is oblivious to his or her good fortune, and secondly, the grandchildren are acutely aware of their being snubbed.

Money, or the love of money, causes people to do foolish things. That is Jesus' point in the parable of the rich fool. He relied on his riches to provide rest for his soul and lost his soul in the process. The fact of the matter is that we are going to depart this earth and come face to face with the Lord. And according to this passage, he will ask you about your investments – probably not the diversity of your retirement plan but in what ways you were "rich toward God."

Investments in God's Kingdom always grow. Investments in ourselves never wholly satisfy us. That is the principle at stake here, and the battleground for our hearts.

Apply:

1. Are you covetous of those who have or appear to have greater financial resources than you? If so, why, and what dangers lurk in this covetousness?
2. In what ways can you be "rich toward God." If you stood before God today, and he asked you how you had been rich toward him, how would you answer?

Pray:

1. That you would invest in the Kingdom of God and not only in yourself.
2. That the Lord would be pleased to grow the investment Christ the King makes in his Kingdom in unimaginable ways.



Read:

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

"...excel also in the gift of giving."

Reflect:

It is likely that Paul is referring to the Philippian church in verse 1 of this passage when he mentions "the churches of Macedonia" that gave sacrificially even in a severe test of affliction.

The Corinthian church, by contrast, was in a much more comfortable state. They were at peace and were experiencing an economic boom of sorts. This boom, however, did not translate into spiritual vitality. That is why Paul challenges them by pointing to others. "The Macedonians," he says, "gave generously even though they were suffering. You are comfortable and excel in many things, excel also in this gift of giving."

Some of us are very comfortable today; some of us less so. But Paul teaches us that, though the gift of giving is both for the comfortable and the uncomfortable, those with financial abundance have an added responsibility – our "abundance at the present time should supply their need." Let us take Paul seriously here and challenge ourselves to excel in this grace also.

Apply:

1. Why does Paul call generous giving a "grace." How does your understanding of God's grace motivate you to give generously?
2. How would you place yourself with respect to the Philippian church (not wealthy but generous) and the Corinthian church (comfortable but struggling to give)? If you are in the latter, how does this passage motivate you to excel in the grace of giving?

Pray:

1. That God would give you the grace necessary to excel in the grace of giving.
2. That, as a church, we would not struggle to give generously to the cause of the gospel in our relative comfort and prosperity.



Read:

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

Reflect:

It is a comfort to me to know that we do not have to be forever stuck in our current attitudes toward giving. God is at work in this part of our lives just as he is at work in all others. He does not compel us in our giving out of guilt. Rather, he woos us in our giving by holding in front of us the beauty of the gospel and the promised work of the Holy Spirit.

None of us should feel like we have ever arrived with respect to the grace of generosity. We are all on a journey. Our model is Christ, and our guide is the Holy Spirit.

Have you struggled through these passages of Scripture? Have they been challenging to you? Have they made you squirm or at least made you feel some level of discomfort? If so, that's good. That means God is at work, and by his grace he refuses to leave you alone – even in this sensitive area of life. The good news is that we have a great Savior, and no matter how much you give, you can never out give God. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! May he work in us the grace to give more abundantly than we ever thought possible so that his purposes may be accomplished in his world.

Apply:

1. In your past giving, have you sown sparingly or bountifully? What do you believe Paul means when he says that a person who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully?
2. How does the inexpressible gift of the gospel encourage you to give more abundantly than you ever thought possible?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would give you the courage to sow bountifully, and that he would use the resources you sow to bring many into his Kingdom.
2. That you would trust in the gospel in all areas of life – including giving – and that you would experience the riches of God's grace as you give generously.



Read:

Philippians 4:10-20

"...a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."

Reflect:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I have seen that on the t-shirts of more Christian athletes than I can count. Paul had it on his t-shirt, too, but it did not have anything to do with winning the state football championship. Paul needed the strength of Christ to learn to be content in every circumstance.

The Philippian church encouraged him in this. They were his partners in spreading the gospel "to the ends of the earth." The Philippian church was not a rich church, but they used what they had to support Paul in his mission to extend the Kingdom of God to every corner of the earth.

Whenever we use our resources to extend Christ's Kingdom – whether it is to support a missionary or build a Kingdom hub in the heart of Houston – we are making "a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God." Paul uses the language of worship here because these gifts enable worship. They are given as an act of worship in the hopes that they will be used to bring people to worship the true God instead of the false gods of our culture. Can you make such a sacrifice? You can through Christ who strengthens you.

Apply:

1. Do you struggle with contentment? How can a life of generosity make you more content?
2. Do you view giving as an act of worship? If not, how could viewing it as such transform your attitude toward generosity?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would strengthen you to be content in whatever circumstance he has placed you.
2. That you would more and more view sacrificial giving as an act of worship, and that the Lord would continue to use the gifts you give to extend his Kingdom.

November 1



Read:

Hebrews 13:1-6

“Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

Reflect:

Contentment is hard. There is always a better job out there. There is always a bigger house in a nicer neighborhood. There is always a newer model car or a latest, must-have fashion. It seems like every month, some company comes out with the biggest and best, barely legal driver that enables a duffer to hit a golf ball 290 yards. I’ve been in garages that have entire sections dedicated to last year’s driver.

Contentment, though, is important. It is a discipline that the Holy Spirit works in the lives of the followers of Christ. It is important because it is instructive. Contentment reminds us that there is a God and we are not him. Contentment reminds us that God “will never leave us nor forsake us.”

When we are discontent or covetous, we doubt the faithfulness of God. We are saying, “God, despite what you may say, you have left me and you have forsaken me – in this area.” Covetousness casts doubt on the goodness of God, and so is an insidious sin that lurks in our hearts and deprives us of the contentment we are meant to find in God alone.

The good news is that, in Christ, we have all that we could ever ask or imagine. Paul says that “all the promises of God find their Yes” in Christ. The author of Hebrews does not say, “Keep your life free from the love of money because money is bad.” He says, “Keep your life free from the love of money because God is good.”

Apply:

1. In what areas do you find it difficult to be content? How has God provided what you need in those areas?
2. How does covetousness cast doubt on the goodness of God?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would convince you of his faithfulness and cause you to be content in him.
2. That the Lord would keep everyone at Christ the King free from the love of money that we may be more generous and better equipped to extend the Kingdom of God in Houston and beyond.



Read:

1 Timothy 6:6-19

“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides everything to enjoy.”

Reflect:

In 2005, two hurricanes in our region of the country cost thousands of people everything they owned. Many of the people never believed for a second that such a tragedy would befall them. They were unprepared – not in terms of having an evacuation plan or plywood for their windows – but in their hearts. They had set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, and the riches were taken away.

Nothing seems as certain to us as the material things we possess. We can see our house from the curb. We can smell the interior of our cars as we slide into them. We can feel our soft sheets when we crawl under them. We can taste fine food. And it is not improper to do so. Paul is explicit in this passage that God “provides us with everything to enjoy.”

No, having these things is not improper; setting our hopes on them is. God is our only hope. He has given us all things, and the reality of the matter is that he can take all things away. The alternative to setting our hopes on the uncertainty of riches, then, is to hold on to them loosely – to be “generous and ready to share.” If we hold on to Christ alone as our hope, we really aren’t giving up very much when we give up our treasures. Rather, we are gaining “a good foundation for the future, so that [we] may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Apply:

1. Have you ever had an expensive material possession that you truly loved taken away from you? How did you feel when this happened and why?
2. How does putting your hope in God allow you to be generous with your treasures? How does your level of generosity provide a barometer for where your hope lies?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would keep you from setting your hope on your treasures and strengthen you to set your hope on him alone.
2. That the Lord would use Christ the King Presbyterian Church as an instrument of his grace to encourage many people to set their hope on God alone.



Read:

Deuteronomy 8:11-20

“Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’”

Reflect:

Money is power – isn’t that how the saying goes? It certainly is the way our culture views wealth. He who has the most money has the most power, and he who has the most power is able to generate the most wealth.

According to the Bible, this is a dangerous presupposition, and it is often one that is hard to avoid. There is a real sense of accomplishment in working hard and being rewarded for your diligence. However, when that sense of accomplishment creeps over into feeling like you have created your own empire and have done it all apart from God, you are in danger of falling into the trap of the Evil One.

It is far better to meditate on the words of this passage, “You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth.” On our own, we can do nothing. Our financial resources are God’s gift to us, and, consequently, they are to be used to extend his Kingdom and not our own.

Apply:

1. How do people you know talk about their financial resources? How much does God’s provision enter into their language?
2. How often do you find yourself speaking the language of the culture with respect to wealth? What does this passage teach about the danger of such language?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would guard you from believing in your heart that you provide anything for yourself.
2. That you would be more thankful for the material resources God has given you, and that he would enable you to grasp them loosely and use them freely for his purposes.



Read:

2 Samuel 24:18-25

“I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.”

Reflect:

Have you ever noticed how the richer or more famous someone is, the more gifts he receives? I once heard an interview with Michael Irvin, the former wide receiver for the Dallas Cowboys, where he said that whenever he was spotted in a restaurant in Dallas, someone, either anonymously or in exchange for an autograph, always paid his bill. Michael Irvin could afford to pay not only his own bill but those of the entire restaurant, but there he was, receiving yet another free meal.

In his day, David was a bigger star than Michael Irvin. He was the king of Israel, the hero of many battles, and the spiritual leader of an entire nation. So when he came to build an altar to the Lord on Araunah's property, it was only natural that Araunah would offer it to him for free. David, however, would not accept Araunah's gift, as gracious and well intended as it was. He insisted that he pay for the property because this altar was for the Lord. David would not offer a gift to God that cost him nothing.

Here we see King David acting as a type of Christ. Christ's sacrifice on the cross cost him everything so that we could have the free gift of eternal life. What about your gifts? When you give to the church, is it always a budgeted item – perhaps what is left over or calculated to meet but never exceed what you can write off in taxes? Have you ever truly given to the Lord something that cost you – a vacation, a new car, or an upgrade to your home? This type of giving is countercultural and most people will think you are crazy if you do it. However, how can we ever exceed Christ in giving, and what are the possibilities for Houston if we truly give that which costs us?

Apply:

1. Think about your pattern of giving. How calculated is it to ensure that you do not feel it financially?
2. How does this passage challenge you to give that which costs you something? How, like David, can you see this as an act of worship to Christ who gave himself up for you?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would open your eyes to the incalculable gift the Lord Jesus Christ gave you when he died for your sins upon the cross.
2. That, as a church, we would adopt the mindset of David not to give to the Lord that which costs us nothing.



Read:

1 Chronicles 29:1-20

“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own we have given you.”

Reflect:

I love David’s prayer in 1 Chronicles 29. The reason I love it is because he turns generous giving into a privilege instead of something to dread. Many people give because they are motivated by guilt. They say, “OK, OK, here’s my money. Please leave me alone.” David says, “Who am I that I should have the privilege of giving my treasures to God?”

Why does he say this? He says it because he remembers the key principle: He is not giving his treasures to God; he is giving God’s treasures to God. This fact has worked its way deep into the heart of king David, so much so that he marvels at the privilege of being able to give away money.

How would your attitude toward giving change if you saw it as a privilege rather than a duty at best or something to avoid altogether at worst? The heart is the key. If we view God as the giver of all things and see ourselves as richly blessed by the greatest gift – his unmerited favor – we can say with David, “Who am I that I should be able thus to offer willingly?”

Apply:

1. What is your attitude when the subject of financial giving comes up? Does it differ from the words of David in this passage?
2. How would your attitude change if you saw giving God’s gifts back to him as a privilege rather than a guilt motivated duty?

Pray:

1. That your attitude toward giving would more and more reflect the language expressed in this passage.
2. That you would be free from guilt as a motivation to give and would receive great joy in giving back to God that which he has given to you.



Read:

Revelation 21:1-22:5

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.”

Reflect:

The end of the Bible is overwhelmingly beautiful. It is so beautiful that the Apostle John can't adequately describe it. He is grasping for images to express something that is beyond the words at his disposal. When Jesus returns, the earth, and everything in it, will be made right and good...and beautiful.

This is encouraging to me because a lot of life is ugly – from the piles of rock and sand near my house that are being churned into I-10 concrete to the pain of loneliness, despair and estrangement from God. What does this have to do with making significant financial sacrifices in order to construct a permanent facility on Silber Road? We have the opportunity to hint at heaven – however inadequate that hint will ultimately be – by constructing something that is purposefully beautiful on Silber Road. It is beautiful because it expresses something of what is coming in and through the return of Christ. It is purposeful because it does not exist for itself, but to bring others in to the beauty of worshipping, knowing and serving Christ.

The Bible teaches that believers in Christ should live all of life in light of eternity. That includes our buildings and our missions. Pray, hope and sacrifice in order that the two will meld together in a way that is honoring to our King and purposeful in extending his Kingdom.

Apply:

1. How can focusing on the return of Christ motivate you to live more purposefully in the present? What is it that causes you to struggle to live in light of eternity?
2. What does this passage teach about the relevance of beauty with respect to the new heavens and the new earth? Why is it important to strive to express some of the beauty of heaven in the present time?

Pray:

1. That God will cause you to live more of your life in light of the return of Christ and the beauty of the new heavens and new earth.
2. That Christ the King will more and more express the beauty of eternity through its message of the gospel and through our future permanent facility.



Read:

Acts 2:42-47

“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Reflect:

For much of the twentieth century, if you wanted to ruin a man’s life, you would accuse him of being a Communist. A person in the middle of the century could be removed from any position of power or prestige just by having such an accusation leveled against him. For this reason, it is a little surprising to hear Luke report in this passage that the believers “had all things in common.” Were they communists? Is the Bible advocating communism?

Well, no. The Bible advocates a lifestyle of radical generosity that meets the needs of others. None of the believers in Jerusalem were in need because the church (the organic gathering of the followers of Christ) would not allow them to be in need. They considered the collective good of the church to be greater than their individual level of comfort and gave radically for that purpose.

This sounds a little naïve doesn’t it? What good could that possibly accomplish? Luke reports the results in the last verse: “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Generosity is attractive. Generosity results in the extension of the Kingdom of God. Generosity is, therefore, vital to God’s mission in his world.

Apply:

1. How does this passage challenge you to see the needs of your brothers and sisters in Christ?
2. How is generosity attractive? What could happen at Christ the King if we all cultivated a lifestyle of radical generosity?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would give our church the courage to express the teaching found in this passage.
2. That the Lord would add day by day to the number of those who are being saved, and that he would be pleased to use Christ the King as an instrument to this end.



Read:

Jeremiah 29:4-7

"...seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

Reflect:

Houston is a city that is easy to use. It offers opportunity and experience. It offers several years of really hard work that can be rewarded with moving to another place and slowing down. The two questions many people ask themselves upon moving to Houston are, first, what can this place offer me, and second, how soon can I leave once I have taken everything I need.

Contrast this with God's instructions to his people. They were not moving from their homes to a sunny retirement spot in Southern California. They were being taken against their wills to a desolate land far away from the land God had promised their forefathers to give them. If anyone had a reason to hate a place, it was the exiled Israelites. Yet God told them not to hate the land of their exile, but to love it and pursue its welfare.

Likewise God does not call us to "use" Houston. He calls us to love it. He calls us to enter into its beauty and its ugliness and to promote peace, justice and welfare within it. That is why Christ the King Presbyterian Church exists in Houston, and that is why we are working and praying toward the Lord granting us a permanent facility on Silber Road.

Apply:

1. What is your disposition toward Houston? Even if you landed here against your will, how does this passage encourage you in your relationship to the city?
2. In what ways can you promote the welfare of Houston? How can God use a permanent facility to this end?

Pray:

1. Confess any ways you have attempted to "use" Houston for your own ends, and ask the Lord to help you seek the welfare of your city.
2. That the Lord will use Christ the King to promote the welfare of Houston and those who live in it.



Read:

Romans 10:5-17

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Reflect:

What is the mission of the church? Is it a place to go to on Sundays to get your dose of spirituality for the week? Is it a place to network – to meet “like-minded” people and make business and social contacts? Is it a non-profit service organization – a platform you can use to launch social renewal initiatives? Some of those activities are valid, and they are connected to the church in an ancillary way, but what is the church’s ultimate mission?

Paul reminds us here in Romans 10 that the mission of the church is to extend the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to proclaim the simple but challenging message that “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” This is a deadly serious mission, and the consequences for not taking it seriously are disastrous. There is no greater privilege on earth than participating with God himself in his mission of redeeming the cosmos and rescuing people in rebellion against him. “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” How beautiful are our collective feet as a church?

Apply:

1. Are you intimidated to proclaim the gospel because you believe the message is overly complicated? How does Paul’s synopsis of the gospel message in verse 9 encourage you?
2. Reflect on whether your mission and understanding of the church’s mission matches what Paul writes in Romans 10. What changes can you make to align yourself with Paul’s mission? How does the use of your material resources fit into your answer?

Pray:

1. That the Lord would convict you of ways you have attempted to use the church for your own ends.
2. That the Lord would make your mission and the mission of Christ the King more consistent with Paul’s mission to preach the good news.



Read:

1 Kings 8:22-61

"...when [the foreigner] comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you..."

Reflect:

Before we begin to consider this passage in earnest, let's be straight about one thing: The Temple Solomon constructed in Jerusalem and the permanent facility we hope to construct in Houston are two different things. We do not plan to build an ark of the covenant, nor do we plan to offer sacrifices.

We do, however plan to have at least one thing in common with the Temple in Jerusalem according to the prayer of Solomon in verses 41-43. We plan for it to be a place where "foreigners" can come in – both those foreign to the city and our country, but especially those who are foreign to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although, the Temple in Jerusalem was exceedingly beautiful and not utilitarian, it did not exist for itself. It existed, in many respects, for those who had no use for it.

We are not building a facility only for ourselves. It is important for us to care for the ministries and people that are in place at Christ the King, and we can no longer do that as effectively as we would like in a non-permanent facility. However, we would be making a grave mistake not to see the facility as a beacon of light to those who may not even know they are in the dark. That is a mission worth having; and that is a mission worth sacrificing for.

Apply:

1. When you think of Christ the King having a permanent facility what comes to mind? Are you focused mostly on existing ministries or does your mind gravitate to those outside Christ's Kingdom?
2. Building the Temple was an arduous process that required great sacrifice on the part of Israel. With the mission of Christ the King and Solomon's prayer in mind, what sacrifices are you prepared to make to build a Kingdom-extending hub in Houston?

Pray:

1. That Christ the King's facility would never exist as an end unto itself or simply for the use of its members and regular attenders.
2. That the Lord would be pleased to call in those who are outside of Christ and find the message of life through ministries of Word and deed.



EXTEND
Advancing the Kingdom