

Pastor Caleb Duvick  
Ambassadors of Reconciliation

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Series: Where Glory Dwells  
2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Welcome to Two Cities Church, everyone. My name is Caleb Duvick. I'm one of the pastors here and am excited to celebrate what you saw there. You see, when we did the ONE Initiative, it was never going to be just a short-term thing we were doing as a church; it was something we knew we were going to own together. We wanted it to be a part of our culture, who we are.

Our hope is that everyone who calls Two Cities Church home can answer that question. Who is your "one"? Who is the one person who's far from God but close to you that you are going to take ownership of their faith? We're going to be diving into that idea quite a bit here in this message today.

Before we do that, I want to celebrate something that happened here on Friday night. We had Jen Wilkin in the house for our annual women's event. It was awesome. We packed out this room. We had an army of gentlemen who were serving here on that night. It was incredible.

I just want to say Jen gave us a master class on biblical theology, oddly enough on bread. So, for all of the ladies out there who are gluten-free, we're sorry if that was triggering in any way, but it was fantastic. If you couldn't make it or if you're one of the guys, we're going to be dropping a podcast with her tomorrow. It's going to be awesome. So, you can tune in for some more.

What I love about nights like Friday is that that was a picture of what we are committed to as a church. We are committed to making and mobilizing disciples in environments of prayer and worship. That's what happened on Friday night. And guess what? We're going to be doing something like that again on Monday, June 17. We are going to be having our next Night of Prayer and Worship.

If you remember the last one, we packed this room out for that as well. My hope is that we pack out the entire building. So, if you have nothing on that calendar yet for

our Night of Prayer and Worship, put it on your calendar. If you have Community Group that week, we want you to cancel it. Come together as a Community Group so we can make and mobilize disciples in environments of prayer and worship like that.

With that, let's dive into where we're going to be today. If you have a Bible, you can turn or type to 2 Corinthians, chapter 5. We're going to start in verse 11. What you're going to see is that we are diving into the most evangelistic passage in the Bible, in my opinion. It's all about evangelism. *Evangelism* is simply sharing your faith with people who are not believers.

Let me ask you this: Who is excited to be talking about evangelism today? All right. That's a better response than the 9:00, but there were still a lot of you who were quiet. I get it. When it comes to evangelism, part of us feels a little bit uncomfortable with it. There's a lot of baggage that can be associated in people's lives when it comes to evangelism.

For some people, what it might dredge up is a sense of shame in some way. Maybe it's because we don't want to be associated with some of the bad things that have gone on with evangelism. I can acknowledge historically there have been some unhelpful and unholy practices people have had.

Or maybe you don't want to be associated with some of the crazy uncles of Christianity. You know what I'm saying? You know, these people who go to a restaurant after church, and instead of leaving a tip, they leave that fake tract that looks like a \$100 bill. If you don't know what I'm talking about, guys, they leave this on the urinal. You fall for this all the time.

Or maybe you don't want to be like the guy... It's summer. We're going to baseball games. We go to a Dash game. There's someone sitting next to us, and we just try to be polite and make some conversation, like, "Man, it's hot." They're like, "You know what else is hot? Hell." It's like, "Dude, I'm just trying to watch a baseball game." We don't want to be associated with that. Right?

Maybe, for some of us, the baggage it brings to mind is fear, because we feel incompetent when it comes to sharing our faith, or maybe we lack boldness. Maybe you fear how a person might respond to you, what it might do to the relationship if you were to have that conversation. Can I be honest? That's me. That may surprise you. You may think pastors should all have the gift of evangelism. I don't have it. It's not something that comes naturally to me. It's something that's way out of my comfort zone.

I'm good at talking about a lot of other things. I can talk to you all day about the Chicago Cubs, coffee, Brandon Sanderson, and *The Lord of the Rings*. All that's easy for

me, but put me in a situation where I have to tell an unbeliever about Jesus... It fills me with timidity. It takes a lot of prayer and encouragement from some of the people around me to go and have some of those conversations. Maybe some of you can relate.

Maybe, for others of us, the baggage we carry with evangelism is this false assumption we've bought into (culture wants us to believe this) that Christianity can be good for you, but you should not ever convince anybody else that it's good for them. Here's another way they say it: "Christianity should stay in your head, in your heart, and in your home. Keep it there." This is a false logic that the church, honestly, has been buying into.

There was a study done a couple of years ago by Barna. They found that 47 percent of Millennial Christians, genuine Christians, believe it is wrong for them to share their faith with people. This is something we are applying to our lives, this unbelief that we can share these things with other people, but that's something that doesn't apply to anything else in the world. It seems to just apply to Christianity, religion.

Here's the thing. It's okay to talk about it. We talk about the things we're passionate about. Everybody does this. It's okay to talk about it, even if it's silly things. We love talking about silly things, the things we love that we want to invite other people into. For example, maybe you're a pastor, and for some reason, you're really into cold plunging. You talk about it nonstop. You even use your stage to invite people into the awesomeness that is cold plunging.

We love sharing the things we're passionate about even if it's silly things. We love talking about our identity. "This is who I am. I want you to know it." Vegans, we know you're vegan. Five seconds into the conversation we're reminded, yes. UNC fans, you annoy the Tar Heel out of me every time you remind me that you are a UNC fan.

Or our ideologies, these things we believe. Flat earthers post all the time about flat earth. That's fine. Or maybe about the way you choose to educate your kids. We talk about the things we believe in because we're passionate about them. For right or wrong, we talk about these things.

I want to tell you today's passage is not a passage that says you need to share the gospel, although that's true. What we're going to see today in this passage is Paul is saying our faith is something we can be eager to share with other people. We have something to be passionate about. It's actually a privilege that we get to do this.

So, he's going to show us four things we're going to need. If we want to be more eager in sharing our faith with the people around us, if we want to more eagerly reach the

"ones" in our lives, we need four things. We need *motivation, perspective, an identity,* and a *message*. So, look with me, starting in verse 11.

***"Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you."***

Paul is, once again, going into the topic about his credibility with the Corinthian church. Pastor Kyle and Pastor Nate have done an awesome job already talking about this, so I'm going to focus in on something else. At the start of verse 11, we're going to see the first motivation Paul is giving us, a motivation that is going to move us on mission.

Look with me again at the beginning of verse 11. It says, ***"Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others."*** Fear is one of the greatest motivations we have. That may seem strange to you, but fear is a major theme all throughout Scripture. Usually, it's referring to the reverence and respect we're supposed to have for God, but I believe Paul is actually taking a different angle here when he's talking about fear.

This is actually tied back to verse 10, which is what Kyle preached about last week. I'm going to read this for you so you can see it for yourself. Verse 10 says, ***"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."***

As I read this, I can imagine Paul. As he's penning this down, he's thinking back to the period of time that he lived in Corinth before he wrote this letter. It says in Acts that he lived there 18 months. He preached, and he shared the gospel boldly. So much so, in fact, that it really ticked some of the Corinthians off to the point that, one day, they took him and dragged him across the city because they were so upset with what he was doing.

They threw him down before what is called the *bema* or the *judgment seat* there in that city. You can see on the screen behind me a picture of this. I was in Corinth last fall, and this is the ruins of where that judgment seat was. So, picture Paul being thrown down here, and before him is a judge, sitting on this seat, and he is going to determine Paul's fate, whether it's life or death.

Now, just as Paul sat before that judgment seat, you and I and everyone we know will one day stand before a judgment seat very much like this one where we're going to sit

before an ultimate Judge who's going to determine our ultimate fates. Here's the good news. If you are a Christian, you do not have to be afraid of what that pronouncement will be on that day. Praise God. We'll be proclaimed guiltless because of Jesus Christ.

What we *should* fear for is the pronouncement that awaits for every unbeliever who will stand before that judgment seat, because for them, it is going to be a day of condemnation because of their willful rejection and rebellion against Christ. For them, it's going to be a day of terror because they will be forever cut off from God.

What Paul is saying is when he comes face-to-face with that kind of fear for other people, it moves him. He presses in even more on mission. He's finding ways to pursue them, because the fear for them is greater than the fear he has for himself. Now, many of us are not like Paul. Part of the reason we struggle to be on mission is we fear more for ourselves than we do for other people and their eternal fate.

We fear more about the thousand little deaths it's going to give us to live on mission more than we care about the eternal death they are going to face. We care about the little deaths we're going to have in our creature comforts if we live on mission. We care about the death of our margin in our schedule it's going to require of us. We care about the death of our personality, because we're going to maybe be forced to do things that are uncomfortable and awkward for us.

Listen. We will never live on mission if we care more about our little deaths than we do about the eternal death awaiting for the lost. So, Paul is saying maybe what we need more in our lives is a little bit of fear for the people around us, a good fear, a healthy fear. What would it look like for you to have more of that in your life?

Maybe a simple practice for each one of us is to picture our "one," picture the people who are far from God but close to us, and imagine what it's going to be like for them on that judgment day. I promise it will move you when you think about how that conversation is going to go, when you think about how they're going to respond. I was talking about this with one of my daughters yesterday morning. We were moved to tears because we were so overwhelmed for the people whom we want to see come to faith in Christ.

So, fear is one of the greatest gifts he has given us so we can be on mission, but it's not the only motivation. He gives us another one that Paul talks to us about in verse 14. Look at this. ***"For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."***

Another one of the greatest motivators God gives us to move on mission is love. Can I be honest with you? When we think about some of the people God is calling us to reach, the "ones" in our lives, the people who are far from God but close to us, can we be honest? For some of us, it is sometimes very hard to love those people.

Why is that? Because sometimes the lost people in our lives are the very opposite of who we are. When we relate to them, sometimes it feels like they are anti-everything we believe and everything we stand for. Sometimes it can even feel like they are anti-us. I was just having conversations with some guys the other day. We were talking about some of the things that were discouraging us in our lives.

This one guy said he's having a really hard time with his brother, who happens to be his "one," because he's vehemently against Christianity and everything it stands for. Anything that tangentially connects to it, he's just railing against it. He's not even talking about the gospel with this guy. He said, "Guys, if I'm being honest, sometimes it's very hard for me to even want to talk to my brother."

So, sometimes it's very hard to love the people God is calling us to. You guys feel this. So, what do we do in those situations? Where do we get the love we need to press in toward those people? Well, the only way we can get love is from love. We derive the love we need from love, because here's what's true: When all of us were unlovely and unlovable, Christ loved us. More than that, when we were enemies of Christ, he laid down his life for us because he loved us.

Here's what Paul is saying. When you actually get that, when we grasp that and understand it and it sinks down deep into all we are in our hearts and our bones...everything...that kind of love controls us. The CSB says it *compels* us. When we get that kind of love that God has for us in Jesus Christ, it is going to help us do all kinds of things we would not naturally do on our own.

You guys know what this is like. Right? When a guy is in love with a girl, he's willing to do all kinds of crazy things. He's driving hundreds, if not thousands, of miles across the country just to see her. He doesn't know how to spell the word *Wednesday*, yet all of a sudden, he becomes Shakespeare. He's writing poetry and soliloquies about his undying love for this girl. He does all kinds of things you're not used to.

Ladies, I think about this when you're raising babies. You're getting two hours of sleep, and you're staying up all day and night to love this little one. It forces you to do all kinds of things outside of yourself. That's what kind of love Paul is talking about that we have in Jesus Christ. If we truly understood how much he loved us, it would change the way we live our lives. It would force us to do all kinds of things that are hard for us, even loving those who are hard to love who need Jesus Christ.

So, for some of us, if we want to be eager to live on mission, we need these motivations to invite some good and healthy fear into our lives and remind ourselves daily, grow deeper in the love we have in Jesus Christ. So, we have a motivation.

The second thing Paul reminds us of is perspective. Perspective is very important for us, because, oftentimes, our perspective is quite wrong, but if we have a proper perspective, it is going to propel us out on mission. Look with me in verse 16. ***"From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer."***

Listen. If we want to be more eagerly living on mission, we need to see Christ differently. Paul hated Jesus. He was anti-mission. He wanted to subtract from the church, not add to it, but as soon as he began to see Jesus rightly for who he is, he became a fierce evangelist. We are never going to live fully on mission if we do not have a proper perspective of Jesus.

Some people think of Jesus as a myth or maybe a historical figure, maybe a good teacher or a person. You're never going to be on mission for a guy like that. That's what's wrong with theologically liberal churches. That's how they view Jesus. They are not on mission. What about a church like us? How can we get the perspective on Jesus wrong? Well, for some of us, the thing we struggle with is we see Jesus as Savior but fail to see Jesus as Lord. We need to be able to see both of those.

We need to say, "Jesus, you saved me, but you're also the King of my life now. You get to say what I need in my life in every compartment. Every area of my life you get a say in. You get to tell me to do things I don't want to do, even if that includes living on mission, reaching the lost people around me." When I see Jesus that way, it propels me. It moves me to live on mission in a different way.

So, we need to see Jesus rightly, but Paul says we also need to see *people* rightly. Look again in verse 16. ***"From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh."*** When we regard people according to the flesh, it's going to hinder us from really living on mission.

How do we do this? How do we view people according to the flesh? One of the ways we do this is by judging and evaluating people based on their external appearance. We all do this. I do this. Listen. I am not a stylish or cool person at all. You're looking at me, and you're like, "Yes, we know." But I judge people based on style even though I have none. There are young men walking around with mullets. Why? I thought that was dead and gone. Man buns are a cry for help.

Ladies, you keep wearing baggier and baggier jeans. Do you know that JNCOs are the lowest point in fashion history? Do not bring them back. We judge people, do we not?

This is all over the place in middle school and high school. We treat people differently based on the way they look, based on how athletic they are. Even when we get into adulthood, we do the same thing; it's just more nuanced.

We evaluate people based on what job they have, the kind of person they marry, and the kind of neighborhood they live in. Listen. When we do this, when we evaluate people based on external appearance, we put people into categories. Here's where they typically go. We view people as people above us, people who are better than us, people who are more put together than we are, people who have the things we wish we could have but don't.

Here's why it's hard for us to live on mission with people we see as above us: we are constantly craving their approval. We want them to accept us. We want to be liked by them. We look at the lives they live and honestly think to ourselves, "Maybe they have everything. Maybe they don't need Jesus, because they sure seem like they're doing just fine."

Can I tell you how I've experienced this? I used to go on missions trips to New York City every single year. We would go and evangelize all over town. The hardest place I've ever been to (I went here twice) was Wall Street. I had zero good conversations there, because I looked at people and put them in a category above myself. I was fearful. I looked at their lives and said, "Maybe they don't need Jesus."

In fact, by the end of the day, I was saying "No" for them without even having a conversation. That's what happens when we put people into categories above us. Or you do that below you, and you see yourself as above people, and then you view people through a lens of pride, some type of prejudice. Maybe we lack compassion for them.

Listen. If we put people into categories based on the flesh, we are always going to be paralyzed when it comes to mission, but if we start seeing people not according to the flesh but through the eyes of God, that changes everything. It's going to propel us on mission, because here's what God sees when he looks at every single person.

He sees someone who is made in his image. He sees people, every single one of them, who are in need of his grace. When he looks at people, he sees a level playing field before the cross. Everyone is in need of that cross. The way we're going to live on mission is to start seeing people through the eyes of God.

Here's how it says Jesus saw people when he looked at them. It says, "**When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**" How much more would we live on mission if we saw people that way? We need a perspective adjustment.



Here's another way we tend to see people in the flesh. When we view people only according to the flesh, we tend to lose categories for change and transformation. Let me put that another way. When we view people only according to the flesh, we are quick to lose hope for the lost.

How many of you today have lost hope for your "one," for the people who are far from God but close to you? How many of you have lost hope because it's like, "I think this person is too far gone"? Maybe you see them like my Wall Street friends. "They have everything. How could they possibly need Christ or see their need for him?" Maybe they've rejected you and Christ over and over and over and you've lost hope.

What do we do with that? When we find ourselves in that place, Paul offers us a good word. We see it here in verse 17. ***"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*** I could preach a whole sermon on this verse. There's good news in this for you and for me. Maybe some of you are here today, and you need to hear this for yourself.

Maybe you are forgetting that in Christ you are a new creation. The old you is dead and gone. It was nailed to the cross. You are no longer a slave to it. You are a new creation. Amen? But listen. As much as this is a good verse for us, this is a great verse because it is a reminder of the power of potential. Everyone has the potential to be a new creation, absolutely everyone.

When we are sharing the gospel, we should not be asking, "What if they reject this message?" What we should be asking is "What would it be like if they accepted this message? How could that change everything? What would it look like if my unbelieving spouse actually came to faith in Christ? What kind of trajectory would that set our family on? How could that change our family and everything we touch for generations to come?"

What if that influential lost person in our lives came to faith in Christ? How could that affect our whole company, our whole school, the whole team? What kind of new path could that put us on through that person coming to faith in Jesus Christ? What if my friend came to faith in Jesus Christ? What could he or she do for the kingdom of God? What kind of ministry might the Lord give them because of what they've been through?"

Just this last week, I was with a friend of mine. This is his story. For the first 30 years of life... He grew up as a child in church, but not in Christ, and he soon left that. For almost three decades, he just pursued the world. All it led to was hopelessness and despair for him. I know there were people in his life praying for him, looking at the path he was going down, and probably feeling hopeless for this guy.

But something happened around the time he turned 30. Jesus grabbed his life, and it changed everything. It changed the future of his family. That man is now in ministry, and because of the ministry of this guy who came to faith in Christ around 30 years old, there are hundreds of people who are sharing the gospel with the lost around the world. That's the power of potential.

What if we saw everybody as a potential story of grace that God could use for his glory? How might that change the way we look at people? Listen. If you've lost hope today, I want you to underline and highlight this verse, because this is for your "one." This is for every single person we've lost hope for. Everyone has the potential to be a new creation. When we have that proper perspective, it's going to move us on mission.

A third thing we need is we all need to be reminded of the new identity we have when we're in Christ. *Identity* is something that shapes who we are and what we do. When we have an identity, it becomes the lens through which we see life. Here's what Paul is going to say. He wants to tell you about one of the identities you've been given in Jesus Christ, one of the things that should be at the top of your list as you live your life. Look with me in verse 18.

***"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."***

Paul is saying, "I want you to have the identity of Christ form and shape who you are and what you do. I want you to see yourself as an ambassador. That's going to be a lens you see life through." Here's what an ambassador is. An *ambassador* is simply an authorized messenger or representative. Let me tell you this, guys: you are an authorized representative of God himself.

I don't care what anyone tells you. Your mother-in-law should be proud of you. That's awesome. You're an authorized representative of God. Here's what ambassadors do: they simply carry the message of the one they report to. Here's God's message to the world: "It is possible for you to have a relationship with me. You were created to experience this, and I'm telling you there's a way for you to experience it now."

So, as ambassadors, we have a ministry and a mission of reconciliation. This word *reconciliation* comes up five times in these two verses. How do we live out as ambassadors of reconciliation to the lost around us? The first thing we do is we act as a bridge. God is calling you to be a bridge.

Ambassadors have two feet planted in two different places. You have one foot in the lives of the people around you, and then you have one foot in Christ. God is simply calling you to do this. "Would you get to know other people, and would you help them get to know God?" That's what it looks like to be a bridge. It's to be in both sides of that and introduce them to each other. We need to be a bridge.

Here's the second thing we're called to do. What does it mean to reconcile? That's a hard word maybe. Here's what it means to reconcile: to identify the barrier that exists between two people and then do everything you can to remove that barrier. When you think about your role as an ambassador in the lives of the lost around you, what you're called to do is find the barriers.

What are the barriers dividing those people from God, and what can you do to help remove those barriers in their lives? Those barriers can look all kinds of different ways. You're going to have to figure out what it is for each person. Maybe it's a misunderstanding of who God is or Scripture or the church. Maybe it's a disagreement with the biblical ethics or morality. Maybe it's people doubting God. Maybe it's doubting Jesus.

What do we do when we've identified those barriers? All we do is, through wisdom and the Word, find ways to help those walls crumble down. We use the wisdom and the Word. We don't do it by debating people. We're about to head into debate season. You guys know how much of a... Yeah. That doesn't help anybody. So what do we do?

Paul says in verse 11 instead of debating people, we persuade people. Here's what it means to persuade: we give people a vision of something that is better and more beautiful. How can you look at that barrier in your life and give them a picture of life with God under the rule of God that is better and more beautiful than they could have imagined? That's what it looks like for us to reconcile, to tear down these barriers.

Guys, I'll be honest. Maybe some of the barriers in people's lives that you're going to have to address are the ones not that *they* put up but *we* put up, whether it's us individually, and we need to fix that, or maybe it's something the church has put up. It's like some of these goofy things we do as a church, putting tradition over mission, being exclusive, doing the right things but with the wrong heart behind it.

Maybe it's our unwillingness to even address the barriers in their life because of fear or whatever else it might be. Guys, we can't tear down barriers in our lives that we're not willing to talk about. So, whatever the lost people in your life want to talk about, engage them with it, because what we're called to be like is John the Baptist. John the Baptist was preparing the way of the Lord. He was making the path straight.

All we're trying to do is remove the barriers and make the path straight for people to come to faith in Christ. Listen. This is our identity. Every single one of you has been given this identity if you're in Jesus Christ. The question is not *if* you're called to do this. The only question you have to answer for yourself is...*Where is God calling you to do it?* For many of us, it is right where he has placed us.

God is calling all of us wherever he has placed us...our home, our neighborhood, our office, our coworking space, our patient's room, our classroom...whatever it might be. God has intentionally put you there as an ambassador, so be a bridge and break down barriers there, because we have so many people here in Winston-Salem and around who need to be reconciled to God. God is calling us to be faithful here locally.

Can I just celebrate us for a minute? I want to celebrate, because I see, and many other people are seeing around us, a movement that is happening right here in Two Cities Church. Can I tell you why I think that is? I see people in this room and in our church who are owning this identity.

They're living as ambassadors where God has called them. They are opening their mouths. They're sharing the gospel. They're sharing their stories. They are breaking down barriers. Some of you are here today because someone in this church was an ambassador in your life.

Every single month, I read Community Group leader updates, and I can tell you this: I see dozens of stories of victories. They are seeing people stepping in and sharing the gospel, sharing their faith with the "ones" in their lives. The video on the screen behind us that you saw right before I came out is just a few examples of the movement God is doing through the people here at Two Cities Church, and I could not be more excited.

But here's the temptation in a church like ours. When we see other people being missional, we can feel like *we're* the ones who are being missional. That's not what God wants for us. God does not want you to ride on the coattails of somebody else's story. He wants us to go and create our own. I believe that's what's going to happen as we all continue to embrace our identity as ambassadors here at Two Cities, and we're going to see more and more movement.

Can I tell you something else? I don't believe God just wants to work through us right here in Winston-Salem. I believe he has a much bigger vision for us. Look with me again in verse 19. "***...in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself...***" Listen. Winston-Salem is not the only place people need to hear about the reconciliation God is offering them. There are millions of people nationally and globally who need ambassadors.

Ambassadors, by definition, do not stay at home. They do not get comfortable. They are eager and ready to be sent. I can tell you this: Two Cities Church is going to be a church that sends ambassadors. We are committed more than ever to be a church that is planting and revitalizing churches, and when we do that, some of you are going to go and be a part of that.

More than ever, Two Cities Church is committed to sending missionaries, mid-term and long-term, around the globe to be ambassadors of the gospel for the lost. Some of you are in this room right now who are going to be going. Some of you are already feeling God stirring this up in you. Some of you are already beginning to feel that call.

Here's my challenge for you if that's you today. Don't let it just sit here. Speak it. Have the conversation with your spouse. Tell one of our pastors or leaders in the church about what you think the Lord is doing. Bring it up in your Community Group. Begin a conversation there.

Here's what's going to happen by God's grace: we're going to be sending you out. I don't know when, but we're going to be sending people out. We are going to be ambassadors who reach people locally, nationally, and globally. That's what's going to happen when we have the right motivation and perspective and when we're embracing and growing this identity.

Here's the last thing you need to know: we go with the most compelling message imaginable. Paul gives us what this message is here in verse 21. He says, "***For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***"

In my opinion, verse 21 is the best encapsulation of the gospel message, and it simply boils down to this little phrase. You see it every time we do baptism Sundays here. You see it on my shirt. It means simply this: *Jesus in my place*. Jesus is in our place. Here's what that looks like.

We are sinners. We have accumulated a lifetime of sin and guilt and shame. On the other hand, Jesus is pure. He is perfect, holy, righteous, and spotless, but what happens is when we come to faith in Jesus Christ... Jesus took on every sin that was ever committed by everyone who would ever believe. He became sin. What happens to us is we lose our sin. It goes on him, and instead, we get his righteousness.

Maybe something you don't know about me is I grew up on a pig farm. One of the least glamorous parts of growing up on a pig farm is cleaning out pigpens. I'll save you from all of the unsavory details, but at the end of the day, I was covered in filth, and there was nothing I wanted more than to get out of those clothes, to be made clean and spotless again.

All of us are like that, covered in filth. It says Jesus comes up to us and sees us and says, "I'll trade with you." He takes that on himself and gives us his pure and spotless clothes of righteousness. That's what happens when we're in Christ. Paul says God sees us differently now, and not only does he see us differently; he treats us differently.

Jesus was treated the way I deserved to be treated. Jesus was treated the way every single one of us deserved to be treated, and do you know how we get to be treated? We get to be treated like Jesus deserved. We get life. Jesus gave his life so we could have freedom and life eternal. That is the greatest message possible.

It is one of the greatest stories that could ever be told. That's why it has been stolen countless times by people like Charles Dickens and C.S. Lewis and J.K. Rowling and Marvel's Avengers. We take this idea, because there is nothing deeper or more beautiful than this great exchange we have in Jesus Christ.

If it's true (and it is), it has the power to change everything. So, we do not have to be ashamed in sharing that message. We do not have to be afraid in sharing that message. We never have to apologize for sharing that message, because it's the greatest gift we could ever give anybody.

As we come to a close, I want to speak to two different types of people in the room here. The first group of people I want to speak to is Christians. Right now, we are going to go into a time of Communion. As we take the bread and drink from the cup, I want you to picture this as a symbol of what Christ has done for us. Jesus took our place, and in return we got all of the rewards. Think about his broken body and his shed blood. He did that for you and me.

Then what I want you to do if you're a Christian today is I want you to ask yourself what God is inviting you into. Who is the one person to whom he is inviting you to go and be an ambassador again in their life? Who is the person you've lost hope for, the person you've given up on and said, "I don't think I can do this anymore"? Who do you need to recommit to? Here's my challenge for you.

We're going to have a prayer team down front. We're going to have elders down front, and we want to pray for you, whatever it is you need to step into your identity as an ambassador, to reconcile people to God, to be a bridge, to break down barriers. How can we pray for you? We want to do that, and we want to pray for the person in your life whom you want to see come to faith in God. We want to pray that the Lord would bring them to faith even this year. That's your invitation, Christians.

For those of you who are in the room and are not Christians, I want to say Communion is a family meal. Here's what I want to offer you instead of this. Instead

of taking Communion, would you, for the first time in your life, take Christ? I hope you heard today Jesus in our place is not just for Christians; it is a message for you as well, because he wants a relationship with you.

I don't know what barriers are in your life that are keeping you from that, but I'm praying that the Lord today may even tear those down. Would you come down and talk to someone? We would love to have a conversation about what it means for you to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, to be reconciled to him and be a part of this family.

If you would, take your Communion and stand up with me. As we take the bread, remember Jesus Christ's body that was broken for you. Jesus in our place. As we take the cup, remember the blood of Jesus Christ that was spilled for us. Jesus in our place. Right now, we're going to respond in worship by singing, but I want to invite you. Whatever the Lord has put on your heart, would you come and would you respond?