

koinonia

August 2023

We Must Go From Pastor Brandon

Several weeks ago, I shared a word with the congregation. I don't take things like this lightly. I do so with the reverence of where I feel that word has come from but also with the understanding that we know in part and prophesy in part (1 Corinthians 13:9). After sharing, I asked the congregation to weigh it and test it. The word I shared was this:

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“If we do not engage non-believers with the gospel of Jesus Christ, presenting the biblical Jesus and encouraging them to make Him their Lord, we will fade away. If we aren't building the kingdom of God, we aren't accomplishing the mission. If we aren't personally seeking the person of Jesus and presenting Him to others, Northside Christian Center will not survive. We can worry about money. We can worry about facilities. We can busy ourselves with both, but if we are not fulfilling the mission we are here for, we will not be here in 5-10 years.”

As I look forward to our next year of ministry, I have not been able to stop hearing this encouragement and warning in my spirit. Because of this, I wanted to expound upon the need we have for outreach ministry at Northside and the church in general. We all receive the call to “go and make disciples” in Matthew 28:19-20. While the church has been blessed with the five-fold ministry - evangelists included here - we must all shoulder the burden of evangelism. As we have studied in the book of Acts so far, we have seen the importance of gospel ministry in the lives of both the lost and the believer. I feel that this word of encouragement and warning is meant to set our eyes on the second portion of our mission.

It can be easy to be content simply exalting God because He has been so good to us. When we think about enlarging His kingdom, I believe there can be a disconnect there that we aren't always aware of. Many times, we can feel that making much of God is enlarging His kingdom. When we show the world His goodness and celebrate His work in us, we sometimes can't imagine why the world would not want to experience that as well. But for us to truly enlarge His kingdom, we must become the willing witness who preaches the biblical Jesus and clarifies the gospel through scripture for the lost. This can be a daunting task when we consider all those who have spent a lifetime perfecting their ways and means of doing this. But God isn't calling us to replicate the evangelistic ministry of others. He is calling us to be a witness to who He is and what He



Upcoming Events:

**Elder Meeting
August 27th**

**Promotion Sunday
September 3rd**

**Deacon Meeting
September 3rd**

**Family Life Event
September 17th**

has done. He equipped us to do so when He accomplished the work of salvation in us.

So, what do we need to do to practically heed this warning? How should we respond to this encouragement? First, we pray. We pray for the gospel to overflow us. We pray for the joy of the Lord to lead us boldly in conversation with the lost. We pray for encounters and divine appointments with those who need to know Jesus. Then, we act. We go. We step out in faith, regardless of how uncomfortable it can be, and we share the gospel with those the Lord puts in our path. We are the vessels the Lord uses to carry the gospel ministry. We are called to exalt Him and enlarge His kingdom. We must go. Each and every one of us have the responsibility of gospel ministry upon us.

Do you have a need or situation that prevents you from doing this? Share that with the body. Do you feel that you need training? Share that with an elder or Sunday school teacher or a believer you know who shares the gospel regularly. Are you fearful? Share that with the Lord and believers you know will support you and pray for you. Finally, we must make Northside a place that is not just comfortable and loving like home, but a place in which people can meet the risen Jesus and be changed. My prayer is that we can begin to have some purposeful conversations about how we can ensure that everything we do as a church fulfills this call to go and make disciples. Let's pray together for direction as God leads us into action. And let's pray to see His kingdom enlarged as we share the gospel with the world around us.

A Word on Worship From Pastor Scott

This month's Word on Worship comes from Marshall Segal, a writer for The Worship Initiative. This devotional gives further context to the song Honey In The Rock.

He would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you. (Psalm 81:16)

After forty long, hard years of hunger and loss in the wilderness, the people of Israel are in Kadesh, finally on the cusp of the promised land. Are they thankful to have been brought this far and hopeful about what God's about to do? No, they're grumbling again, this time about water. And yet, as he so often does with bitter, stubborn Israel (and with us), God responds patiently and with help. The Lord tells Moses,

Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle. (Numbers 20:8)

Even after they watched God deliver their people from Egypt and feed them for forty years

in the wilderness, they looked at the dry ground around them and could not imagine God quenching their thirst. So he took the driest, hardest land he could find, and made it a fountain.

Refreshment in Unlikely Places

Moses gathered Israel around the rock — he obeyed that far, at least — and then he “lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock” (Numbers 20:11).

Because you’ve likely never been as thirsty as they were, and because you’ve likely drank from faucets, bottles, and water fountains your whole life, it will be difficult to imagine the wonder of this moment, to really taste the miracle. As they faced the real prospect of dying of thirst, an ordinary rock, like so many rocks they’d seen on this journey, poured water like a broken dam. This wasn’t a trickle of moisture, but enough to satisfy thousands of people — and not only the people, but their animals too. Because God was their God, they found refreshment in the most unlikely place. They survived what no one could survive. They drank from wells that didn’t exist. They learned, again, just how generously God provides for those who trust and ask. So do you trust him in moments like these? Do you still expect God to provide or deliver, even when you can’t see how he could?

More Than Water

Looking back on how God cared for and fed his people in the wilderness, the psalmist rehearses the lesson that Israel was so slow to trust and embrace: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psalm 81:10). Just like in Moses’s day, however, the psalmist saw just how discontent and distrustful God’s people could be. A few verses later, he warns them on behalf of God, “Oh, that my people would listen to me! I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes” (Psalm 81:13–14). If you would listen to me and trust and obey me, I would guard you from all harm and harm all those who would hurt you. More than that, the psalmist says in the next verse,

He would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you. (Psalm 81:16)

This God will not only protect us, and not only provide for us, but he’ll go even further and satisfy our deepest longings. He won’t settle for streams of water — the basics of what we need to live. He’ll carve out streams of honey — a sweetness we do not need, but that brings joy to life. The land he’s preparing for you, in the Christ-filled world to come, is not only a safe shelter from storms and wars, but a paradise of milk and honey (see Deuteronomy 32:13–14). In the presence of God, we’ll experience unparalleled pleasure (Psalm 16:11) — and we’ll see that honey (and everything else we enjoyed on earth) was only a teaspoon of joy next to the rivers of knowing and having him.

Water and a Warning

The rock at Kadesh was a stunning fountain — and a sober warning. If you read carefully, you heard that instead of telling the rock to offer water, like God had said, Moses went further and struck the rock. And he struck the rock not once, but twice. He didn’t listen, and

God hated the sound of each unbelieving strike.

And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” (Numbers 20:12)

For all the faith Moses had through the plagues and the wilderness — and he had great faith (see Hebrews 11:23–28) — he was not allowed to see the promised land. Why would that be? Why would God hold that one rock against him? Because he wanted the generations to come to take his word that seriously. He wanted us to see that we will have his promises only if we trust his promises. So, whatever needs or trials are pressing in on you now, run to our Rock, Jesus Christ. Listen diligently to him, receive him, and expect God to provide and satisfy in ways you don’t expect.

NCA Update

We are preparing for NCA’s 39th year of Christian education in Panola County. Praise the Lord for His great faithfulness to sustain and direct this ministry!

A new year always comes with new possibilities and new opportunities. It is our desire to make the most of every opportunity that the Lord gives us that we might see Christ formed in our students and their families, as well as equipping them to answer God’s call in their lives.

As the summer progresses, we need your help. Please pray for us as we prepare for this school year. Here is a list of things you can be praying for.

- Pray for our staff as they prepare for this school year.
- Pray that God would send us the students He wants us to have.
- Pray for our school families as they prepare to return to class on August 23.
- Pray for God’s provision for this ministry.
- Ask God how He might have you be a part of this ministry.

Thank you for praying. Thank you for taking time to do this work of ministry. Any ministry work starts with prayer and cannot be successful without it. Please stand with us throughout this school year as we do this work together.

Giving Update

As we closed our fiscal year, we were facing a lack to the tune of around \$20,000. Through prayer and generous giving, this need was met entirely! Praise the Lord! We have just completed a year of ministry filled with challenges and opportunities that were constantly overshadowed by the sovereignty and goodness of God. I pray that you have been encouraged by the faithful provision of the Lord in this season as I have. As we look forward to another year of ministry, I pray we can remain in an attitude of total dependence on the Lord. I believe we are where He wants us to be.

We are not in a place to depend on our plans and schemes. We will need the Lord every step of the way forward. This means we must be looking for the leading and direction of the Lord as we have learned to do over this past year and trusting Him to provide. We will continue to faithfully minister as the Lord has led us. Please continue to pray with us as we begin another year of ministry and seek the Lord for how He would have your family give to

continue this ministry.

The elders have approved a budget for this next year. You can get a copy of this from the church office during the week if you like. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have. Each of our elders are more than willing to take time to answer questions about our finances and address any concerns you may have.

-Pastor Brandon

The chart below reflects giving through the month of July and is a complete picture of our finances for the last fiscal year. As a reminder, this chart is based on projected expenses in the budget. Negative numbers on this chart do not directly reflect our accounts and balances. While there are needs shown in the numbers here, we ended last year with money in all our accounts, having fully funded youth camp and paying every bill. We did not receive all we planned to spend last year, but also did not spend all we planned to spend. If you have any questions about giving or finances, feel free to call the church office and we'll make time to discuss any thoughts or concerns you may have. (903) 693-6366

