

Vision 2020

Thank you so much guys. Let's thank everyone again for the testimonies we've heard this morning.

I love that, I love hearing from the voices of people in our church, about where God is moving in their hearts. We hope to have more opportunities for that in the weeks to come. Thanks again guys for stepping out and being willing to share.

Thanks also to pastor Jerry for the update you gave and to Pastor David and Craig for all the work you did on the video.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, Rock Prairie is a special place. I really mean that. We feel so blessed to be a part of this incredible body of believers here in Tipton, Indiana. There is so much that God has done in this place, and we love taking time to give him the glory that he deserves.

I also need to say that this year has personally been one of the hardest for me in a long time. I'm not trying to complain, but I just want to be real. It's been a struggle in a lot of ways.

I had lunch with Nick Cox on Friday, and I was telling him that I've felt the difference between just saying I trust the Lord and proving whether or not that's actually true.

Before coming here, I certainly said and even thought I believed that I was going to be totally reliant on God, but I think deep down I was thinking that my gifts could get me through if God didn't come through for me.

But with what we've walked through, including this financial season we're in as a church, it's like the Lord has been saying to me, "You say you trust me. Prove it."

And in a lot of ways I've failed. I've been anxious at times. I've stayed up at night worrying about what was going to happen next, what shoe was going to drop next.

But even in my failure, God has been so faithful. And even though I still feel anxious, the Lord has helped me grow so much in my trust in him that I wouldn't trade it.

And as I was thinking about what to share to close our service this morning, I was brought back to the passage I preached on when Craig got sick a couple months ago. 2 Corinthians 4:7.

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

Remember, we have the treasure, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the greatest treasure in the universe, and God has chosen to house it in us little old measly jars of clay so that he can get all the glory, not us.

So I hope I can show that even in my brokenness, my testimony is that God is faithful. That the treasure is still there. The gospel is still true. I'm still clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

Paul goes on in verse 8:

8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

Sometimes we have to go through hard things. But those hard things will never destroy us, because in our weakness, God is proven strong.

So we're not going to despair. We're going to choose to trust God. My former pastor always says, "Trust the one who keeps you trusting." So as we continue to be a people who carry the treasure of the gospel in jars of clay, as we continue to manifest the life of Jesus in both our strength and our weakness, here are three commitments we are going to make as a church.

3 things that, for as long as the Lord allows us to be here, we're going to commit to no matter what.

1. We're not going to stop doing ministry

We're called to make Christ known from our neighbors to the nations. That's why we exist. And for as long as the doors are open here at

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Rock Prairie, which Lord willing will be another 150 years at least, that's what we're going to do.

In this season, there will probably be some hard decisions we need to make, we're going to need to be even more careful about what we spend money on. But we're not going to stop doing ministry. And we're going to trust that God will provide as we do.

We're going to continue to make Christ known truly by exalting him on Sunday mornings, deeply in our relationships with him and one another through his word, and we're going to keep making him known widely, to those in Tipton who don't know him and to the ends of the earth.

For as long as we exist, we're never going to stop doing ministry.

2. We're not going to shy away from the command to give

We firmly believe that everything we have is from the Lord. That can be easy to forget sometimes. It can be easy for me to forget in our culture that teaches that hard work always equals success. And of course we're called to work hard, but we also can't forget that everything we have comes from God. There is nothing we have that wasn't generously given to us by our creator.

And because of that, we're called to be generous. Like Pastor Jerry said, we're not a business. We don't have other revenue streams. We exist solely from the generosity of the giving of our congregation. And we trust that that generosity flows from a thankfulness to God for the gospel.

Theologically, that's why we give. Giving isn't just one of a bunch of commands God gives us because he is a control freak and wants to tell us what to do. We give generously and joyfully because of what we've been given in Christ.

If in Christ we've been given all things, how can we help but be generous in return? And if everything we have is God's, why wouldn't we want to generously give back to him?

So we're not going to shy away from his command to give. Generously, joyfully, and sacrificially. Trusting that he will provide. We won't be embarrassed to ask people to give.

And for our church right now that means two things.

First, If you're not giving regularly to the church, now is a great time to start. Not out of guilt, but out of thankfulness for all you've been given in Christ. I don't believe there's a hard and fast rule about how much you should give, but the Old Testament talks about giving 10%, and I think that's a great place to start.

It's something my parents instilled in me from when I was little. I had a little bank that had three sections, and whenever I got some money I would put 10% in the church section and 10% in savings. If you're a parent, this is a great time to start teaching your kids about the importance of giving. Especially if giving is a new thing for you.

We're all in this together, the church is dependent on each one of us, and we all need to be giving regularly. So if you aren't giving, this is an awesome opportunity to start. Not out of guilt, but out of gratitude for all that the Lord has done.

Second, if you are giving regularly, and we're thankful for the many, many of you who are, we're asking you to prayerfully consider giving above your regular tithe for a season as we pay down the debt.

That's what's cool about this plan that the deacons have worked on, it's only for a season. If we can raise the money to pay off the debt, it will be a huge weight lifted off the budget, and we can have some breathing room. So, like Jerry said, we're asking that you would take some time to pray and ask the Lord what he's calling you to sacrificially give for a season.

So that's our second commitment. We won't shy away from the command to give. Because everything we have is from the Lord. So if you're not a regular giver, now is a great time to start, and 10% is a great place to start. And if you are a regular giver, now is the time to pray and ask how you can participate in this stewardship decision of our church to pay down the debt.

3. We're not going to stop preaching the gospel

The church is not a social club. The church is not just an organization to make the community better. The church exists because of and for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is unlike any other message on earth. There is nothing that can happen that the gospel doesn't speak to in some way. We are here because of the gospel, and we are here to proclaim the gospel. To proclaim his death until he comes.

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

This affliction is momentary, but the weight of glory is eternal. There's nothing that can compare. I want to be faithful. I don't want to regret that I wasn't willing to give up temporary comforts for an eternal weight of glory.

We have been given an incredible promise, that our affliction, no matter how difficult, will seem light compared to the glory we'll experience when Jesus comes back.

May we long for that day with our whole hearts. May we be a people who trust that God is sovereign, that he's in control. May we be a people who continually preach the gospel. And let's continue to make Christ known from our Neighbors to the Nations until our savior returns.

Let's Pray.

Father, we praise you this morning, and thank you that you have given us all things in Christ. What an incredible reality. We thank you that you have taken care of us, your church, for so many years. And we ask that you, as the creator and rightful owner of all things, would continue to do exactly what you've done and provide for our church. I

thank you for the people in this room, we know that the church isn't a building or a pastor but it's the body of Christ. Thank you for this body, thank you for their generosity. I pray that you would work in our hearts and do an incredible thing as we try to pay off our debt and be good stewards of what you've given us.

We thank you for your Son, we praise you for the gospel. We ask that you would bless us with many more years to proclaim it to our neighbors and the nations. In Jesus' name, amen.