



COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH

“We are Him, here!”

Part II

June 7 - July 4

CHBC Daily Scripture Readings

“WE ARE HIM, HERE!”

Week 4: Mercy

Monday, June 7 - John 20:30-31

Jesus had a public ministry for three years, yet we can read through the Gospel of John in one to two hours. Do you ever wonder what else Jesus did during those three years? What are the stories that we don't know about? How many did he heal and teach whose stories are not told? The two verses we read today let us know that we are right to wonder because he did a lot more. This is only a selection of signs.

Do you ever wonder what it felt like to receive the mercy of Jesus when he was on the earth? What did it feel like to be the woman with hemorrhaging feeling freedom for the first time in twelve years? What did it feel like to be the woman at the well being freed from her past? What did it feel like for the woman caught in adultery to believe she would be murdered, but Jesus sets her free? What did it feel like for the father whose child was raised back to life? What did it feel like to receive the mercy of Jesus?

I hope that we feel that mercy in our life because we have received it. Too often, we take that mercy for granted. We've been in church long enough that we don't realize the amazing mercy and grace that God has given us. It's just become second nature. It's not as exciting as it was when we first came to Jesus. I hope that you catch that excitement again.

Our youth are going to camp later this week. Would you pray that if they've never realized that God wants to share mercy with them that this week be the moment they accept mercy? Would you pray this week for the camp counselors, speakers, and worship leaders so that they can clearly share the message of God's grace which is greater than all our sin? Pray for camp as you pray also to remember the joy of your salvation and the mercy God gave you.

Tuesday, June 8 - Acts 20:7-12

If the mercy of Jesus is our topic this week, how can we, who are certainly not God, give mercy to others? It won't be salvific mercy, that's a guarantee. But what does mercy to others look like?

If there was a hall of fame for weird Bible stories, our passage today would be in it. Paul gets long winded during Bible Study and a guy falls asleep, falling three stories to his death. Paul goes down to the ground, resuscitates him, and everybody acts like this is no big deal and Bible Study keeps going all night. Wait, what?!?

Paul shows Eutychus mercy by giving him life again, similar to what the Old Testament prophets like Elijah and Elisha were able to do. This is what a *man* of God was able to do; how does that apply to us, as *men* and *women* of God? Can we give people physical life? I don't know if we can do as Paul, Elijah, and Elisha, but I do know that without the power of God, they were ordinary people. Through the power of God, all things are possible, *including, dare I say*, resuscitating people. Or do we not believe in the power and mercy of God?

Saying that, it is unlikely that God will use us in this miraculous way. But there are ways we can show mercy to people who are in physical need. We can take people to doctor's appointments, go get medicine, or bring them dinner when they are sick. We can clean their house, sit with them in the hospital, and we can even pay their medical bills. There are lots of ways we can show those who are sick God's mercy and love. Pray for an opportunity to show mercy to someone. And I will pray that when the opportunity arises, you take it as Paul took the opportunity to show mercy to Eutychus.

Wednesday, June 9 - Exodus 15:22-17:7

Do you need anything? Every pastoral phone call or visit I have seems to include this question. It makes sense to me. I take the words of James 2:15-16 seriously when it says "If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?" If I have the physical needs to provide for your

well-being, but all I do is say “I’ll pray for you,” then we are not meeting the needs of those around us.

The people had escaped Egypt, but now they were hungry. Were they whiny too? It seems that way; nevertheless, they needed food and water. God provided for their physical needs. God does not just provide for the spiritual needs of His people, but he can provide physical needs as well. You can trust God with what you need. Come tonight to hear how God provided for Israel in the wilderness and how God can provide for you as well.

Thursday, June 10 - Luke 10:25-37

If there’s a standard, prototypical, almost cliché story of showing mercy, it is the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In a world where the Bible has less and less influence, the phrase “good samaritan” is still regularly used. Sometimes it is not used in the correct manner, but it is used. Several years ago, I pulled into my apartment complex trying to find a parking spot. Finding an open spot, I pulled in next to a construction truck with the name of the company on the side. The side of the truck read: “Good Samaritan Fencing.” Perplexed, I posted a picture of the truck on Facebook with a caption “so does he do the work for free?”

Being a good samaritan means showing mercy to people who are in need and not taking wages or compensation for that work. It means showing mercy to another person not based on who they are or what they look like but because they need help. It means showing mercy to someone no matter why they are in that circumstance. I always point out in this passage that the one who is hurt is intentionally left unknown. He is left raceless, ageless, and without any comment on his financial status. The point Jesus is making is crystal clear in my mind: it doesn’t matter who the one in need is, the need must be met by his followers.

If “we are Him, here,” we must meet the needs of our community. It doesn’t matter who they are, what they have done, or what benefit we might get, we are commanded to be neighbors by showing mercy to other people. We must be Good

Samaritans to people who are hurting and dying. To people who have no hope. Let us not be the Religious Elite who snub their noses at people in need, but let us use our own resources, our own time, our own money to show others the mercy of God.

Friday, June 11 - Acts 9:10-19

To have the faith to show mercy as Ananias did would be remarkable. Let's remember that as the reader of Acts 9, we have information that Ananias did not have. We know the miraculous events on the road to Damascus and know the condition Paul is in. All Ananias knows is what God tells him. Ananias trusts God, but he is still apprehensive. Ananias goes as God commanded and Paul's ministry begins.

In order to show mercy to others, we need to have faith that "God has our back." To show mercy is to be vulnerable. The Good Samaritan was vulnerable on the Road to Jericho; Ananias is vulnerable by going to this one who has been arresting and killing Christians. There is vulnerability in serving others in this way. Can you be taken advantage of? Yes. Can you be hurt? Yes. But as Romans 8:31 says, "if God is for us, who can be against us?" If God is leading you to show mercy to a particular person, he will protect you in your time of need. Be free to show mercy to all people because you trust in God and you fear (respect) God more than you fear (are afraid of) persecution. Go, be free of our anxieties. Go, show mercy to all people. And remember, God is with you always until the end of the age.

Saturday, June 12 - 2 Kings 4:8-10

What is it like to show mercy and grace in simple ways? It is using what God has given you to glorify Him and take care of needs you can meet. The wealthy Shunammite woman had resources to provide meals to Elisha but she knew she could do more. She knew she could provide a place for him to stay as well, so she and her husband did.

It doesn't take an extraordinary feat to show mercy to people. It is just using what God has given you. If God has given you time, use that time to show mercy to people.

If God has given you money, use that money to show mercy to people. If God has given you a particular skill, use that skill to show mercy to people. Do you get the point?

What do you have that you can give to other people? Make a list and see what you come up with. Ask God to show you how you can be merciful to others. Look over that list and see if there is a ministry which you can plug into which corresponds with those skills/talents/resources. If there isn't, is God leading you to start a ministry? God wants you to show mercy to others. How are you going to fulfill that command?

Sunday, June 13 - Psalm 95:1-7

FATHER'S DAY

Monday, June 14 - 1 Chronicles 22:6-19

This coming Sunday will be Father's Day. There are many great men in the Bible, but one of the flaws of many of these men was fatherhood. No person is perfect; the great men of the Bible are no different. We see many fathers playing favorites; we see fathers who are absent from their families. It is hard to find good examples of fathers in the Bible, with God being a notable exception. Even David, who we single out today for his work preparing the way for Solomon, on the whole, was a terrible father. The entire story found in 2 Samuel 13-19 with Absalom could have been avoided if David had been a better father punishing Amnon for his actions.

However, in this episode, toward the end of his life, David blessed Solomon with the supplies in order to build the Temple. If you remember, in 1 Samuel 7, David wants to build the Lord a Temple. God tells him that it is not his task to build the Temple. Here in 1 Chronicles 22:8, there is more detail telling us that because David is a warrior, he is not worthy to build the Temple. However, this does not stop David from preparing for his son to build the Temple. He has gathered the supplies and prepared the artisans to build.

A good parent will prepare his/her children for the future. There are many ways that we do this. We save for college; we teach kids life lessons about living. We provide our children with their needs and make sure they know the difference between needs and wants. We support them on the good days and the bad. Above all of that, the most important thing we can teach our children is how to love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. We teach our children to love their neighbor as themselves. The most important thing to prepare our children for is to have a relationship with God. We do this through our words and our actions. We live out our faith so our children know it is important. We live out what we tell them; we practice what we preach. Live out your faith so your family knows the God you serve. Prepare your children for their future relationship with God.

Tuesday, June 15 - 1 Chronicles 28:1-21

Covering similar instructions as yesterday, David continues to give instructions for the Temple to his son Solomon. A notable difference between 1 Chronicles 22 and 1 Chronicles 28 is that 1 Chronicles 22 was spoken to Solomon only, but this time David prepares all of Jerusalem for what Solomon is to do. A good father gives his son accountability. Before, when Solomon had only heard the plans from the Lord as told by David, he had no accountability for what he needed to do. Now, after everyone has heard the plans, Solomon will be held accountable should he decide to go against the Lord's plans.

My mother-in-law tells a story of when she was growing up. After school, there were places in town she was not allowed to go, including downtown of the sprawling metropolis of Denison, Texas. One day, she decided to go downtown with her friends against her mother's rules. By the time she got home in the late afternoon, her mother already knew where she had been. A friend of her mother saw my future mother-in-law in town and called her mother to tell. Maybe you have a similar story of your mother already knowing what you had done before you got home or you yourself had "spies" throughout town and at school. As kids, we find this to be extremely unfair, but as a

parent, we know that we are keeping our kids safe and holding them accountable to the rules set before them.

David not only holds Solomon accountable, but he also encourages his son to do the work. Sounding similar to the Lord's words to Joshua, David tells Solomon to "be strong and of good courage, and act." Parenthood is not just negative reinforcement when kids go astray; parenthood is also positive reinforcement and encouragement when kids make the right decisions. David does this by telling Solomon to be strong because the Lord is with you.

The promise of the Lord being with us is something we all need. It is a reminder to do as David told Solomon: be strong, have courage, and ACT. When the Lord is with us, we can have courage because the Lord is not just with us sometimes, he is with us always until the very end of the age.

Wednesday, June 16 - Exodus 19

Being in the presence of God can be frightening. It's probably why we don't spend enough time in prayer. When we focus on the perfection of God, we realize all of the imperfections we have. As Jesus tells Nicodemus in John 3, "...light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (Jn. 3:19).

In our passage tonight, the people will encounter the presence of the Lord at a distance. It will be an awe-inspiring, frightening experience which will lead them to say in Exodus 20:18-21, "uhh...Moses, just tell us what to do so we don't have to hear the voice of God (my paraphrase)."

We are scared of being in the presence of God, but it is the only way to become more holy as he is holy. Let us look at Exodus 19 and the instructions of preparation for entering God's presence tonight. Let us recommit ourselves to regularly being in the presence of God.

Thursday, June 17 - Genesis 22:1-19

In the early days of Facebook (circa 2005), there were a few choices for “Relationship status:” Single, in a relationship, and it’s complicated. If I had to make a decision about my relationship with this story, I would definitely select “it’s complicated.” On one hand, it is a beautiful story of being faithful to God no matter what. On the other hand, it is a story of a father willingly sacrificing his son. On a practical level, if this exact story happened today, Abraham is arrested and sent to jail. Most of the time, when we read this story, we think “all’s well that ends well,” Isaac doesn’t die, God provides, Abraham passed the test. But let’s be honest: Abraham isn’t winning any “Father of the Year” awards for this. In fact, if you read through the rest of Genesis, after Sarah dies, Isaac goes to live in the same land as Ishmael and avoids Abraham (Gen. 21:21; 24:62; 25:7-11). Like I said, my relationship with this text is complicated.

Abraham and Isaac is a fairly easy text to preach when you only focus on the relationship of Abraham and God. Frankly, it’s also easy if you throw in the relationship of Isaac and God. But it is the father/son relationship which makes it complicated and what we should discuss given it’s Father’s Day week. What do we do when God calls us to do something which could hurt the relationships around us? In *Experiencing God*, the Blackabys write about how following God’s Will is costly not only to you but for the people around you as well. Obeying God was costly to Abraham. It did not cost his son’s life, but it did cost the relationship with the son he had prayed for and wanted for a long time. Obeying God may be costly to you and to others around you. This is the cost of discipleship. It’s why Jesus says “whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:25-26). As a parent, your obligations are to God first and family second. Is that a hard decision? Of course! I’d be worried about you if it wasn’t. Pray for God to help you with these decisions. Pray that you follow Him with all of your being and if obeying God will be costly to your family, you will still choose to obey God.

Friday, June 18 - Matthew 7:7-11

As we move closer to Father's Day weekend, let's talk about the perfect example of a father: our Holy, Almighty God. Today and tomorrow, we will discuss passages outlining that God is ready to give us wonderful blessings from God, but he doesn't because we don't ask for them.

I love a good dad joke. I would say I'm an expert in dad jokes. If you don't know, a dad joke is a very lame joke that gets your younger kids to laugh, your teenagers to be disgusted, and your wife to roll her eyes. One of my favorites is when your child says "I'm hungry!" responding with "Hi Hungry! I'm dad."

Reading Matthew 7:7-11 almost sounds like a punchline to a dad joke. Your kid asks for food and you give them a rock; they ask for a fish, and you give them a snake. That's not very nice! If a dad did this as a joke, he would probably move forward to provide what the child asked for. Even dads who make mistakes know the need to take care of their children. How much more would the perfect Heavenly Father give if we would ask!

What have you not been praying for but need in your life? What have you not brought before God? God knows how to take care of you if you will let Him. He won't force himself into your life. He waits and stands at the door and knocks. Will you let Him in to take care of you?

Saturday, June 19 - James 4:1-3

There is a good (though slightly repetitive) worship song, sung by Chris Tomlin, called Good Good Father. With a very simple chorus, it praises God for being a good Father who loves us as His children. God is a Father who is with us in the middle of the night comforting our fears and concerns. God is a Father who answers our prayers and knows what we need even before we ask. God is a good, good Father.

James 4:1-3 gives the same advice as yesterday's passage in Matthew: you do not have because you do not ask. It then goes on to say you have not asked God, so

you have tried to do things on your own and it has caused conflict and dispute. Our God supplies every need that we have, and we can trust in his providence and provision. He is a good, good Father. You can go to Him with all of your needs and requests. Do just that today. Spend an extended amount of time asking God to provide your needs. Do not think you are being a bother or that God has more important requests to listen to. God cares about you and your needs. You do not have because you do not ask. Remedy that today and ask God for what you need.

Sunday, June 20 - Matthew 6:7-13

Let us celebrate Father's Day today by remembering how we are to pray to our Heavenly Father. Whether you have an earthly father who deserves celebrating today or not, you have a Heavenly Father whose name is to be praised. Spend time today thanking God for being a great Father.

"WE ARE HIM, HERE!"

Week 5: Forgiveness

Monday, June 21 - John 21:15-19

If we are going to learn how to be like Jesus in the task of forgiveness, it would be best to see how he does it. This passage is not the first time that Peter and Jesus have had a conversation about forgiveness. Matthew 18:21-22 records a conversation where Peter asks how much should a person forgive a brother or sister in Christ. Jesus responds with an exponential amount more than Peter suggests (77 or 70x7 vs. 7) signifying that we are to forgive as many times as necessary. This instruction in Matt. 18 comes right after the instructions concerning discipline in the church. Don't you think these two passages are related? I do.

Matthew 18 is in the background as Jesus and Peter talk after breakfast in John 21. Peter has denied knowing Jesus, and this is the first time the two have had a chance to speak alone. What is Jesus going to do? Rebuke Peter? Call him Satan

again (remember Mark 8:33)? No. Jesus forgives Peter by asking him do you love me? Jesus asks three times to match the three times Peter denied Christ. Full forgiveness and pardon is given to Peter when Jesus finishes this passage by saying "Follow me" which were the words he called to Peter in Mark 1:17. The message is still the same; forgiveness has been given. Jesus, even after what Peter has done, still wants him to follow.

When it comes to forgiveness, we need to forgive ourselves. God has forgiven us; why can't we forgive ourselves? Jesus forgave Peter and commanded him to continue to follow. No matter what we have done, we can never lose God's forgiveness. Since God has forgiven you, forgive yourself. In order for Peter to become the leader of the church God wanted him to be, he had to forgive himself. In order for you to be who God made you to be, forgive yourself, and live as God wants you to: by following Him.

Tuesday, June 22 - John 21:20-23

I don't know if you remember, but a little over three years ago, this passage of Scripture was the first sermon I ever preached for you. It is a passage which reminds all of us that God calls us each to a task and purpose and it does not matter what he has called someone else to do. We need to worry about ourselves and our relationship with God instead of worrying about others' relationships and tasks.

This relates to forgiveness in a bigger picture way than the original context of Jesus, Peter, and John. God has called each and every one of us to forgive those who have wronged us. Too often, we get like Peter asking "well, what about him?" We decide we aren't going to forgive because the other person needs to forgive us first. We decide that we are not going to forgive because no one else is forgiving one another. It does not matter what everyone else is or is not doing, all that should matter to you is living as God requires. Don't worry about what other people are doing. Worry about what God is asking you to do. And God is telling you to forgive all people who have wronged you. Who do you need to forgive today? Call that person and give

forgiveness whether they've asked for it or not. Pray for God to heal that relationship as you take the first step to forgive.

Wednesday, June 23 - Exodus 20:1-21

The Ten Commandments: 4 focusing on our relationship with God, 6 focusing on our relationship with others. These ten commandments govern the way we are to live our lives. Which set of commands do you find most difficult to keep? Is it the ones which deal with your relationship with God or is it the ones which deal with your relationship with other people? Reflect on these commandments today; consider your life and how faithful you have been to keep these words from God. Let's come together tonight to discuss how we are to base our life on these words from God.

Tuesday, June 24 - Luke 23:33-38

If we are going to be like Jesus, we need to forgive like he did and that includes those who mean us harm. Throughout the ordeal Jesus goes through by being betrayed, arrested, beaten, and killed, he is always thinking about others. He prays for his disciples and future followers in the garden (Jn 17). He heals a man's ear and tells Peter to put his sword away (Lk 23:50-51; Jn 18:11). He asks for God to forgive his murderers.

It can be a powerful testimony for the gospel of Jesus to forgive those who have wronged you in the most extreme way. We all remember in the fall of 2019 when Botham Jean's brother, Brandt Jean, forgave his brother's murderer, Amber Guyger. It was a powerful moment of the gospel being acted out in real life. It was a perfect example of being like Christ on this earth.

Who do you need to forgive? If we are going to be Him, here, we must forgive as God forgave. We must not hold grudges or participate in divisions and factions. We must be unified for the common goal of furthering the Kingdom of God. Who do you need to forgive in order to achieve this unity in the church?

Friday, June 25 - Acts 7:54-60

How do we forgive people who are murdering us? It is only by the work of the Spirit. Stephen faces martyrdom at the end of Acts 7 because of his unapologetic witness for Jesus. It is when he called out the Jewish leaders, calling them uncircumcised, stiff-necked people who do not listen to the Holy Spirit that the leaders got angry and wanted to stone him. It was in this moment that Stephen needed all the strength he could be given and God gives him that strength. "Being filled with the Spirit" it says in Acts 7:55, Stephen stood boldly for the faith he believed in, and, through the Spirit, in his dying breaths, Stephen asks that his murderers be forgiven.

Much like Jesus, Stephen wants forgiveness to be given to the perpetrators. Maybe we brushed off the passage yesterday because, of course, Jesus could forgive people. He was Jesus... unlike any person who has ever walked the earth. But Stephen? Not even one of the twelve apostles, Stephen was one of the first seven deacons. He was supposed to be taking care of widows, not proclaiming Jesus to the point of death. Yet here Stephen is, emboldened in the faith, telling others about the Messiah and he dies because of it.

Any one of us could be Stephen. We could be bold in our faith, but could we forgive people for killing us? Are we withholding forgiveness for actions less than killing? If we think we could do as Stephen and Jesus did, but we can't forgive our neighbor for loud music on Friday night, we are kidding ourselves. Forgive everyone, no matter what they have done. Forgive yourself, no matter what as well.

Saturday, June 26 - Matthew 6:8-15

I've preached on this passage before and when I get to verses 14 and 15, it always makes me cringe. Hold on, if I don't forgive others, God won't forgive me? I cringe when I also read the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matt. 18. Does that mean that God won't forgive me if I don't forgive others? What does it mean that God won't forgive my trespasses if I don't forgive others?

In the Bible, the separation of spirit and body is impermissible. Our human action is an overflow of the work God is doing in our hearts. Thus, the assumption in the Bible is that if we have been forgiven by God, then we will be overly willing to forgive others. Let me reword v. 12 to help us understand this:

And forgive us our debts as we *are forgiving* our debtors.

The assumption is that we are forgiving other people, similar to in the rest of Matthew 6, it is assumed we are praying, giving money, and fasting. Forgiving others is such a part of the Christian life, it is such an important part of being Him, here that Jesus *assumes* that the people listening are doing it. If Jesus assumes that we are forgiving others and not even bothering to issue a command concerning forgiveness, we better get to work. Forgive one another as God forgives us.

Sunday, June 27 - Psalm 96

WEEK 6: TRUSTING

Monday, June 28 - Matthew 10:5-15

Our last theme may sound very similar to the first. Back in May, we discussed having faith in God like Jesus did. In that week, we used trusting in God as a synonym for faith in God. This week, when we talk about trusting like Jesus trusted, we do not mean our trust in God, but we mean our trusting in others to do the work of God in the world.

The way that Matthew 10:5-15 reads, along with its companion tellings of the sending of the twelve in Mark 6 and Luke 9, it seems that this event occurs early in the three year ministry of Jesus. The disciples have not graduated from the internship, but Jesus trusts them to do the work of God. The disciples are still in school (and retaking the same class over and over after failing), but Jesus sends them into the world.

Many times we think that we need a Ph.D in church to do the work of the Kingdom. We think we should let the professionals handle it because we will just mess up. That is not the story of Jesus' ministry and should not be the way we do church. If

you are a leader in our church, we need to trust everyone to do the work of the church. No prerequisites, certifications, or degrees required! In Mark's order of the story, in fact, no disciple has even declared Jesus to be the Messiah! You don't have to be a "Super Christian" to be part of church work. We need to trust one another to work together for the glory of God. Do you trust other church members like Jesus trusted his disciples?

Tuesday, June 29 - Acts 1:6-11

Have you ever watched an event (sports, movie, musical) where at the end, you just sat in awe with your mouth agape? On a Saturday night in April, I stayed up late to watch Gonzaga University face off against UCLA in Men's Basketball. The winner would play Baylor in the National Championship the following Monday. At the end of the 2nd half, the score was tied, so they played an additional five minutes of overtime. With three seconds left in overtime, the score is tied. At this point, the assumption is that the game is headed to the second overtime. Gonzaga inbounds the ball, Jalen Suggs runs to half court, shoots the ball, scores, winning the game and sending Gonzaga to the National Championship (where, I am obliged to add, they lost). As I watched on that night before Easter at 10 pm, my mouth fell open as the shot went in. It was an incredible moment. I didn't think about what I was doing, it was just automatic.

That's the type of reaction I expect the disciples had when watching Jesus ascend to heaven. I imagine in between Acts 1:9 and 1:10 some time has elapsed, and the disciples are just staring in the sky. Just in absolute awe of what they just saw. Finally, some angels come and say (my paraphrase), "hey, stop looking up, he'll come back, but right now you've got work to do."

What is that work? Jesus lays out the plan that he trusts the disciples with in Acts 1:8. Be my witnesses throughout the countryside and world. Tell my story to all people, discipling and teaching them. It takes trust in his disciples for Jesus to leave them with this plan and purpose.

At the same time, Jesus is not leaving them to do the work on their own. Jesus does not give marching orders and then disappear without sending help. Having Jesus' trust does not mean we are on our own and do whatever we want. The Holy Spirit is our helper and leader. The Holy Spirit is from whom we receive our power and how we are able to do the work of the Lord. God trusts us to do the work, but we are not alone. God is working ahead of us, alongside us, and pushing us along.

The disciples were in awe of what they just witnessed. It was now their mission to share what they witnessed to the world. That is our task as well. God trusts us to spread the message of Jesus with the world. He has sent the Holy Spirit to help us, but we must still go. Are we up to the task?

Wednesday, June 30 - Exodus 18

We will (or we did) have prayer meeting at 10:30 am this morning to pray for Vacation Bible School. Tonight is a very important night of VBS. Last night, I shared the plan of salvation to all of the older kids at VBS. Everyone filled out commitment cards and tonight, I will be talking individually with each child who indicated they wanted to make Jesus their Savior. Be in prayer for this time tonight.

Because of VBS, we won't have Bible Study tonight, so we will use this space to read a passage of Exodus we skipped over. Exodus 18 is a fascinating passage detailing advice that Moses' father-in-law Jethro gives Moses. It is a great passage of Scripture to apply to the church in all generations. It answers how we can delegate tasks to one another so that the community can flourish. Enjoy reading this passage today and please pray for Vacation Bible School.

Thursday, July 1 - Acts 6:1-7

We trust one another to do the work of the Lord. The early church had one of those good problems to have. At CHBC, we've had a good problem recently. Our Wednesday Night Children's Ministry this Spring has almost outgrown our capacity. Throughout April and May, we had some Wednesday nights with 18 children in

attendance. We were having to problem-solve with what to do if we don't have enough room in the Fellowship Hall and what to do in the fall as we move back to the Children's Building. These are good problems, exciting problems to have! Praise be to God!

In the early church, they were growing to the point that the Twelve could no longer do everything. People were being left hungry, even after everyone was sharing what they had in common. Again, a good problem but a problem nonetheless. The twelve tell the community to select seven deacons to serve the Christian community. They do so, and the words in Acts 6:7 are important: "the Word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem." Because the deacons were selected, the church was able to continue to grow.

We must trust one another to do the work for the church to grow. A church can only grow as much as its leadership has capacity to lead. If we don't have enough vocational and lay leaders in the church, the church cannot grow. This is not a devotion today telling everyone to get to work. This devotion is to say *let others* do the work also. They may not do it like you do; that's ok. The seven deacons may have served the widows in a different way than the twelve; again, that's ok. We must trust one another to work together and we must not micromanage each other. If we want others to continue the work we have done, we cannot make them feel as if we are watching and waiting for them to fail. They must not feel as if we are judging every move they make. Let's trust one another to work together in the Kingdom of God.

Friday, July 2 - Philippians 2:19-30

On their 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Band*, The Beatles released a song led by Ringo Starr called "With a Little Help from My Friends." Paul McCartney in an interview a few years later remarked that the song was based on the idea to write a song for Ringo. Ringo said he could do it "with a little help from my friends." From there, the song was written by Ringo, Paul, and John Lennon.

We all need a little help from our friends. In Philippians, Paul's personal ministry has been halted because he is in prison. In order for the gospel to continue to be spread, he must trust in his co-workers to deliver the message. He turns to Timothy and Epaphroditus to go to Philippi in his place, trusting that he will follow soon after. If Paul did not trust the people around him, like Timothy, Epaphroditus, Barnabus, Silas, Chloe, Phoebe, Lydia, and all of the other Christian leaders in the early church, the ministry would not have continued when Paul was incarcerated.

We all need a little help from our friends. The days will come when we no longer can do the work in the church we have been doing. It is incumbent on us to trust others to continue the work we have started. It is incumbent on us to mentor others so that the work can be continued. We were handed the work from the previous generation and it is our Christian duty to pass on the work as well. It is our obligation to trust others with the work that has been entrusted to us. We are Him, here, meaning, we are doing Christ's work on earth, and we must pass that work on and trust others to be Him, as well.

Saturday, July 3 - Ephesians 4:1-16

Let's wrap this series up, bookending the discussion with Spiritual Gifts. Some are called to be apostles (missionaries), prophets (preachers), evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These gifts of the Spirit are to build up the body of Christ equipping us to be proficient in the work of the Lord. We pray that all of us work together, not thinking ourselves better than one another, but with humility, serving one another with patience and love. We are to make every effort to have unity remembering what v. 5 says as we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God.

What's the thought I want to leave you with? WE are Him, here! This is not a "royal we" where you do not do anything but have others do it. This is not "you (singular) are Him, here." We, together, are the body of Christ in this world. We are to be unified toward one goal. We want to be mature in our faith, sharing that faith with the world through our words and actions. Let us speak the truth in love to one another

and to the world, following the lordship of Jesus Christ, being his witnesses in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). We are Him, here! Let us do as Jesus did when he was on this earth.

Sunday, July 4 - Psalm 97