



UNLEASHED
Unleashing Community
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September 10, 2017

Discussion Notes
The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are concluding our series called “Unleashed.” So often, the biggest thing keeping us from the life God has for us is actually us. What would it look like if we, as a church and as individuals, fully unleashed God’s purpose in our lives? What if we pursued God fully and prayed completely over that pursuit? We are on a journey to discover what living an unleashed life looks like as God uses prayer to release His power in us. Our goal is to spiritually re-engage our hearts and souls and realign with God after the distractions of the summer.

SCRIPTURE¹

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions in order to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 1-8 Go ... I want you to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Matthew 16:18 I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

OBSERVATION

Two giants of the Early Church gave brilliant speeches to the religious leaders as they laid out the history of the Jewish people and the workings of the Lord in the lives of the Ancients. Peter and Stephen were courageous in their expounding of the Lord’s plan in bringing our Messiah into the world, and giving proof that Jesus Christ was that Messiah. We again are privileged to hear about giants of Scripture, but this time about the Early Church leaders who put their lives and possessions on the line for their faith. Acts Chapter 2 tells of their fellowship together, meeting in the Temple court and witnessing there, meeting in homes as they shared communion and meals. Luke gives us a blueprint for our own community today as he describes the mighty warriors of the first century. He says they were of one heart, mind and mission, that they cared about their cities and they cared about their friends. Then Stephen is martyred, but first gives a passionate and honest defense of his faith through a bold dissertation of Jewish history. Afterward he was killed by religious extremists because of his goodness and his belief in Jesus. Philip journeyed to Samaria to witness there and is diverted to an encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch who is then saved and baptized through his witness. Saul traveled to Damascus to persecute Christians there when Christ appears to him and asks, “Why are you persecuting Me?” His life is radically changed and his impact all over the ancient world is immeasurable. John Mark goes to Egypt, Thomas goes to India, Paul goes to Turkey, Greece and finally Rome as the New Church of Jesus Christ emerges as the greatest of all time.

Question: What do you think when asked, “Are you persecuting Christ by your silence?”

Question: The Holy Spirit manifested Himself in former uneducated fishermen and tradesmen who were able to present magnificent discourses of faith to thirsty people. Tell us about a time when you were empowered to speak boldly about your faith. How did you feel?

It was the “best of times, it was the worst of times” as Charles Dickens wrote in [A Tale of Two Cities](#), because persecution through Emperors Nero, Vespasian, and Domitian was rampant and horrific. Paul is beheaded, Peter is

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

crucified upside down, John is exiled and all of the remaining ten Apostles suffer awful deaths. Persecution kept the church strong. Yet the Christians counteracted the cruelty with compassion. They showed love to all, spoke gently to their oppressors, and did good to their enemies. They even asked God to forgive their murderers!

Question: why do you think God required such horrible deaths of people like His Apostles and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice during the Reformation and are still dying today?

Question: How do you react to your oppressors and enemies? Have you ever considered that you might be martyred for your faith? What do you think when considering that possibility?

The Church, after 300 years of tremendous growth, began to scatter to places like Austria, northern Italy, and Constantinople. Emperor Constantine in 313 AD put an end to persecution of the Church through the Edict of Milan. But people became spoiled by the benefits he gave to followers of Jesus so the church became weak in faith as a result. Instead it became a powerful political machine bent on financial gain, legislation of morality and military conquest. This corruption tragically spread for the next 1000 years called the Dark Ages. But God spared for Himself a remnant faithful few such as St. Patrick, Gregory the Great, Augustine, John Wycliffe, Johann Guttenberg, Martin Luther and John Huss with so many others who were horribly martyred. Thus began the Protestant Reformation. There was a fresh discovery that salvation comes by Grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. There was a great awakening as preachers like Jonathon Edwards and George Whitefield spread the gospel.

Question: Mike Breaux took us on a historical journey of church history this week. What is your reaction to all that you learned about God's involvement in that history?

APPLICATION

Now we look to our history as a movement began in Las Vegas and Central Christian unleashed the Good News in our Valley. It planted an offshoot called Canyon Ridge from which Shane Philip and other faithful brothers launched The Crossing seventeen years ago. That's how we got here!! We are standing on the shoulders of brave and visionary men and women who for 2000 years embraced the Good News in their lives and wanted to unleash it in their world. People who had discovered a living hope, and loved their friends, their families, their city enough that they were willing to take risks to make sure others found it too. It was their life. It was an all-consuming passion to take hope to everyone. We are still writing history and now it is our turn. The church is not something we come to ... It is something we are. It is part of our DNA - our souls. We are dreaming of a dangerous church in this city that brings hope and light – that pushes back crime because people like us are dispensing grace and helping to thousands of people who are far from God. This is because, when we live like Jesus and love like Jesus, we start looking like Him.

Question: What is your small group doing? What would you recommend as a service project for your group? When are you going to spearhead this effort?

Question: Are you waiting for God to say evangelism is your spiritual gift? How do you feel about approaching strangers in order to tell them about Jesus and His offer of redemption? What would it take for you to overcome the hesitance you have about speaking boldly for Him?

Spiritually speaking, we have all traveled different roads and taken detours along the way which are totally unique to us, yet we are together here – together – at the same place – a bunch of profoundly imperfect people being profoundly changed by the Good News of Jesus. So many people are drowning in feelings of worthlessness. We want to spend our lives helping others experience the same grace that we've encountered as we bring hope and light against the darkness in Las Vegas.

Question: If you agree with this statement, how are you going to make this happen in your family?

Question: At what point in your faith walk did you realize that you are worthy and your life has meaning and value? When will you leave your past behind and unleash the faith warrior within you?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, there is so much work to be done and through Your Holy Spirit we want to passionately be a part of it. Present us with Open Doors we can run through as Light replaces the darkness of our city. In Jesus' name. Amen.