



## 2018 October Sermon Series "Until the Whole World Hears"

October 28<sup>st</sup> – Awesome Benefits from the Ascension!

### Opening Video: **We Are the Church Empty Pews**

#### Getting the Nod

#### Showing Graphic Slide of Series at the Beginning

**There's no getting around it... we are the church... not because we're gathered in a building... but because we're living out the calling... we are the church!**

This has been our first attempt at turning every October of every year into emphasizing... concentrating on... and intentionally focusing on the lostness of the world. Our monthly verse has been Acts 1:8 and we have been led by the scripture to know our commission to witness; to think of our community... our country... and the continents.

We have placed before you the purpose of our church... **To be a bridge that connects lives to God...** but that purpose is for all of us to connect lives... not just some.

And we are to simplify the vision of that bridge... **We are urgently called to E.M.S.; To help people ENCOUNTER CHRIST; To MAKE DISCIPLES through spiritual disciplines; and to STRENGTHEN OUR FAMILIES through equipping and experiencing community.**

**And we do that through our everyday lives... at work... in our neighborhood... and in our God-given divine appointments.**

**Transition:** What we're trying to say is... Every day ordinary believers make an extraordinary difference in this world. To prove it...

#### Connecting Us

**Illustration of Edward Kimball: Meet Edward Kimball**, an ordinary Christian who taught Sunday school in his church and made a living down at the shoe store. But his real passion was sharing the gospel. One day Edward determined that **he was going to look for an opportunity to explain the gospel to a salesman named Dwight**, who had just joined the staff.

Edward was nervous. He hemmed and hawed and paced back and forth. Dwight was in the back room putting shoes away. Finally, Edward mustered up his courage and launched into the story of Jesus birth, death, and resurrection. That day Dwight gave his life to Christ.

**Dwight is better known as D.L. Moody**, who went on to become one of the greatest evangelists. The story doesn't stop there. One day Moody was preaching, and a pastor named **FB Meyer was listening**. He was deeply stirred and went on to establish a nationwide preaching ministry. Later, while Meyer was preaching, **a young man in the audience named Wilbur Chapman** accepted Christ.

**Chapman later felt the call to evangelism**. As he was proclaiming the gospel in various places, he decided **he needed some help. He knew a young former baseball player named Billy Sunday**, who was looking for a job, and Chapman hired him. Billy asked if he could preach every now and then. **Billy Sunday ultimately emerged as the greatest preacher of the early 1900's.**

**One day Billy Sunday was preaching in Charlotte, North Carolina**, where a great move of God was taking place. Many people believed. **These new believers then invited a relatively unknown preacher, Mordecai Ham**, to set up his tent in Charlotte and keep preaching. It was at this time that **a tall, lanky farm boy walked down the aisle and gave his life to Jesus. His name was Billy Frank, but we know better as Billy Graham**. And that lanky young man personally delivered the gospel message to more people than any other man in history.

So, consider this, because an ordinary guy like Edward Kimball was willing to share the gospel with a coworker, millions ended up hearing the gospel message and found Christ. And the multiplication isn't over... how many people have found Christ through Billy Graham's ministry that are now leading others to Christ? Out of one moment in a small shoe store came a history-making event!!!

**Transition:** Who knows what one moment in your life will produce? Christ set it all in motion in Acts 1... let's read it.

### God's Take

NKJV | Ac 1:4-11 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. **8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**" 9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (That is called the ascension!) 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (In other words, get on with your next step!)

**I have to ask... "What's your next step?"** I'm not asking you to reveal your lunch plans or your things to do list waiting for you at home. I'm asking what your next step is in reaching a new level to accomplish Acts 1:8 in your life?

**Illustration of Rick Warren's Five Circles of Commitment:**



**Explain: Where are you in the circles? You see, the closer you get to the center core... the more exciting it becomes!**

- **Community** – The unchurched. Rare if any church connection.
- **Crowd** – These are the guests of a church. Attending somewhat, but not involved beyond attendance.
- **Congregation** – These are the ones who come regularly, might be in a small group or S.S. Class, typically know what's happening, but not helping in ministry yet.
- **Committed** – These are the kingdom-mature attendees. They read their Bibles all the time, attend a small group, involved in helping in activities.
- **Core** – These are the fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ who have been blessed by the presence of God in their lives and actively minister to others. The lost world burdens them. Broken lives matter to them. Committed at all cost to make a difference.

**Each of us are found somewhere on this graph.** Where are you? And in knowing where you are... you now know where the next step is!!! **Let's take a few moments to study this... so we can answer the question that God is asking us... "What is my next step?"**

**Here's what I do know for sure... each step toward the center is a closer step toward Jesus Christ!! The closer you get to Jesus... the closer you are going to be to the center of God's best for your life!!! It starts with Him and what He has done for you. And that GOOD NEWS becomes the GOOD NEWS you are willing to share with others.**

So, to begin our new step... let's look at the awesome benefits that we find in the Acts 1 story of the ascension of Christ...

### **Awesome Benefits from the Ascension:**

#### **1. We have power over sin, death, and the devil.**

- **His mission is to help us master our lives.** The first benefit that we have as a result of His ascension is power over sin. Jesus' finished work on the cross and His resurrection is power to live our lives without the domination of temptation. **NKJV | 1 Jn 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**
- **His resurrection trampled death.** We now have hope after death. The power of fear and sin no longer hangs over us as God's children. **NKJV | Ro 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
- **His death and resurrection trampled the devil.** The curse of our disobedience is no longer to us. **NLT | Heb 2:14 Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.**

#### **2. We have access to Jesus at any time.**

- **He is available anytime, anywhere.** Talk about good cellphone coverage!! We can be on the other side of the planet and have instant access to God!! **NLT | Ro 10:12 Jew**

and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him.

- **Even though we may forget to pray to Him, He prays for us.** Jesus is praying with you and for you. NKJV | Heb 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.
- **Our Heavenly Father is just as passionate as Jesus is.** When we hear Jesus say, “Father forgive them...” we are hearing His heart... as well as His Father!! NLT | Jn 14:9 Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?”

### 3. Our bodies are destined for glory.

- **Our lowly bodies are destined for perfection.** The amazing truth of the ascension is that the physical body of Jesus entered heaven. That physical body is in the presence of God. We will have new bodies!!! NLT | Ro 8:23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.
- **Heaven is a real and physical place.** NLT | Heb 9:24 For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf.
- **Although our bodies are weak, they will become strong.** All that saddens us with these human bodies will someday be forever changed. NLT | Re 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

**Transition:** Thank God for all the truths yet to be seen and understood!! Our God is awesome and amazing... so what can I leave with you this morning to impact the question before us? **What is my next step?**

#### Taking It Home

##### Takeaways:

1. **Ask the Lord to take you there.**
2. **Be aware of your divine appointments.**
3. **Set your affections on things above.**

##### Transition:

#### Relevant Conclusion

**Final Illustration:** Homeless Man Thanks Pastor for 'Looking at Me'.

The following story was shared by Ed Salmon, a pastor from South Carolina, who passed away in 2016:

Just yesterday, I went out for lunch. When I got to Forest Park, there's usually a homeless man or two standing there, and there was this terribly disheveled man standing there with his sign, "I'm homeless." And of course, he was going by the cars, and nobody looked at him. He got to my car, and I rolled down the window, and I said, "I don't have any money with me, but my wife is going to take me to the airport in about an hour and a half, and I'll have something for you then. And do you know what he said to me? **He said, "Thank you for looking at me." Didn't say a word about money. He said, "Thank you for looking at me."**

Salmon then gave the following charge to his fellow ministers (although this can apply to every Christian): **"You see, the Good Shepherd is raising you up so that the world you minister to can look at you and say, "Thank you for looking at me, because in that, I see the glory of God."** Sarah Condon, "Heaven Side Encouragement for Earth Side Ministry: A Remembrance of Ed Salmon," Mockingbird blog (6-13-17)

Open the Altar and Pray for the Church to be Living Witnesses