Greater Ministry — Delivery Transcript

Colossians 4:7–18 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, June 11, 2017 · *Greater*

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All right, well this morning we're finally, finally, finally, finally getting to the end of the book of Colossians. This is the last message in that book. If you're just now joining us, you picked the best Sunday to come because you get the whole book in one. You're the most time efficient people on the planet, so kudos to you for that. If you were with us during our Greater campaign, that's kind of like the second half of the book of Colossians. We started it at the beginning of this year with a series entitled First Things First.

So let me just kind of catch you up on the book of Colossians before we get into the section we're going to be at today. Essentially it's a letter written to a church, kind of like if some big important person wrote a letter to our church. But imagine if our church had a group of people, influential people in it, who were basically pushing an agenda, trying to advocate a gospel that deviated from the true biblical gospel. And let's imagine that there were people in our church who were kind of buying into that gospel and it was getting some traction.

Then I, as your pastor, would get a little bit concerned. And not necessarily having had that problem before, I would have reached out to a friend of mine. And that's essentially what their pastor, the pastor of Colossae, did with the apostle Paul. He takes a trip over to Rome, Paul's in prison, he visits him, he tells him that these teachers are in his church teaching things that are a deviation from the biblical gospel. "Paul, I don't know quite how to handle this. What should I do?" And so Paul, as an apostle, writes the letter to the church of Colossae, essentially telling Epaphras and all the church members there how they were to respond to this false teaching.

Now let me kind of encapsulate the false teaching this way. They essentially said, Jesus is great, you need Jesus for salvation and all that. But you need Jesus plus something else. Jesus for salvation plus works for righteousness. Or if you really want to please God, then you've got to eat a certain way, drink a certain thing, not look a certain way, associate with

certain people. And essentially, Paul writes the letter to the Colossians and says, you know, that's incorrect. You need to put the first things first. The priority of the gospel can't be subsumed underneath this works-based approach to salvation.

You've got to keep the first things first. And so chapter after chapter, if you read through the book of Colossians, it's essentially saying Jesus is supreme over all. He's Lord over all. That if you want to live a righteous life, that righteousness needs to proceed from salvation that is by grace through faith. And so keep the first things first. Now that's not to say that Christianity, once properly understood, doesn't produce a holy lifestyle. Over the last eight weeks or so, we've been in a series where we've seen how the gospel will transform every element of your life, and especially your most important relationships, that the gospel, once properly understood, has incredible implications for your marriage, your relationship with your kids, your attitude at the workplace.

Your most important relationships, whichever side of that pendulum you may be on, the gospel does produce righteousness, a holy lifestyle. But it comes from a place of being accepted by God, not from a place so that I will be accepted by God. I love my wife in a particular way, not so that God will love me, but because God already loves me, therefore I love my wife in this way. And so when we get to this section of the book of Colossians, there at the very end, it's a section that most people skip over.

In fact, I looked at a couple of different preachers as they preach through the book, and a lot of them just kind of skip this part. Maybe at the very end of their last sermon on verses 2 to 6: "And all these names. The end." And it's tempting to do that even in your own personal Bible study when you see a list of names that are hard to pronounce, that you just kind of skip over it. Anybody ever do that? A little confession time. It's okay, yeah, some of us do that.

And I mean I do that too, even though I probably shouldn't say that from the stage. But today we're not going to do that because there are some things in this list of names that are really instructive. And really it's instructive to us as a church family, our life together as a church. And if you're visiting today, this is going to be somewhat of a family discussion around the dinner table, except there's no— well, yeah, there's dinner. So it's going to be kind of like that. And it's essentially I entitled the message being Greater in our Ministry because there are some things that we get from this list of names.

That I think teach us how to be greater in our ministry. So let's read starting in verse seven and we'll read a couple of verses and then talk about these names that are really easy to brush over and most of us don't know anything about. Colossians chapter 4 verse 7: "Tychicus"— or as I like to call him, Mr. T— "Mr. T will tell you all about my activities. He's a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord." There are not many more nice things you could say about Mr.

T. Beloved brother, faithful minister, fellow servant in the Lord. "I have sent him to you for this very purpose"— here it is— "that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here." So let's just real quick on these names. Number one, Mr. T by the way, if you're reading a passage of scripture and you can't pronounce the name, you can either make a fool of yourself, try to pronounce a name, or you can just nickname them.

And my favorite thing to do is nickname them, especially when we're reading with Blaze. He loves the nicknames. He calls biblical characters dinosaur names. I call them Mr. T, people from the nineties. But this first guy, Tychicus, kind of hard to pronounce, but he's mentioned five different times in the Scripture.[1] Every time he's mentioned, it's always really quick, but every time he's mentioned, you get this idea that he's this silent servant. He's always willing to do the hard jobs, the not-so glamorous jobs, the dangerous jobs. But if he doesn't do the things that he does in the scripture, then half the scripture doesn't get written.

How many of you have ever benefited from reading the book of Colossians? How many of you— this series, last couple series— helpful in your day-to-day life? A little bit? How many of you ever read the book of Ephesians and found some helpful stuff in the book of Ephesians that pretty much changed your life in a dramatic way? The book of Ephesians, big in my life, huge in my life. Philemon, the book of Philemon, was instrumental in overturning the institution of slavery in Great Britain and even in America. Paul's approach to that relationship between Philemon and Onesimus— hugely instrumental in Christian history.

Philemon, Ephesians, Colossians, those letters were all delivered by one man, and that man's name is Tychicus. He was always taking these kinds of jobs, and those were not safe jobs delivering letters, especially as a Christian person, was an incredibly dangerous thing to do. But Tychicus was that man. He was the one who delivered for Paul the letters to the different churches. And you know, by the way, why he had to deliver the letters? Because they didn't have text messaging. They didn't have Facebook or any of those kinds of things. So you had to physically deliver the letters.

And Tychicus was the one that did that. He's also what you might call an interim pastor. He was the one who alleviated the pastoral responsibilities for Titus. He also did it for Timothy. And that's not a glamorous job, you don't get all the accolades, you don't get all the popularity. He was the one that did a lot of grunt labor, and it would have been really easy to overlook him. But his ministry, historically speaking, was incredibly significant. And there's ministry that maybe you participate in. You say it's not that significant, a lot of people overlook it.

But on the grand scheme of things, when it comes to the kingdom of God, the things that he sees versus what we're able to see, your ministry very well may be used by the Lord to have

tremendous implications on Christian history. Just think about the fact that the children that you raise, your greatest contribution to the kingdom of God may not be what you do in the church, it may be who you raise. But take this ministry seriously because you may be like Tychicus. The other guy is Onesimus. If Tychicus— let's say that together.

Tychicus, no. If Tychicus is a silent servant, then Onesimus, I would say, is the guy with a shady past or a sinful past. And his sinful past isn't because he was a slave, although he was a slave, it's because of what he did with his slavery. He was like a lot of slaves in that time. And you got to understand slavery back then is not— don't think civil rights slavery today, those were two different things. But essentially he worked for a guy named Philemon. Philemon was a member of the Colossian church, but Philemon wasn't always a Christian, and Onesimus wasn't always a Christian.

Onesimus was not a Christian, and his master was not a Christian, and it must have been so bad between the two of them that Onesimus decided to chance his life and run away as a slave, and essentially probably stole some property and some money from Philemon, and he runs towards Rome for his freedom. And he knew if he would have gotten caught, it would have been game over for him. He would have lost his life. But he didn't care. He was going to run anyway. And as he's running, he's running on his way to Rome.

Guess who Onesimus runs into? Of all people. He runs into the apostle Paul. As the apostle Paul is doing his evangelistic crusade, kind of think of like somebody just randomly showing up at a Billy Graham crusade. Onesimus hears the gospel, responds, becomes a Christian, and not only does he become a Christian, he becomes one of the closest associates to the apostle Paul, a tremendous help to him. And here you have the apostle Paul sending Onesimus back to Philemon, essentially chancing his life once again, except this time he's not going alone.

He's going with Tychicus and he's going with a letter to Philemon that essentially says, I know I was a slave, I know I've done something wrong, but I've become a Christian, you've become a Christian, let's make it right. He's confronting his sinful past, coming to terms, reconciling with the person that he wronged. Those are the first two. Those are the ones delivering the letter. Let's look at the next four. Verse 10: "Mr. A—" I really can't pronounce it. So, "Mr. A, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions— if he comes to you, welcome him)."

So Aristarchus, Mark, verse 11, you see "Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision"— meaning Jewish people. These are the only Jewish men "among my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been"— what does that say?— "they have been a comfort to me. Epaphras"— he was the lead pastor at Colossae— "Epaphras, who is one of you"— he's a Colossian— "a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always

struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis." And then you have "Luke the beloved physician," he "greets you, as does Demas." So we're not going to spend long on these names, but just real quick. First one, Aristarchus, Mr. A. He's just like Tychicus. He's a fellow servant, faithful minister, he's a Jewish man. But unlike some of the other men, Paul calls him a fellow prisoner. Not because he got arrested and was in prison with Paul, but because he was the one visiting Paul in prison every single day.

And if you've ever been in prison, you know how nice it is to get visitors. Not that I've been in prison, but this is just what I've heard. Seriously, I've heard this. So Aristarchus was always going to him, comforting him, telling him what was going on, and Paul said, if it wasn't for this man, I would not be nearly as encouraged or comforted as I am. Same with John Mark. John Mark, if you remember from the book of Acts. John Mark was the one who went with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey.

There was a church called First Baptist Antioch. Just kidding, not Baptist. They were a church called Antioch. They were the first missionary sending church. And their first missionaries that they sent was John Mark, Barnabas, and Paul. And essentially halfway into the first missionary journey, John Mark gets cold feet. Takes off, abandons Paul and Barnabas, and when he tries to go back on the second missionary journey, Paul essentially tells Barnabas, I'm not going to work with that fool. He abandoned us. We're not going to bring him along. This is not God's will.

And Barnabas said, oh yes, it is. It is God's will. We need to restore him. And Paul and Barnabas had this huge, sharp disagreement. And all because of John Mark. And yet here John Mark is with the apostle Paul, restored back into ministry. And Paul essentially tells the Colossians, if John Mark comes to you, I want you to receive him. We're right. We have reconciled. He's been restored to ministry. And he's been a comfort to me, as is Justus, and Aristarchus. Then you have Epaphras; he was the lead pastor of Colossae.

He would be kind of like a guy like me, except Epaphras didn't have one church, he had three churches. He had the church at Laodicea, he had the church at Hierapolis, and he had the church at Colossae, and that's why he prayed so much. No, I'm kidding. But he says he was a praying pastor. Paul says every time I see this guy, he's praying for you, not just kind of praying, not just sort of praying, but struggling, agonizing on your behalf in his prayers that you would be fully mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

And so you see Epaphras, and then the last two names are Luke and Demas. The thing I want to point out about Luke is Luke was not a seminary-trained minister. He wasn't a

professional minister in that regard. And yet Luke has one of the most tremendous influences on Christian history more than anybody else. He ends up writing the gospel of Luke. He writes the book of Acts, maybe wrote the book of Hebrews, some people think. And yet he wasn't a quote-unquote minister. He was a doctor, secular trained, if you want to use that word.

And yet he has a tremendous impact on the kingdom of God, which means for you, the gifting that you've received from the Lord does not necessarily mean that your ministry or your impact on the kingdom of God has to happen within these four walls. It may, it may seasonally, you may work VBS, you may work in the preschool wing, but the significance of your ministry may in fact take place outside of these four walls, the kind of influence that you have on the kingdom of God. And then Demas, the one thing about Demas I'll point out is this guy doesn't finish well.

He's mentioned one other time in the scripture, and it's in 2 Timothy, Paul's last letter to Timothy, and he says that Demas has basically abandoned the faith. He has chased after the loves of this world and he's run to Thessalonica. I don't know if it was for a woman or for something else, but he doesn't finish well. So let's take those nine names and try to draw some conclusions. And the reason I think this is the main point of the text, I know it took a while to get there. It's because of what Paul says in these last two verses.

Let's just read them real quickly, verses 15 to 18. He says, "Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house." She had the house church at Laodicea. "And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans . . . And say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.' I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you." Now I want you to put yourself in the shoes of Archippus.

Not that you have that kind of a terrible name, but you've just heard example after example after example of faithful ministers, people who have received a ministry from the Lord and fulfilled that ministry exceptionally well. And Paul essentially says to this guy, now I want you to do this. Your ministry that you have there in Colossae is significant. So take the example of Tychicus and Aristarchus and Onesimus, take their example, and I want you to fulfill your ministry. And what I want us to ask this morning is how do we do that?

If we were to put ourselves in the shoes of an Archippus, if you're in this church, if you're a member of this church, there is a ministry that you have, and so how do you become greater in that ministry? And I just wrote down five quick things. You could pull out ten things from this text, but we'll look at these five and then we'll be done. If you're going to be greater in your ministry, the first thing you've got to do is you've got to receive it. Receive the ministry you've been given by the Lord.

I'm firmly convinced that the New Testament teaches that every single Christian has been gifted for ministry, that every member has a ministry. And I don't know what your gifting may be. Different talents, different abilities, different personalities. Some of you are passionate about children, some of you are not. Some of you are passionate about old people, some of you are not. Some of you are organized, you know, you're administrative and you're gifted in that area. Others of you don't know how to find your keys in the morning unless someone else tells you.

You're just not wired that way. But every single person, no matter how you're wired, no matter what your personality type may be, if you're in this church and you're committed to this church, if you're in Christ. You've been given a ministry. And if you're a Christian, even if you're not a member of this church, but God is bringing you to this place, then there's something about what God has put in you that he wants to use for the strengthening and the upbuilding of his church here at Broadview. Every Christian has a ministry.

So receive the ministry that you've been given by the Lord. And you say, well, my ministry is not significant. You know, all I do is wipe dia— not wipe diapers, wipe the things that diapers cover. All I do is wipe the things that diapers cover. Or all I do is cook or all I do is provide meals, or I just work in the office, I just stuff the bulletins. Look, I'm sure that Archippus or Tychicus didn't see his ministry as being that significant either, and yet the Lord used it in an incredible way.

You don't know what the Lord may do through your menial, overlooked, underappreciated ministry. So since you don't know, receive it and work in it, live it out in a way that's in the Lord. Meaning you're the reason that you have that ministry isn't because Taylor came and tapped you on the shoulder, or probably Ora tapped you on the shoulder. She'll come get— you know, she'll enlist you. Your ministry wasn't from Taylor. It wasn't from Ora. It's not from this church. Ministry fundamentally, no matter what it is, no matter where it is, it's from the Lord.

The Lord's giving you that gift and he's giving you that ministry, which means the way you do that ministry, the way that you serve, you're not doing it to be seen by people or for the accolades or the, you know, the praise of men or women. You're doing it as unto the Lord. He's the one who sees you. He's the one who oversees all of it. He's the one to whom you'll give an account ultimately. And I'm telling you, when you see your ministry that way, it changes it. The level of satisfaction that you have in what you do raises.

It doesn't matter if you're wiping the things a diaper covers. It doesn't matter if you're doing those kinds of things. You're doing it as unto the Lord, knowing that he'll use your commitment to him to strengthen the church and accomplish his purposes and however he sees fit to do that is up to him. But it changes the game. So whatever it is, no matter what your giftings are, no matter how new of a Christian or old of a Christian you may be, receive

the ministry that you've been given. And I would venture to say that for most of us, there are implications between that ministry and the life of this local church.

You've been given a gift to strengthen the church. So it may be serving in a ministry environment. It may be signing up to work the preschool wing or you know, whatever it may be. But walk in it, receive it. The Pareto principle. How many of you ever heard of the Pareto Principle? I didn't know this, but it came from an Italian economist[2] who, as he was watching the relationship between rich people and poor people, noticed that 80% of the land in Italy was owned by 20% of the people.[3] So the people who had all the wealth had all the land.

And economists after that kind of took that principle and extrapolated it and said that 80% of the causes in the world or 80% of the results or effects in the world come from 20% of the causes. And that shouldn't be in the church. It shouldn't be like some football stadiums. You got thousands of people in the stands and what is it? 24 people? 22. I totally made myself—take away my man card. You got 24 people on the field in desperate need of rest and thousands of people in the stands in desperate need of exercise.

That ought not be the way the church functions. But every member has been given a ministry and called to serve. And one of the reasons I love VBS isn't because of the Legos on the stage, but it's because so many people in our church are mobilized for ministry. And for some of them, it's the first time and they realize I can be used by the Lord to have an impact on another person. And it wakes them up to this purpose that they have as a Christian and it's satisfying and fulfilling and they're never the same after that.

So receive the ministry you've been given by the Lord. Number two, leave your sinful past in the past. Two things on this. Some people get into the ministry thinking that if I start doing ministry, then my sinful past will go away. And they get into essentially they get into the ministry to fix themselves. You know, I have a pornography addiction, so maybe if I start, you know, working on the hospitality team, my pornography addiction will go away. And it won't. You'll just be a hospitality worker with a pornography addiction. Or, you know, "Mama called, Papa sent" kind of ministers.

You have to leave your sinful past in the past. The only way to get rid of that pornography addiction is to repent, to have a change of mind, a change of direction. And believe on the Lord Jesus to forgive you of your sin, to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, and from that place do your ministry. Don't get into ministry to fix your sinful past. And the other thing to do is don't let the shame and the regret from your sinful past undermine the significance of the future God wants to give you in ministry.

I can show you person after person after person whose worst regrets came from 20, 15 years ago. Some of them were not Christians, some of them were Christians. And there is a

tendency with those type of individuals to think implicitly that because of my past, because of what I've done, God cannot use me significantly in the future. And therefore I'm just going to have this subpar, weakened, watered down type of ministry. And that's not true. Take Onesimus for an example. He wronged his master; it was punishable by death; some things he probably deeply regretted, and yet he was going to confront his shame, confront his past mistakes, reconcile with Philemon and, having made it right, have a significant ministry.

And really he had a tremendously significant ministry even before doing those things. Same thing with John Mark. He made a boo-boo. He messed up. He shouldn't have deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. And yet he confronted that mistake, he reconciled with the apostle Paul, and he was used in an incredible way in the future. So the fact that you made a mistake in your past, whatever it may have been, no matter how significant it was in the eyes of people, that does not preclude you from having a meaningful, significant ministry in the future.

And you've got to believe that God is a God of grace, that He can forgive you of that, He can cleanse you from that, and that He can set you up. As Pastor David likes to say, every setback is a setup for a comeback. And so that setback can be used by the Lord to set you up for meaningful ministry in the future. So receive the ministry you've been given by the Lord. Leave the past in the past, and then secure and nourish Christ-centered friendships. How many of you when you were in high school, you had some best friends and six months after you graduated, you never saw them again?

High school seniors are like, what? What? I'm telling you, it'll happen. Here's why. Because the friendship is built on a shared something. You're sharing real estate on your school. And when the school goes away, the friendship a lot of times, not always, don't freak out. But a lot of times it just goes away. And so some of my best friends in high school, I don't talk to them anymore. Not because I don't like them, it's just because the thing that we shared in common we don't share in common anymore. Same kind of thing happens with people who do drugs.

You got deep, deep friendships in the drug world, and you take away the drug, the friendships seem to just disappear. Same thing with sexual relationships. If the relationship's built on sex, you take away the sex and the relationship goes away. So when you build Christ-centered, gospel-grounded friendships, those kind of friendships have a longevity that other friendships don't have because the thing on which the friendship is based, that shared reality, is the person and the work of Christ. And he'll live on forever. And those type friendships, they trade in things like forgiveness and mercy and patience and grace and long-suffering.

Because Jesus traded in things like mercy and grace and patience and long-suffering. And I'm telling you, when you put around you a group of gospel-grounded, Christ-centered people, it changes the way you do ministry. It sets you up for greater ministry. On the other

hand, if you surround yourself with a bunch of yahoos or knuckleheads, now you see this in the apostle Paul. He's surrounded by a group of men who are manly men, who are Christian men, who are committed to the Great Commission no matter what it's going to cost them.

And as a result, he was able to have a tremendous impact on the world even from prison because of those Christ-centered, gospel-grounded friendships. And the same is true with us. If especially if those of you who have become brand new Christians, there's a tendency with brand new Christians to one of two extremes. You either say I'm not hanging out with any of those people anymore. I'm only going to do my Christian friends, and then basically you dis your whole mission field. Or the other extreme is to continue to let those people have a shaping influence on your life and instead of progressing in godliness you kind of stay restrained.

The answer is to add to your circle a group of Christ-centered, gospel-grounded friendships so that you can continue to minister to those other friends and yet at the same time progress and grow in godliness and do what God's called you to do. There's nothing like having a friend in Christ in that way. Some of my best friends are people who are co-laborers or they're doing the same type thing that I'm doing, committed to Christ, grounded in the gospel, and I wouldn't make it without them. And the same is true with you.

So if you don't have those friendships, secure them. If you do have them, nourish them. The easiest way to nourish those kind of friendships is the fourth point, and that is to offer encouragement and comfort every time you can. The reality is ministry is kind of tough. If you've done ministry at all, if you've worked with people whatsoever and you take their problems seriously and you take them onto yourself and you try to feel what they feel, then it drains you. Doesn't it? It wears you out. And you're like, oh, they're calling again.

What is it this time? And for people who do ministry in that way for a long period of time, if they're not given encouragement and comfort, if they don't have a group of people around them who say keep the course, stay steady, you're doing a good job, writing encouraging notes, speaking a word of encouragement in the hallway at the right time, in the right place, the right way, then they would fail. They would get out of ministry, they would be ineffective. And so for us as a church, what that looks like is every single one of us paying attention to the people that we have around us and insofar as we're able, offering encouragement and comfort and those type things, so that the people who get discouraged, like the apostle Paul was when he was in prison, not able to do the things he wanted to do, he was reminded your negative situation doesn't mean God can't use you.

It doesn't mean that God isn't using you. Here are the things that are going on in Colossae. Here's the good things that are happening as a result. So secure and nourish those friendships. And in our world, it's as easy as writing a thank you note. I got a thank you note the other day. Lifted my soul. I mean lifted my spirits. Same thing probably happens to you.

And this church is really pretty good at it, especially the older demographic writing notes, encouraging people, it's central for being greater in ministry. Then the last thing, you got to work hard and pray often.

Ministry is hard, therefore you got to work hard. If you get into ministry thinking it's going to be easy, you better work with a lot of hardworking people so you can coast on their work. Because ministry is tough. As I said, if you work with people, their problems become your problems, it drains you. And so you work as if it all depended on you, but you pray as if it all depended on the Lord. That's what John Wesley said. Work as if it all depended on me and pray as if it all depended on— me— on the Lord.

Essentially at the end of the day, ministry is a supernatural thing. It requires the filling of the Holy Spirit, and so you pray. John 15:5: you're the vine— Jesus is the vine. We're the branches. Apart from him we can do nothing, so you abide, you stay prayerful and committed to the Lord in that way. And yet at the same time, having abided in him, you work out your salvation, knowing it's God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. If you want to know how hard ministry is, just work VBS for a week.

And if you want to know what The Walking Dead looks like, you don't have to turn to AMC. Just come up here Friday and take a look at some of the volunteers from VBS. They'll be walking dead in that way. Don't worry, they won't bite you, but they'll be kind of— they'll be — ministry's tough. And so you've got to work hard and you've got to pray. You've got to pray often. Now the only way any of that's possible is what Paul says at the very end. His last prayer is that you would be strengthened by grace— or, grace be with you.

He tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2, be strengthened by the grace that is in our Lord Jesus. And so one of the reasons I wanted to do the Lord's Supper this morning is for us as a church to be reminded the energy for ministry, the way that we make it in our life together from point A to point Z isn't just by self-effort or pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps, but it's by being strengthened by the grace that's in the Lord Jesus. And so we're going to have a time where we can respond and prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper.

Daniel's going to come and lead us through a time of playing softly and setting the table in that way. And then I want to invite you right there where you're seated, or you can come to the front if you want, to just reflect and ask the Lord, am I walking in the ministry that you've given to me? I mean could you imagine if every one of us in this congregation began to live out ministry in this way, where we let the past stay in the past. I'm not going to be dominated by my worst regrets.

I'm not going to let my friendship suffer and wither. I'm going to be proactive and encouraging and comforting my people that God's put around me. I'm going to work hard, I'm going to pray often. I'm going to recommit myself to believing that he's the vine, I'm the

branch, apart from him I can do nothing— that would change the way we do ministry as a church. And so let's use this time responding to the Lord, responding to his word, so that we'll be greater in our ministry. And if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, then the same is true for you as it is true for us.

You need to receive the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he'll call you into a meaningful future. But it begins with repenting of sin and calling on the name of the Lord. And so if that's a decision you need to make this morning, let me invite you to do that as well.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "four different times"; Tychicus is named five times in the New Testament (Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; 2 Timothy 4:12; Titus 3:12). Source: ESV text of those verses. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "a French economist"; Vilfredo Pareto was an Italian economist (born in Paris to an Italian family). Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Vilfredo Pareto." ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "80% of the land in Paris"; Pareto's observation was that about 80% of the land in Italy was owned by about 20% of the population. Source: Investopedia, "Pareto Analysis" and "The 80-20 Rule." ↩