

**Almont Vineyard Church**

**Week 3 Sermon Series: Witnesses of the Risen King**

April 25, 2026

## Opening Monologue

Greetings, AVC family and friends—and welcome! To our new guests and those who have just downloaded the app, we're so glad you're joining us. You're going to get a lot out of this application.

Just a quick FYI: this is the sermon portion of the app. If you scroll down, you'll find spiritual reflections, commentary, and devotional questions connected to this week's sermon. There are many other great features on the AVC app too—the best way to explore is simply to poke around and discover them. If you need any help, please contact the church office; we'd be happy to assist you.

We are in a sermon series titled “Witnesses of the Risen King.” As I've mentioned throughout the series, the church was established by Jesus Christ Himself, yet we as Christians have a great responsibility to participate in the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are New Testament Christians, and we are called to be actively involved. Using the Apostle Paul's words, we are to “prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12).

The heart of the gospel is about salvation, but it's so much more than that. The good news is about restoration and second chances. (I praise the Lord for giving me many chances!) This week, we will examine how Jesus' ministry demonstrated what the church should look like. Christ touched the outcasts, showing compassion and giving people a new identity. He gave people courage in the midst of their failures and fears. This week, we'll look at several passages that highlight these truths.

If you've been around Christianity for any length of time, you've certainly heard about the Great Commission—going and making disciples of Jesus Christ. Often that gets translated as going to Africa or sending out missionaries overseas, and that is certainly part of it. But the reality is that the church itself is also a mission field, and we have a vital part to play in caring for the body of Christ to which we belong.

In my sermon, I share a story about how grateful I am for the church during the early years of my marriage. As a young Christian, husband, and father, I needed a lot of advice and a lot of prayer. Praise be to God, I belonged to a fantastic body of believers during those years. The Lord used the men and women around us to support us every step of the way. That kind of mutual care is part of the Great Commission—taking care of one another.

“But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:24–27, ESV)

I invite you to join us this Sunday to be encouraged and equipped by God's Word as we grow together in our faith in Jesus Christ!

In Christ,

Rev. Pastor Brad

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**To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 3 Sermon Series: Witnesses of the Risen King" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:**

**Web:** <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

**You Tube:** <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

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## Key Sermon Text

**Ephesians 4:12**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204%3A12%20&version=NIV>

**Mark 1: 40-42**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%201%3A40-42%20&version=NIV>

**Matthew 14:22-32**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2014%3A22-32%20&version=NIV>

**1 Corinthians 12:24-27**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2012%3A24-27%20&version=NIV>

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## Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections

**Jesus Modeled the Great Commission: A Theological Reflection**

Jesus told us to "go and make disciples," but long before He gave the Great Commission, He demonstrated in the Gospels exactly what that looks like. Before sending His followers out, Jesus showed them—and us—how to live out the mission of

the kingdom through compassion, restoration, and courage. His life demonstrates how God's power, love, and healing should permeate every aspect of a broken world, and this pattern became the template for what His followers would eventually be commissioned to do.

Rather than simply commanding His disciples to go, Jesus trained them primarily through observation of His ministry. Then He sent them out. (Luke 9:1-6, Luke 10: 1-24) This wasn't incidental—it was intentional formation. The Great Commission itself is framed by Jesus's authority and His promise of spiritual presence, both necessary for fulfilling the mission.

We see this modeling first in the way Christ touched the outcast and gave people a new identity. A powerful example is the healing of the leper in Mark 1:40–42:

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Here, a man covered in disease—socially and religiously isolated—approaches Jesus with desperate faith. Rather than recoiling, Jesus reaches out, touches him, and restores not only his body but his place in the community and his dignity as an image-bearer of God. This single gracious act reveals the heart of discipleship: seeing people as Jesus sees them and calling them into the fullness of life in Him.

We also see Jesus giving people courage in the midst of their failures and fears. This is vividly displayed in Matthew 14:22–32, when Jesus walks on the water toward His terrified disciples. Exhausted and battered by the storm, the disciples cry out in fear, mistaking their Lord for a ghost. Peter, in a burst of bold yet faltering faith, steps out of the boat—only to begin sinking when he takes his eyes off Jesus. Yet Jesus does not condemn or abandon him. He immediately reaches out His hand, lifts Peter up, and gently says, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." In that moment, failure becomes a deeper encounter with the saving presence of Christ, and fear is transformed into courage by the voice of the Savior.

As these Gospel accounts reveal, true discipleship flows from the compassionate heart of our Savior. Jesus felt compassion for crowds lacking spiritual shepherding; this compassion wasn't merely sentiment but an attitude that grew into action, moving Him at the deepest level. The very disciples—those closest to Jesus—were often afraid, doubtful, and imperfect. Yet Jesus never cast them aside. Instead, He restored them, strengthened them, and commissioned them. His words to them still echo for us today: "Take courage. It is I." That message remains for His church today.

We are therefore called to have that same great compassion for the people of God and for the body of Christ to which we belong. The Great Commission is not an abstract mandate imposed from above; it is an invitation to continue what Jesus Himself embodied—meeting people in their deepest need with the authority, presence, and heart of God. We do not merely proclaim the gospel with our lips—we embody it with our lives. We reach out to the outcast, restore the fallen, strengthen the fearful, and remind every struggling believer that Jesus is present in the storm. In doing so, we participate in the same restorative work Jesus modeled, building up His church as a

community where no one is left behind and every member is cared for with the same love He showed.

This pattern of mutual care and restoration is beautifully captured in the words of the Apostle Paul:

“But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:24–27, ESV)

As we reflect on Jesus’ example, may we be moved to live out the Great Commission not only by going out, but by faithfully caring for one another within the body—extending compassion, offering restoration, and instilling courage—so that the church might truly be built up to the glory of the Risen King.

[Sources: 1-3]

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## **The Church’s Calling**

The Gospels portray Jesus not only as the Savior who forgives sins but as the Master who shapes His followers through the daily realities of life together. He invested deeply in a small group of ordinary people, allowing them to walk with Him, observe His character, and participate in His ministry. This relational, formational approach—marked by teaching, modeling, coaching, and correction—prepared them to carry forward the mission of the kingdom after His departure.

Jesus’ example reveals the inseparable connection between proclamation and practice. He cared for bodies as well as souls, restored dignity to the marginalized, and instilled courage in faltering hearts. In doing so, He showed that true discipleship involves the whole person and calls the church to reflect the same holistic love.

One clear demonstration is how Christ touched the outcast and gave people a new identity. A striking example is Jesus’ encounter with the woman who had suffered from a disabling spirit for eighteen years, found in Luke 13:10–13 (ESV):

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your disability.” And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

This woman, bent over and socially sidelined for nearly two decades, was an outcast in both body and community. Jesus saw her, called her forward, spoke words of freedom, and laid His hands on her. In that moment, He restored not only her physical posture but her dignity and place among God’s people—giving her a new identity as one healed and honored by the Lord.

Scripture emphasizes both the spiritual and physical dimensions of the church's calling. A mature congregation growing in God's Word feels compelled to address human suffering, because this care is integral to discipleship, not an optional extra. Jesus cared for the whole person—body and soul—since every human bears God's image, and believers are called to care for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. The disciples themselves were often fearful, doubtful, and imperfect, yet Jesus never abandoned them. He restored, strengthened, and commissioned them. His reassuring words—"Take courage. It is I"—still speak to His church today.

We are therefore called to extend that same great compassion to the people of God and to the body of Christ to which we belong. The Great Commission invites us to embody what Jesus modeled: meeting people in their deepest needs with the authority, presence, and heart of God. We proclaim the gospel not only with words but with lives that reach the outcast, restore the fallen, strengthen the fearful, and assure every struggling believer that Jesus is present even in the storm. In this way, we participate in His restorative work, building a church where no one slips through the cracks.

Pure religion also demands concrete mercy, as James declares:

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." (James 1:27, ESV)

**And Paul urges:** "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2, ESV)

### **Spiritual Applications: As Individual Christians Within the Church, We Are Called To**

- 1. Pray for one another faithfully, especially for those suffering, battling sin, or facing trials (James 5:16).**
- 2. Bear one another's burdens through practical help such as meals, financial support, transportation, or listening ears (Galatians 6:2).**
- 3. Care for the vulnerable—widows, orphans, the elderly, struggling families, those facing addiction or mental illness (James 1:27).**
- 4. Show compassion and kindness, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (Romans 12:15; Ephesians 4:32).**
- 5. Forgive quickly and fully, refusing to let bitterness create division (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).**
- 6. Serve humbly with our gifts, time, and resources, considering others' interests above our own (Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:4).**
- 7. Encourage and build one another up through God's Word, fellowship, and truth spoken in love (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Ephesians 4:15–16).**
- 8. Practice hospitality, opening our homes and lives to fellow believers, especially the lonely or new (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9).**

**9. Restore those who stumble gently, helping them return to faithfulness while watching our own hearts (Galatians 6:1).**

**10. Love sacrificially as Christ loved us, so the world recognizes us as His disciples (John 13:34–35; 1 John 3:16–18).**

This holistic calling—spiritual growth joined with tangible acts of mercy—demonstrates the gospel in action. It refuses to separate evangelism from edification or soul care from body care. Internal ministries of mercy, counseling, financial help, and community support within the local church are not side projects; they are discipleship lived out in the pattern of our Savior.

May the Lord stir our hearts to live as faithful witnesses of the Risen King, caring for His body with the same compassion, courage, and restoring grace that Jesus first modeled.

[Sources: 4-5]

### **Living as Witnesses of the Risen Christ**

Your witness as a follower of the risen Christ takes shape through both conviction and action—standing firm in what you believe while actively serving others in your church community.

Being steadfast and immovable in your faith demonstrates the reality of Christ's resurrection to those around you. This means taking clear positions on matters that reflect Christ's values. You stand firmly for God-given principles—resisting sexual perversion, rejecting revenge against enemies, and refusing the endless pursuit of more that characterizes consumer culture. These aren't abstract stances; they're visible markers that something has transformed you.

But witness extends far beyond resistance—it flows into active engagement. Your involvement in the church's work testifies that Christ is alive, and every action—welcoming a lonely newcomer, supporting a struggling young person, comforting a grieving widow, or sharing Scripture—becomes a declaration of your new allegiance. The church itself demands your priorities as Christ's bride, the place where the gospel is preached, salvation is found, and sacrificial love is practiced.

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Practically, this means volunteering in ministries that reflect Christ's compassion—serving in small groups, participating in mercy outreach, mentoring younger believers, or simply being present to those in crisis. The church embodies the gospel through its common life together, and this participation in divine communion overlaps with witness to the world. Your presence, your consistency, your willingness to sacrifice time and resources—these communicate more powerfully than words that the risen Christ has fundamentally altered how you live.

### **Theological Reflection**

This dual calling to conviction and compassionate action echoes the New Testament vision of the church as the living body of the resurrected Lord. Just as the early disciples in Acts pointed to the risen Jesus not merely by their words but by the transformed power at work among them, our lives today become signs of His victory over sin and death. When we resist cultural pressures while pouring ourselves out in love for the vulnerable, we participate in the same pattern Jesus modeled: crucified faithfulness joined with resurrection power. In a world hungry for authenticity, such integrated witness—rooted in the empty tomb—makes the gospel visible and credible. It reminds us that the resurrection is not a distant doctrine but the empowering reality that turns ordinary believers into credible ambassadors of new creation.

[Sources:6-7]

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## Commentary

Mark 1:40-42

### **The Cleansing of a Leper**

A man with leprosy came to Jesus. He fell on his knees and begged Him, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” He said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cured.

Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” Instead, the man went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to Him from everywhere.

### **Jesus Touches the Untouchable**

In Jesus’ day, leprosy was more than a terrible skin disease. It was a slow, painful condition that made a person ceremonially unclean. According to the law in Leviticus 13–14, people with leprosy had to live outside the towns, stay away from others, and shout “Unclean!” whenever anyone came near. They were cut off from family, worship, and normal life. The Bible usually speaks of “cleansing” leprosy rather than “healing” it, because the disease was often seen as a powerful picture of sin—something that isolates and defiles.

This man was an outcast. He had no hope—until he came to Jesus.

Notice his humble plea: “If you are willing...” He had no doubt about Jesus’ power. He only wondered about Jesus’ heart. Would the Lord be willing to help someone like him?

Jesus’ response is one of the most moving moments in the Gospels. He was filled with compassion. He did something no one else would dare to do—He reached out and

touched the man. In that culture, touching a leper made a person unclean. But Jesus was not bound by ritual rules when human suffering was involved. His love for people was greater than any law of uncleanness.

With tender authority Jesus said, “I am willing. Be clean!” At once the leprosy disappeared. The man was not only healed physically—he was restored socially and spiritually. He could return to his family, worship in the temple, and live again as part of God’s people.

### **Christ’s Compassion for the Outcast**

This story powerfully shows the heart of our Savior. Jesus is willing to touch the untouchable. He does not stand at a distance from our brokenness. He draws near. Even when society pushes people away, Jesus reaches out with compassion and gives them a new identity.

The man came as an outcast labeled “unclean.” He left as a cleansed child of God, restored to community and worship. That is what Jesus does for every one of us. No matter how deep our sin, shame, or isolation, He is willing to make us clean. His touch brings healing, forgiveness, and a brand-new identity.

Jesus then instructed the man to follow the Old Testament law—show himself to the priest and offer the proper sacrifices. This was not only for the man’s official cleansing; it was also a testimony to the religious leaders that the kingdom of God had arrived and that Jesus had authority to cleanse what the law could only declare unclean.

Sadly, the healed man could not keep quiet. He spread the news everywhere. While this brought many people to Jesus, it also made it harder for Jesus to move freely in the towns. Yet even when Jesus had to stay in lonely places, the crowds still found Him.

### **What This Means for Us**

The same compassionate Jesus who touched the leper is still reaching out today. He sees our hidden struggles, our shame, and our sense of being “unclean.” He is not repelled by our mess. Instead, He is moved with compassion and says, “I am willing. Be clean.”

If you feel like an outcast—spiritually, emotionally, or socially—bring your need to Jesus. He is ready to touch your life, cleanse what sin has defiled, and give you a new identity as a beloved child of God.

Let us learn from Christ’s example. May we also reach out with compassion to those whom others avoid, remembering that no one is beyond the healing, restoring touch of the risen King.

[Source: 8]

### **Jesus Walks on the Water (Matthew 14:23–32)**

#### **Witnesses of the Risen King – Jesus Shows Us How to Do Church**

After feeding the five thousand, Jesus sent the crowd away and made the disciples get into the boat to cross the lake. Then He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. He needed time alone with the Father, especially after the people tried to force Him to become their earthly king. In His humanity, Jesus sought strength to stay on the path of the cross instead of taking an easier road.

Meanwhile, the disciples were far out on the water. A strong wind rose against them, and the waves battered their small boat all night long. They rowed hard, fighting exhaustion and fear. This was their second major storm, but this time Jesus was not in the boat with them. They felt completely alone and helpless.

In the early morning hours (between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m.), Jesus came to them—walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him moving toward them across the waves, they were terrified. They cried out in fear, “It’s a ghost!” The long night of struggle, the howling wind, the crashing waves, and now this mysterious figure pushed them to the edge of panic.

But Jesus did not rebuke them for being afraid.

### **Immediately He called out over the storm:**

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

“Take heart” means “Be courageous... take courage... have confidence.” Jesus did not scold their terror or their weak faith. Instead, He encouraged them. He identified Himself with the powerful name “I AM”—the same name God used when speaking to Moses. In the middle of their greatest fear, the Lord drew near and said, in effect, “It’s Me. I’m here. Stop being afraid.”

### **Jesus Shows Us How to Do Church**

This story is a powerful picture of the church in action. Jesus was training His disciples—the first church—right there on the water. He showed them (and He shows us today through the Gospels) what real church looks like:

- The church is not a perfect group of strong, fearless people.
- The church is ordinary people facing real storms—exhausted, afraid, sometimes crying out in fear.
- The church is Jesus coming to His people in the middle of the storm, speaking courage, and reminding them, “I am with you.”

The disciples were the original “called-out ones” (the meaning of *ekklesia*, church). Jesus had already sent them out on a short-term mission trip (the 72), and He was preparing them to be His witnesses. In this moment, He was teaching them how to live as His church: trust Him when the wind is against you, cry out to Him when you feel like you’re sinking, and keep your eyes on Him instead of the waves.

Peter’s experience shows the same lesson. When he kept his eyes on Jesus, he actually walked on water. But when he looked at the wind and waves, fear took over and he began to sink. Even then, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” and immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. Jesus gently asked, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”—not in anger, but as a loving Teacher training His followers.

When Jesus and Peter climbed back into the boat, the wind stopped at once. The disciples saw again that their Lord has complete power over nature itself.

### **The Same Jesus Comes to Us Today**

As witnesses of the Risen King, we are the continuation of that first group in the boat. Jesus is still building His church the same way—by coming to us in our fear, doubts, and worries. He does not wait until we are strong and fearless. He steps onto the very waves that frighten us and says the same words He spoke that night:

**“Take heart... it is I; do not be afraid.”**

When you feel tossed by life’s storms—health struggles, financial pressure, family problems, anxiety, doubt, or loneliness—remember this scene. Jesus sees you straining at the oars. He comes to you in the darkest hour. He does not shame you for being afraid. He encourages you. He reaches out His hand when you cry out. And He invites you to keep your eyes on Him.

This is how Jesus does church: imperfect people in real storms, met by a compassionate Savior who equips them, encourages them, and builds them up together. Just as He trained the first disciples on the water, He trains us today through the Gospels to be His witnesses—people who encourage one another, equip one another, and point everyone to the Risen King who walks on the waves.

Whatever storm you are facing right now, hear Jesus speaking to your heart: “Take heart... it is I; do not be afraid.”

Keep your eyes on Him. Cry out when you sink. Trust that the same Lord who calmed the wind is still Lord over every storm—and He is building His church on the Rock that cannot be shaken.

[Source: 9]

### **The Body of Christ Needs Each Other (1 Corinthians 12:22–27)**

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. The more honored members must not look down on the more humble ones. In fact, the parts that appear to be weaker are actually essential to the health of the whole body.

In the church, some gifts and roles are very visible—preaching, teaching, leading worship, or standing up front. But many of the most important contributions happen quietly in the background. These “weaker” or less noticeable members are indispensable. The pastor may be well-prepared and eloquent, but he cannot do his job effectively if others are not using their gifts. Who greets newcomers warmly? Who keeps the building clean and maintained? Who makes sure the sound system works, plans the service, follows up on people in need, or prays faithfully behind the scenes? The church needs the visible gifts, but it needs everyone. The less-visible servants are often the ones who keep the body functioning.

God has put the body together in such a way that extra honor and care are given to the parts that seem to have less dignity. Just as we carefully protect and clothe the more private parts of our physical body, so in the church we should give special honor and attention to those who serve quietly. Appearances can be deceiving—every part is necessary. No one should be dismissed as unimportant, and no one should be given undue prominence either.

This arrangement creates harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other equally. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is

honored, every part rejoices with it.

When one believer hurts, the whole body should feel it. When one is honored or blessed, the whole body should be glad. There is no room for jealousy or competition. We are called to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Too often we become jealous when others are blessed and apathetic when others suffer. But real connection in Christ means we get involved in one another's lives. Christianity is never private. We are in this together.

**All of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.**

Every believer—across the world and throughout history—belongs to this one body. As new people come to faith in Jesus, they are added to the body, receive a gift from the Holy Spirit, and become useful to God. No believer is unimportant. Each one has a gift to share that helps the body function better.

**Mission Work Right Here in the Body**

This passage shows us that the church has important mission work to do right here within our own body. Before we reach the world, we must learn to care for one another. The church is not a collection of independent individuals; it is a living body where every part needs the others. The “behind-the-scenes” servants are just as vital as the up-front leaders. When we encourage, equip, empower, and build one another up (as we saw in Ephesians 4), we are doing the mission of the church.

Jesus showed us how to do church. In the Gospels we see Him training His first disciples—walking with them through storms, reaching out to the outcast, healing the sick, and teaching them to trust Him together. He still does the same today. As witnesses of the Risen King, we are called to live out this interconnected life. We rejoice together, we suffer together, and we serve together with the gifts God has given each of us.

No gift is too small. No person is unimportant. When we value every member and care for one another with compassion and unity, the body of Christ becomes strong and healthy—ready to show the world the love of the Risen King.

Let us stop discounting anyone's contribution. Instead, let us treat every gift as valuable to God and eagerly use what He has given us to serve and build up the body.

[Source:10]

**Resources:**

Rev. Brad Standfest, (1) Logos Bible Commentaries: [1] Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2012), 267.

[2] Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 1:130–131. [3] Charles L. Quarles, “Matthew,” in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1553–1554. [4] Ed Hindson, *Everyday Biblical Worldview: Understanding the Christian Faith* (B&H Academic, 2016), 132–133. [5] Fernando Enns,

Jonathan Seiling, and César Garcia, *Mennonites in Dialogue: Official Reports from International and National Ecumenical Encounters, 1975–2012* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2015). [6] Larry Payne, “Our Lives, His Witnesses (Acts 3:12–16),” in *Award Winning Sermons*, ed. James C. Barry (Broadman Press, 1978), 2:140–141.

[7] John Christopher Thomas and Frank D. Macchia, *Revelation*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner, *The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 503. [8] Brooks, James A. 1991. *Mark*. Vol. 23. *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. [9] Barton, Bruce B. 1996. *Matthew*. *Life Application Bible Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [10] Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. 1999. *1 & 2 Corinthians*. *Life Application Bible Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

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## Sermon Notes:

### **Week 3 – Witnesses of the Risen King**

Happy Sunday to everyone, and welcome. Welcome to those joining us online.

**We are in a series titled “Witnesses of the Risen King.”**

**If you have missed any of the first couple of sermons, here are the AVC Connections:**

YouTube • App • Facebook/Website

[Let’s Pray]

**The Church was established by Jesus Christ**, and we as Christians have a responsibility to participate. As the Scriptures declare: “[We are Called] ... to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” Ephesians 4:12

**It says: Works of Service... For what? To build others up.**

**One scholar says this about the words “Build Up”:**

“The words Build Up involve the Church Body... The People. It involves edifying and helping others grow spiritually. It involves strengthening people through words of encouragement. The goal is growth which leads to maturity and stability.”

Some of you know this and others don’t, but Meg and I got married when we were young — age 17-18.

**[Story of Church] FULL STORY IN SERMON**

The heart of the Gospel is about salvation... but it’s way more than that.

The Good News is about restoration and second chances. Amen! (Praise God I got many chances.)

Listen... Every person Jesus touches gets more than forgiveness... They get a future. Jesus demonstrated to us what the Church looks like.

**Christ touched the outcasts, showing compassion and gave them a new identity.**

**Mark 1:40-42** A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

**Christ gave people courage in the midst of their failures and fear.**

**Matthew 14:22-32**

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

**As witnesses of the Risen King we are to be the hands and feet of Jesus.**

The Great Commission says, "Go make disciples," but that doesn't mean we send everyone to Africa (missional work is part of it).

**Church, we have mission work to do right here within our body.**

**The Apostle Paul makes the point of taking care of each other when talking about spiritual gifts.**

1 Corinthians 12:24b-27 (As read in the service)

**I want to close with a powerful statement from theologian Thabiti on the Church's responsibility and Apostle Paul's words:**

"Harmony emerges only when all members—the weak and the strong, the flamboyant and the quiet, the up-front and the behind-the-scenes—use their gifts, appreciate one another, and care for each other equally. (1 Cor 12:25–27) No one is dispensable; no one operates in isolation. Believers should share one another's burdens in order to help lighten them. (1 Cor 12:25–27)

Believers need to empathize with others—to join in with their feelings as if they were experiencing the feelings themselves, rejoicing with others with no hint of jealousy and suffering with them, offering kindness, concern, compassion, and a shoulder to cry on if needed. (1 Cor 12:25–27) This transforms the body of Christ from a collection of individuals into an organism where each member's wellbeing affects the whole."

**Church... We are in this together. Let us encourage one another and pray.**

**Understand... You're not doing life alone... Only if you choose to...**

**Closing Prayer**

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## **Devotional Questions:**

### **1. Jesus Touches the Outcast**

In Mark 1:40–42, a man with leprosy fell on his knees and said, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus was filled with compassion, reached out, touched him, and said, “I am willing. Be clean!”

How does this story show that Jesus gives people a new identity? Is there an area in your life—or someone you know—where you feel like an “outcast” or “unclean”? What would it mean for you this week to believe that the Risen King is still willing to touch and restore?

### **2. Jesus Gives Courage in the Storm**

In Matthew 14:22–32, the disciples were terrified in the storm and cried out in fear. Jesus did not rebuke them. Instead, He immediately said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

When have you felt exhausted, afraid, or like you were sinking in life’s storms? How does Jesus’ response to His fearful disciples encourage you today? What fear or doubt do you need to bring to Him right now, trusting He will say, “Take courage”?

### **3. The Church as Mission Field**

The Sermon reminded us that the Great Commission includes mission work right here within the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:12 tells us we are to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

How has the church been a place of encouragement, prayer, or practical help for you (like Pastor Brad and Meg experienced in their early marriage)? In what specific way can you actively participate in “building others up” this week or in the future?

### **4. Every Member Is Indispensable**

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:22, “On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.” The less-visible servants—those who greet, pray, clean, follow up, or serve quietly—are essential.

Do you sometimes feel your gifts or service are small or unnoticed? How does this Scripture change the way you view your role in the church? What “behind-the-scenes” gift has God given you that the body needs?

### **5. Suffering and Rejoicing Together**

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Think about someone in our church family who is currently suffering or facing a trial. How can you “suffer with them” this week through prayer, a listening ear, practical help,

or encouragement? How can you also rejoice with someone who has received a blessing?

### **6. Jesus Shows Us How to Do Church**

In both the healing of the leper and the walking-on-water story, Jesus trained His first disciples (the original church) by modeling compassion, restoration, and courage. As witnesses of the Risen King, how is Jesus calling our church to look more like the one He modeled? What is one practical way you can be the “hands and feet” of Jesus to an outcast, a fearful person, or a struggling believer this week?

### **7. Joining Forces as the Body**

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). The heart of the gospel is salvation, restoration, and second chances—and we are called to live this out together.

Looking back over this series, how has God been growing your “grace meter” and your willingness to care for others in the body? What one step will you take this week to join forces with other believers and do the works of Jesus Christ right here in our church family?