

**Outsiders**  
***Plan “A”***  
**October 28, 2018**

**PRE-SERVICE VIDEO**

**Congregational Song – “Alleluia, He Has Loved Us” / T&G**

**Video – Behind the Scenes**

**Feature – Worn**

**Communion**

Let’s pray together.

Lord we come to you this morning just as we are.

- Some of us are worn down.
- Some of us are in pain.
- Some of us are broken.
- Some of us are aware of how far we are from being the person you want us to be.

But no matter where we are, we know that because of the grace and mercy shown to us in Jesus of Nazareth and his death on our behalf, you take us just as we are.

But more than that you promise us that, one day, redemption will win. A song *will* rise from the ashes because Jesus rose from the grave.

And for that, and for Him, we are extremely grateful.

Amen.

One of the greatest promises of the Christian faith is that nothing and no one is irredeemable. No sin, no pain, no injustice is so great that God cannot bring good from evil.

One of the greatest *strengths* of Christianity is that we don't believe that because it sounds nice and

we want it to be true. We believe it because it really happened in history. It happened in the body and through the blood of Jesus – who suffered a painful and unjust death at the hands of the Roman Empire as an atonement for our sins and then was raised again on the third day.

And because it happened to Him it will happen to those who believe in Him and trust Him as their savior.

Every so often we remind ourselves of that truth and that event by celebrating the Lord's Supper (which is also known as communion). In fact, Jesus himself asked us to do that.

The Apostle Paul tells us that ...

*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 1  
Corinthians 11:23-25 (NIV)*

So, in the next few minutes, that’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross. We’re going to remember how God, in His mercy and grace, brought us from *death to life* and from *darkness to light* by giving us his Son.

Now, whenever we do this, there are always some who think “well, Rick, I’d really like to participate but I just don’t feel worthy of receiving communion today. I haven’t felt close to God. I’ve been pretty sinful lately.

And I always say “that’s OK. I understand how you feel. But you should come and receive it anyway because (and I talked about this in last Sunday’s

message) Jesus said ‘I have not come to call the righteous. I have not come for the people who feel close to God or who think they are worthy.’”

Jesus came, as the song said, to save those who are worn, in pain, broken and aware of how far we are from the person God wants us to be – *sinner*s.

And communion is meant to remind us of that; to remind us that our acceptance by God is not the result of anything we do or don't do. It's about what Jesus did. It's totally *grace*.

*He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. Because of his grace he declared us righteous and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.*

*Titus 3:5,7 (NLT)*

So, during the next few minutes, I invite you to get up from your seat and go to one of the communion tables, take a piece of bread, dip it in

the juice, eat it and then go back to your seat.

And be confident and thankful that redemption will win in your life not because of how good you are but how good *Jesus* is.

## **Communion**

### **Feature – Reckless Love**

If you're like most people, at some point in your life, you will want your life to be about more than just your life.

At some point in your life, you will want the meaning and purpose of your life to transcend what you do in your life.

You will want your life to be about ...

- More than making money
- More than spending money
- More than changing diapers

- More than changing jobs or neighborhoods
- More than keeping up with your hobbies
- More than keeping all the plates spinning for your kids and your family

Those things are all well and good as far as they go but, if you're like most people, at some point in your life, you will discover that *you want your life to be about more than just your life.*

The good news is ... if you belong to Jesus – if you have believed in Him and received Him as your savior and have declared your allegiance to Him as the King of the Universe ... if you belong to Jesus, God wants that for you as well. *God wants your life to be about more than just your life.*

In fact, if you belong to Jesus, *God has a mission for you that transcends whatever you're doing in your life.*

More specifically, God has called you to join Him in accomplishing *His* mission; the one Richard and

Hannah and Sabrina just sang about – the one that’s driven by His overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love that leaves the 99 sheep in the wild to go search for the one that wandered away and is lost.

## Review

Now, if you were here last Sunday, you know that we talked about that metaphor and where it comes from. It’s from one of the parables Jesus told in response to criticism from the “religious insiders” who were upset that people who were not like Jesus *liked* Jesus. In their words, Jesus was “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”

So Jesus explained His thinking and, in fact, His mission by saying ...

*“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he*



do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness [which is kind of reckless if you think about it] and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it?

*“And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’*

**Then Jesus said ...**

*“In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!”*

*Luke 15:7 (NLT)*

And the point Jesus was making to them and to us is that ...

**In the same way that lost things matter to people, lost people – people who are not of**

**the tribe called “Christian,” people who are *outsiders* to the faith – matter to God.”**

- That’s why Jesus was doing what He was doing.
- That’s why He welcomed the company of tax collectors and prostitutes and those other “notorious sinners.”
- That’s why He allowed Himself to be crucified on a Roman cross.
- That’s why He took on human flesh and entered our world in the first place.

*Jesus – the ultimate insider – came ...*

- So that those who were far away from God might be drawn near to Him
- So that those who were lost could be found
- So that worn, suffering and broken sinners could be redeemed.

*Jesus came so that *outsiders* could become *insiders*.*

And if you belong to Him, that mission is yours as well.

**As the Apostle Paul once put it ...**

*God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. 2  
Corinthians 5:19-20 (NLT)*

This is God's plan "A" – the *Ambassador plan* ...

- Where those who belong to Jesus serve as His representatives to the world around them
- Where ordinary people living ordinary lives discover that their lives are about more than just their life

- Where the Grander Vision God has for our lives *transcends whatever we're doing with our life.*

So let's talk about that vision for a bit.<sup>i</sup>

## **The Grander Vision**

Probably the best illustration of it shows up in the story of Jesus as told to Luke by the Apostle Peter.

In chapter 5 of Luke's Gospel we read that ...

*Once when [Jesus] was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon's [who is also called Peter] and asked him to put out a little from*

*the shore.*

*Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.*

*When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, “Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch.”*

*Simon said, “Master, we’ve been fishing hard all night and haven’t caught even a minnow.”*

*“But if you say so, I’ll let out the nets.”*

*It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.        Luke 5:1-7 (TM)*

Can you imagine how elated Peter and his partners were because of this incredible catch of fish? They’d never seen anything like it! Their

nets were bursting. The boat was so full of fish it was sinking! They'd never had to call in reinforcements before.

Talk about a banner day in their careers as fishermen! If only it could be like this every time!

But then something very odd happens.

### **Slide**

*When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"*

*For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.*

*Luke 5:8-10 (NIV)*

Once the initial euphoria passes, it dawns on Peter and then on James and John what the miracle means: *that Jesus is no ordinary man.*

Peter even calls him “Lord” though, as the story plays out from here, it’s obvious he’s not yet totally convinced that Jesus is God incarnate.

In any case, whoever Jesus is to Peter at this moment, it’s enough to make Peter realize ...

a) his own sinfulness and

b) that a guy like Jesus certainly wouldn’t want to be around someone like him.

Ah ... but remember who Jesus really is? He’s the “friend of sinners” ... like Peter.

**So, in response to Simon Peter’s shame,  
Jesus says ...**

*“Don’t be afraid; from now on you  
will fish for people.”*

*So they pulled their boats up on  
shore, left everything and followed*

*him.*

*Luke 5:10-11 (NIV)*

Now, that's an amazing story and it's easy to just jump into what happens next: the part where Jesus and the boys launch out into the ministry.

But I think it's worth pausing to ask a couple of questions.

- Why would Jesus do this amazing miracle for them and then tell them to leave it all behind and follow him?
- Why would Jesus give them the greatest payday in their professional lives and then say, “forget these six-inchers – let's go after the six-footers?”

I mean, He could have simply said (as he did with other disciples he called) “follow me” and skipped the whole fish miracle thing.



But He didn't because, I think, Jesus was trying to illustrate something both for them and for us: *there's little fish and there's big fish in this world and you can choose which kind you'll pursue with your life.*

Let me say that again: *there's little fish and there's big fish in this world and you can choose which kind you'll pursue with your life.*

In fact, from the moment He arrived on the scene ... all the way up until today, Jesus has been presenting that choice to those who belong to Him. He's been asking all sorts of people – *not only career fishermen* – but ...

- Businessmen and businesswomen
- And stay-at-home moms or dads
- And middle-school students
- And high-school students
- And software developers
- And actors and singers and writers
- And hairstylists

- And pro football players
- And professional chefs
- And retail managers
- And pilots
- And lawyers
- And teachers
- And preachers
- And all the rest ...

**From the very beginning, Jesus has been asking all sorts of people this one question:**

*Are you going to throw your one and only life into pursuing little fish, or will you risk tossing your nets out there in hopes of catching the big ones - the people-sized ones?*

Are you going to dive headlong into the Grandeur Vision, or will you settle for the lesser ones?

## **Contrasting Priorities**

Now, let me see if I can illustrate the difference between the two.

**In the lesser visions, the priority is perch ... or perks ... or paydays ... or positions ... or personal pleasure.**

**But in the Grander Vision that Jesus offers, *the priority is people.***

Jesus wanted those three career fishermen—and us—to prioritize people above everything else that clamors for our attention.

Of course, that's not as simple as it may sound.

See, for those fishermen that day, the choice was much clearer: either stay by the water and keep catching fish or leave it all behind to become fishers of men and women.

But very few of us will ever be asked by God to make such a radical one-time decision. Instead, we're typically invited to stay in the water (to stay

with our career or situation) ... but to change our perspective so that our priority is people.

Here's what I mean.

You can be in business simply to become a success and to reap all the financial reward that will bring you. That's little fish, the lesser vision.

*Or* you can be in business to be successful AND to be in the business of redeeming the lives of people who you serve or with whom you work. That's big fish. That's the Grander Vision.

You can go to school and put all your energy into becoming a top student in your field and all the opportunity that will bring you. That's little fish, the lesser vision.

*Or*, you can go to school and become a top

student in your field AND become a student of people and how Christ might make a difference in their lives. That's big fish. That's the Grander Vision.

You can be a homemaker and pour all of your energy into creating a wonderful family of your own and all the happiness that will bring you. That's little fish, the lesser vision.

*Or*, you can create a wonderful family that you love AND which also becomes a light to other families in your neighborhood and school, a light that shows the way to Jesus. That's big fish. That's the Grander Vision.

You can have an abundance of the things of this world – money and property and toys – and arrange your life so you can enjoy those things in your free time. That's little fish, the lesser vision.

Or you can have those same things to enjoy AND also arrange to use them in the service of pointing others to Jesus. That's big fish. That's the Grander Vision.

By the way, there's a real life example of someone here at North Heartland who is doing that very thing. I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to sit down with Roger Scarbrough and talk about the unique way that he and his wife, Jeannie make use of the home they own at the Lake.

Check it out.

### **Video – Church at the Lake**

Pretty amazing, isn't it, how a regular guy is using his property not only for himself but in service of the Grander Vision.

And whatever *your* situation in life, if you belong to Jesus, He is saying to you: "You can invest all

your energy in catching fish if you want. You can spend all your time netting some scaly, underwater creatures and taking them to market for a few dollars. It's a perfectly acceptable occupation.

“But there's another option. Your life can be about *more* than just your life. You can become fishers of men and women ... primarily concerning yourself not with dollars and grades and lake houses and happiness but with ...

- getting to know people
- caring for people
- accepting people
- serving people
- listening to people
- embracing people
- befriending people
- introducing people to spiritual things

*... prioritizing* people who are not insiders like you

are.”

And you unless you hear a word from God, you don't need to move or quit your job to do that. God has already strategically placed you in a position where you can carry out Plan A. You can be His ambassador right where you are.

## **Contrasting Focus**

Now, I know that some of you are thinking, “Rick, I hear what you are saying. But there's one slight problem with. You don't know the people I have to work with, go to school with and live with.

“They – and the term ‘Grander Vision’ – don't necessarily go together in my mind. Now, *perch* and them, I can see. But ‘Grander Vision’ and *them*? Not so much.”

And, that's OK. I understand why you might think that way.



But before any of us opts out on this opportunity to have a life that's about more than just our life, I want to give you another contrast between the lesser visions and the Grander Vision.

**In the lesser vision of life, the focus when it comes to people is primarily on their problems ...**

... why they won't do this or become that; why they'll mess up or fail; why they'll never get it.

**But in the Grander Vision, the focus is on their potential. The focus is on what people could *become*.**

This is fascinating to me: in the fish story we just read, it didn't seem to matter to Jesus that his soon-to-be disciples were young men whose first response to His command was a little less than obedient.

Remember what they said when Jesus told them

to throw the nets out again?

“Jesus, we’ve been fishing all night! And we’ve caught nothing!”

In other words, “We’re the experts here. We’re the ones slogging it out all night at sea, working for all we’re worth to net a few fish. We’re the ones slaving away while you’re sleeping. And now you want *us* to listen to *you* about catching fish?!”

These guys weren’t the most obvious choices for head-of-the-class followers of the one and only Messiah. But Jesus saw past their initial responses to what these guys could be like *if* they followed Him.

- He looked past their self-sufficiency ... and saw the potential for servanthood.
- He looked past their rebelliousness ... and saw the potential for righteousness.
- He looked past the quick tempers ... and

saw the potential for kingdom-building

Jesus could see the “before and after” stories, the “I am and I am becoming” stories just waiting to happen.

In the same way, we’ve also have to avoid making judgments about what’s possible in people’s lives when it comes to faith. We’ve got to understand that no one is too far gone. We’ve got to believe that God’s grace can reach out and change even the most negative, resistant and hardened soul.

Want proof? Just look – really look – in the mirror sometime. Look deep at the darkness that lurks in your own heart. *You* could easily be on the road *they* are on.

And *they* could – with God’s intervention and maybe a little investment from you – be on the road that *you* are on. What would their life would be like if Jesus was at the center?

Try to visualize that and let that inspire you.

## Getting Practical

So, again, there's little fish and there's big fish in this world and you can choose which kind you'll pursue. You can live a life that's just about your life; a life where the priority is perks, paydays, positions and pleasure and the focus when it comes to people is primarily on their problems.

Or you can live a life according to a Grander Vision where your life is about more than your life; where there is a mission that transcends whatever you're doing in your life: *Plan "A" - to be an ambassador for Christ* where the priority is people - outsiders to the faith - and the focus is on their potential as "insiders."

The question is, if you belong to Jesus, how do you actually go about shifting your energy from

pursuing little fish to big fish? From the six-inchers to the six-footers? From perch to people?

In his book, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, Mark Mittleberg lays out a practical strategy in terms of a equation. He calls it the “Maximum Impact” formula and it looks like this:

$$\mathbf{MI = HP + CP + CC}$$

And don’t get nervous because it looks like math. It’s not. It’s really simple.

If you want to maximize your impact (MI) as an ambassador and representative of Jesus, three elements need to be present in your life.

- HP stands for “High Potency”
- CP stands for “Close Proximity”
- CC stands for “Clear Communication”

Let's take each one and break it down.

*High Potency (or HP)* means that the life and light of Jesus is in you and it is shining brightly. It means that your relationship with Him is strong and influencing your heart and your head.

When your potency is high, people see three things about you.

- They see the real you – warts and all – but they can also see how following Jesus is making your life better and making you better at life.
- They see your compassion for people who are less than perfect – like them.
- They see you humble yourself and put the needs of others about your own.

Now, as we say all the time around here, you can't give away what you don't have. If your relationship with Christ is weak and frail, your light isn't bright and your potency is low. You just don't have that much to give so your impact will be limited.

Therefore, the first question to ask as you consider how your life could be about more than just your life; how you could participate in God's Plan A ... is *how is your relationship with Jesus?*

- Do you spend time with Him?
- Do you have relationships with others who follow Him and encourage you to do the same?
- Do you regularly join with other believers in corporate worship and learning (i.e., "church")?

How is your relationship with Jesus? It's key to being Highly Potent.

Let's move on.

Close Proximity (or CP) means that you are relationally (if not physically) near to people who are outside of the faith.

This one can be challenging for those of us who have been Christians for many years because we typically lose meaningful contact with outsiders. Instead, we tend to connect only with like-minded people – other believers – because it's a lot more comfortable to stay in the “holy huddle” (so to speak).

Therefore, for most Christians, maximum impact requires proactively and intentionally getting out of the huddle and putting ourselves in places where “outsiders” are AND developing genuine friendships with people who are not like us (sort of like Jesus did when He left the throne-room of God to live as one of us).



*Close proximity* often requires us take risks like ...

- Walking across the room.
- Meeting someone new on our street.
- Offering kindness to a stranger.

So, at this point, the question to ask is: “even if I have enough spiritual potency, do I also have enough proximity to have an impact?”

Finally, *Clear Communication (or CC)* means that you are able to explain who Jesus is and what He has done for the world and for you. In other words, you’re able to tell God’s story and your story and you’re able to give reasons for why you believe.

Now, this one is even more challenging than close proximity because we live in a culture that’s growing more and more hostile to Christianity. So we’re actually going to do a deep dive on “clear communication” over the next two weeks.

Next Sunday's message is "Speaking Up in a PC World" and the week after that, the message is "God's Story, My Story." And I have to tell you that I'm fired up about both of those weeks and I hope you'll be here or watching online.

**So there you go.**

$MI = HP + CP + CC$

*Maximum Impact* happens when ...

- A highly potent follower of Jesus
- Is in close proximity to those who are outside of the faith
- And can clearly communicate God's story, their story and why they believe.

**Closing**

That said ... all of this rests on what we talked about last week: that it starts in the heart, meaning that, if we're insiders to the faith, our heart for those outside has to become like God's heart. Outsiders must matter to us like they matter to Him.

But something else has to be in the heart of a person who represents Christ well in this world, and that's *gratefulness* for what He has done for them. They – or should I say, we – we never forget that we, too, are sinners and that without Jesus and what He did for us, we would be lost.

So, I want us to close with that thought of gratefulness this morning. And we're going to do that by singing together a song we learned last week called "Awake My Soul."

Would you please stand? Let's sing and then I'll come back and speak a blessing over us.

# Congregational Song – Awake My Soul

## CLOSING COMMENTS

1. Offering @door
2. Next week – time change AND also time change for Student Ministry: from 11 to 9:30 so that kids can be in here at 11
3. Blessing

May the Lord bless you and keep you  
May the Lord's face shine upon you  
And may your life be about more than just  
your life

As you join Him in the Grander Vision  
where the priority is people not perch.

Amen.

Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup>The next two sections are based on Bill Hybels *Grander Vision Living* message from the *Just Walk Across the Room* series.