

**Reset**  
***Mystery Sunday***  
**August 23, 2015**

**– Rick/Nathan (set up speakers, connect wires)**

**Greeting / Song sheet distribution – Nathan / Kitti & Rick**

**Congregational Worship – We Are / This I Believe**

<Put Flipchart into place>

Good morning, everyone.

Almost forgot! I have to turn on the camcorder! If we're going to be able to post video and audio of this message on our website and app, we need that. Hang on. <Camera on tripod>

Good morning again!

I'm sure by now you're wondering "what in the

world is going on here today?” If you’re a regular here at NHCC, I’m sure you’ve noticed that something is different. Today is *not* a normal Sunday for us.

If this *was* a normal Sunday ...

- You would have noticed as you drove up this morning that the church lawn had been freshly cut and trimmed.
- You would have been greeted in the parking lot and at each entrance.
- (10:30 only) If you are a middle school or high school student, you would have been able to participate in student ministry.

If this was a normal Sunday ...

- You would have been able to pick up a cup of hot coffee or tea (9:00 only and a breakfast snack) at the Coffee Corner.
- You would have been handed a program

as you entered the auditorium (10:30 only and the ushers would have straightened up the room).

- You would have heard music filling the commons area and the auditorium before the service began.
- You could've stopped at The Well and purchased a book or a CD.

On a normal Sunday ...

- There would have been a full band up front instead of Nathan alone.
- The lyrics would have been on the screen instead of in a printed handout.
- Those of you in the back half of the auditorium would be able to see a lot better because cameras would be providing close-ups of the stage.
- Plus we would be projecting the service into the Café and the Family Room (my apologies to those of you who normally

sit in one of those locations).

Finally, on a normal Sunday, those of you who are first-time guests would have been able to stop by the Welcome Center to get more information about NHCC and even get a tour of the place if you wanted. I apologize to you as well.

In fact, if you *are* a guest today, please come back *next Sunday* when things will be normal again. I promise it will be awesome. But this Sunday is *not* so awesome because this Sunday is ... *no-show Sunday*: an opportunity to experience what it would be like *if no volunteers showed up*.

That's not totally accurate. We *do* have volunteers back in our Adventureland children's ministry so, parents, please don't freak out if you left your kids back there. They're not running around unsupervised! But in every other area of ministry, we have no

volunteers. *That's why it is the way it is this morning ...* which, in a word, is *lame*. North Heartland is clearly lame (in every sense of the word) without volunteers.

So, if you're one of those volunteers who greets, ushers, welcomes, makes coffee, runs lights, sound, camera, sings or plays in the band, etc, etc ... let me take this opportunity to say *thank you*. We cannot be what we're supposed to be as a church without you. In fact, would you all mind just recognizing the folks who typically volunteer for us every week? <applause>

Now, some of you are thinking "you know, Rick, you *could* have just *said* that to all the volunteers instead of making us all suffer without coffee or a program or a band or video screens or whatever else is missing today."

And you're right, I could have. But there's a reason why I wanted to illustrate the point this

way ... and I'll explain that reason in just a bit but, first, let me give a little bit of context.

## **Context: D-C-I Model**

And the context is what we've been talking about over the past several weeks: what we, as a church, hope to see happen in the life of anyone who regularly and systematically engages with our ministry over the long haul. And that comes down to one thing: *life transformation*.

Our goal is to take "whoever will" *just as they are* and help them to become more like Jesus and less like themselves. Above all else, if you're part of this church, that's what we want to see happen in your life.

Actually, that's not just what *we* want. As I explained earlier in this series, we believe that's *God's* ultimate goal for our lives: that in

the way we think, feel, and live, we reflect more and more of the nature and character of Jesus. That's why we do what we do as a church.

And what we *do* as a church is to provide environments where people can engage in three high-impact habits that facilitate transformation.

The first of those habits I talked about two weeks ago. It's to ...

**Discover (and keep on discovering) the grace and truth of Jesus by regularly engaging in environments where you are reminded of it ... which, at North Heartland, is primarily our Sunday morning service.**

We want people to discover (and keep on discovering) the truth about themselves and about Jesus and what He has done for them on the cross and in His resurrection.

For a lot of people who come to NHCC, that

begins with a decision to believe in Him and say “yes” to Him as their savior. But it doesn’t stop there. Once we’re Christians, we need to continue discovering and experiencing *more* truth and *more* grace in everyday life.

Last week, I talked about the second habit, which is to ...

**Connect (and keep on connecting) in Christian friendships by regularly engaging in relational environments where you receive (and give) the gifts of Christian fellowship ... which, at North Heartland, is primarily our small group system.**

As I said last Sunday, if you and I are ever going to be the people God has intended for us to be, we need friends who are on the same journey of transformation in Christ as we are; friends who are also discovering (and continuing to discover) the truth and grace of Jesus in their own lives.



And I was so happy last Sunday to see so many folks who are not currently in a small group step out and take a risk and join up for the next season which begins next week. I think you'll be glad you did.

By the way, if you missed either of those services, I encourage you to *discover* what we talked about by listening to, watching or reading the message on our church app or in the media section of our website.

So, what we're trying to help people do around here is to ...

- Discover (and keep on discovering) the grace and truth of Jesus
- Connect (and keep on connecting) in Christian friendships

And the third thing we're trying to do around here is to help people ...

## **Invest (and keep on investing) through giving and serving ...**

... which means taking our resources of time, talent and treasure and offering them up to God so that He can, in some way, use us in His great mission of redeeming the world through the Gospel of Jesus.

And that's what I want to talk to you about in this message. Specifically ...

- Why do we use the word “invest” to describe this habit?
- Why is it transformational, i.e. how does it help us become more like Christ?
- And what does this experience of “no-show Sunday” have to do with it?

Let's take those one at a time.

## **“Investing” Defined**

Why do we use the word “invest?” Why not just say “give and serve so that God’s Kingdom can grow?”

Here’s why – and I’ll use an example from the world of finance to explain it. Every week, I contribute \$100 to my Roth IRA. I release that money from my bank account and it’s gone. I can’t use it to buy groceries or anything else.

But I do that not because I want to *lose* \$100; I do it because *I hope, at some point in the future, to get it all back – and then some.* And we call that process – that activity – *investing*.

Well, guess what? Again and again, Jesus said that whenever we let go of some of our money and our time for the sake of God’s mission in this world (i.e. when we give or we serve God in some way), we can know (not hope) that, at some point in the future, *it will all come back to us – and then some.*

*“Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”*

*Matthew 19:29 (NIV)*

*“If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded.”*     *Matthew 10:42 (NLT)*

*“Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great ...”*     *Luke 6:35 (NIV)*

*“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of*

*the righteous.” Luke 14:13-14  
(NIV)*

*“Give, and it will be given to  
you. A good measure, pressed  
down, shaken together and  
running over, will be poured  
into your lap.” Luke  
6:38 (NIV)*

This means that ...

- Whenever you put money in the offering here at NHCC or do it online or through our app ...
- Or you send money to Compassion International or give money directly to people in need ...
- Whenever you volunteer in some capacity around here ...
- Or donate your time to some other charitable organization that blesses people with the Gospel ...

... you are making a failsafe investment that is guaranteed by God Himself to come back to you *and then some* in ways that are *tangible* (especially when it comes to giving – and you just can't miss that from what Jesus said) and in ways that are *intangible*.

For example, when you give and you serve others for the sake of God ...

- You tend to feel good about yourself.
- You feel like there is a greater purpose to your life.
- You get joy from seeing others experience the goodness of God that you yourself have experienced.

Those are all intangibles. But the greatest intangible return on investment is *transformation*.

## **Why “Investing” Transforms**

If you're a Christian – if you believe that Jesus is who He says He is and you have received Him as your savior, personally – when you give to or serve God's purposes in some way, it changes you. You become a little more like Jesus and a little less like your natural self.

Why is that? It's because of an amazing insight about the way humans are wired up. Jesus once described it like this.

*“Where your treasure is, there  
your heart will be also.”  
Matthew 6:21 (NIV)*

Wherever you put your money and your talent and your time – wherever you invest – that's where your greatest concern will be. That's what you'll be drawn to. That's what you'll worry about. That's what you'll focus on. That's what you'll grow to love and care about.

## **Heart always follows treasure.**

For example, just this past week, the stock market took a pretty good beating. It's been pretty flat since at least May but it went down like five or six percent between Thursday and Friday.

Now, if you have little or no money invested in the market, you really don't care. You may not even know what's going on. But if you *do* have money there – if some of your treasure is there – then you are very concerned.

- You're paying attention to what's going on China.
- You're tracking economic data like GDP and unemployment.
- You're listening for what the Fed might do with interest rates.
- You're reading up on how to prosper in a down market.



Your heart is following your treasure. That's just how humans are wired. Whatever you invest in time-wise, talent-wise, money-wise, that's where your heart will be drawn. That's what you will grow to value and love and cherish.

And this is true whether you're investing in the financial world or in your children or in your career ... *or* ... in the Kingdom of God, in the mission of God, in the purposes of God.

... which means that when you give to and serve God with no ulterior motives (like "if I do this or give that then God *has* to do this or give me that") ... when you give and serve with no strings attached, your heart becomes more like the heart of Jesus because, as He himself put it on several occasions ...

*The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for*

*many.*  
*(NIV)*

*Matthew 10:28*

He said, “Father, here I am. Use me however you will to fulfill your purposes in this world.”

So, when we thought about how North Heartland could help people become more like Jesus, it was a slam dunk to include the idea of “investing through giving and serving” because it draws us into God’s mission of redeeming this fallen world. And it helps us to love what – and who – God loves.

So, how do we actually do that around here? On the giving side, obviously, we collect an offering every week as part of the service or you can do it online through our app or our website. That’s how Jetta and I give.

On the serving side ... well, guess what? *We provide opportunities for people to volunteer ... every Sunday.*

- Serving the grown-ups in all the ways that we're unfortunately *not* serving the grown-ups this morning.
- And serving the children in all the ways that, thankfully, are happening right now on the other side of the building.

But our volunteer opportunities are not limited only to what we do on Sunday. We have many ways for folks to serve throughout the week. For example:

- Leading and facilitating small groups and classes
- Working with Middle and High School students
- Keeping our property in shape
- Assisting with the administrative, leadership and pastoral tasks that happen behind the scenes.
- Helping to plan and carry out the various

events from “Guys Night at The K” to funerals to the upcoming Christmas Celebration (about which you’ll be hearing lots more as we get into fall).

In fact, last year someone calculated that our volunteers collectively invest over *740 hours each week* in making this place “go.” That’s incredible!

## **What “No-Show Sunday” Illustrates**

Now, having said all of that, I need to also say that we’re not just dreaming up tasks for people to do because “serving is transformational.” We’re not creating “busy work” for busy people to do. Every single thing volunteers do around here *matters* – and matters *greatly* ...

... which brings us, finally, to the reason why we chose to do a “no-show Sunday”: we wanted

to illustrate as vividly as possible the significance of what our volunteers collectively accomplish.

And to explain that significance, let me start out by asking ... how do you feel about your experience this morning? How do you feel about what's gone on or not gone on? About the things that are missing – like coffee?

- Some of us would probably say “It feels kind of weird. It feels a little empty.”
- Some of us might say “It’s not too bad. After all, a lot of Christians in other parts of the world have it a lot worse than we have today. *I think we’ll survive if we don’t have coffee for an hour.*”
- I think some of us would say, “Well, for a change of pace, this is actually kind of fun. Simple is good from time to time.” I would

agree with that.

- And a few of us might be bold enough to say “Honestly, I really don’t like this at all. And you guys better not pull a stunt like this again or I’m not coming back.”

Now, some of us would say that because we don’t like being inconvenienced or messed with. “I’m counting on coffee when I get here. Don’t mess with it!”

But some of us would say we don’t like this experience because ... we have a friend who has a lot of questions about God. And we’ve been praying for that friend. And we’ve been telling that friend, “You’ve just *got* to come to NHCC. You’ve *got* to come because my church really cares about people like you. My church takes people just as they are with no strings attached. And every Sunday morning they do this amazing thing: they create a relevant, excellent, welcoming environment where

people can discover who Jesus is – the grace and truth that is found in Him – and how that makes a difference in everyday life.”

And right now, if that’s you – if you’re that person who has been inviting a friend or maybe even got that friend to come with you today, you’re thinking, “Oh. My. Goodness. Everything we’ve done this morning is *the exact opposite of what I’ve been telling my friend.*”

You’re thinking, “It would be so disappointing if *next* weekend ...

- People weren’t greeted and welcomed.
- We didn’t make them feel at home by at least serving them coffee
- They couldn’t see and hear very well.
- We didn’t give our best visually and musically and technically.

Actually, it would be worse than disappointing. It would be *unacceptable*.”

And quite frankly, that’s why we’ve attempted to illustrate the value of volunteers in this way. Not only would North Heartland be lame without volunteers ...

**We would be lame at serving our *guests* – and *that is unacceptable*.**

And not because we say so but because our leader, Jesus, says so.

In fact, one of Jesus’ most unique characteristics (and this is a quality He wants to produce in us) is that He was always giving people who were considered to be “spiritual outsiders” the opportunity to feel like and become insiders. He was always inviting guests, planning for guests, welcoming guests ... so much so that he was accused of being “a drunkard and a glutton” and “the friend of



sinners.”

There are so many stories that are included in the Gospels that illustrate this point but, in the time we have left, I want to look at just one. It's recorded in the second chapter of John's Gospel.

John writes:

*A wedding took place at Cana in Galilee (which is not far from Jesus' hometown). Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.*

*When the wine had run out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."*

... which was a major faux pas in that culture because, in those days, wedding celebrations would last a whole week. Every day there

would be some kind of festivity and, as part of the deal, you had to serve wine.

And to run out of it before the end ... that was a major embarrassment to the groom (who, in that culture, was responsible for the wedding). It was dishonorable, first of all, to himself. But, more importantly, he dishonored his guests by not being adequately prepared for them.

So, Jesus is at this wedding, the wine runs out and his mother comes to him in a way that sort of suggests that he “do something” about it. “You know, son, the wine is all gone, so *maybe this wedding* would be a good time to reveal your identity.”

And Jesus kind of teases her ...

*“Dear woman, why do you involve me? My time has not yet come.”*

*John 2:1-4 (NIV)*

I think Mary knew he was teasing because John writes that, immediately ...

*She said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”*

And what Jesus is going to tell them to do ... is going to be pretty challenging. John writes:

*Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing (i.e., baptisms, religious ordinances). Each of them held from twenty to thirty gallons.*

*Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.*

*John 2:5-7 (NIV)*

Let's do some math: a gallon of water weighs 8.35 lbs and each jar holds 20-30 gallons ... which means that each jar can hold 170 to 250

pounds of water ... which means all these jars together could hold anywhere from 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of water in total.

What Jesus is saying is “Go get 1500 pounds of water and fill the jars.”

How are they going to do that? Either drag the jars – heavy enough in themselves – to a well and fill them and then haul them back with the additional weight. Or go get some containers and run back and forth from the well hauling small quantities, which would obviously take a long, long time to fill up these jars.

However they did it, the Bible tells us that they did it. They filled the jars to the brim with fresh water ... and of course, we all know what’s going to happen next, right? There won’t be water in the jars – there will be wine.

*Then he (Jesus) told them,  
“Now draw some out and take*

*it to the master of the banquet.”*

*They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. John 2:8-9 (NIV)*

*Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “[I’ve done a bunch of these wedding gigs and I’ve got to tell you] everyone [else I’ve worked for] brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink [and they don’t really care what they’re drinking anymore]; but not you, you have saved the best till now.”*

Of course, that wasn’t true at all, was it? The truth was that this particular groom had not

planned very well for his wedding guests but, because of Jesus' gracious action, everyone was served above and beyond their expectations!

Then John adds this curious little statement.

*This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. John 2:9-11 (NIV)*

It was to his glory, John tells us, to miraculously provide not a healing or an exorcism or a resurrection (like He later did for Lazarus) but something that seems, on the surface, much less significant: a good time!

**1. The very first miracle Jesus performs to reveal his identity was serving guests at a party!**

It was important to him that people felt welcomed and honored – a trend, which I said

earlier, continued throughout his ministry.

And this is a model for us as a church. Today, we “ran out of wine” (so to speak) – on purpose. But let today be *the only day* that it happens. Let us follow the example of Jesus and always be the church that has enough wine, the church that is always prepared to serve our guests – our family, friends and those in the community who are seeking to know God.

Something else I want you to notice in this story:

**2. Jesus used the “ordinary” to accomplish the extraordinary.**

A bunch of empty stone pots, some plain-old water and a handful of servants who just did what servants typically do. There was nothing out of the ordinary in any of those things.

But that’s how God’s miracles almost always

*work: God uses ordinary people who do ordinary things with ordinary things to accomplish extraordinary things.*

And that's what happens here at NHCC, pretty much every week. Extraordinary things happen – God does miracles in people's lives – because ordinary people do ordinary things with ordinary things.

About 80% of all volunteer work in a church almost anyone can do. It's ordinary stuff. In fact most people are way overqualified for most of what needs to be done: greeting people, running a camera, serving snacks to the toddlers, setting up the stage, cooking a meal, sitting in a circle leading a discussion with middle-school kids – that kind of stuff doesn't require a college degree. It just requires an investment of time.

Another thing to notice in this little story ... and this is pretty surprising because of the way



most people think about the miraculous:

**3. Even though *Jesus* did the miracle, the *servants* still had to work ... and work hard.**

It wasn't easy to carry those stone pots and all of that water. It took a lot of effort on their part.

And it works that way in a church, too. The work of God – the transformation of water into wine, the transformation of people – from whatever they are to whatever God wants them to be – requires the servants of God – all of us – to *work* and sometimes work hard. That's a surprise to a lot of people.

A lot of people come in here from week-to-week and they think everything “just happens.” They see everything running smoothly, “We've got lights, we've got sound, we've got children's stuff, we've got coffee, we've got greeters, the yard is cut.” And they think, “They've got it all

covered. They don't need my help. Plus you know, it's really all about what God does, not what people do."

Tell that to the servants who had to haul all that water so Jesus could turn it into wine!

It doesn't work that way, friends. That's why I think every person who is a part of a church (and I'm talking about any church), ought to be able to say, in some way, "*this* is what I do to contribute, to serve, beyond just showing up and giving" (as important as those things are).

Now, I know that not everyone can do that because of life-stage or job situation. I get it.

But I also think, if we're Christians, that it ought to be the norm (not the exception) that our name is on the line somewhere in a church or a charitable organization that serves God's purposes. We ought to be saying, "You can count on me to do this or to do that." It should

not be unusual that we serve in some way.

Even though Jesus does the miracle, the servants have to work ... and sometimes work hard.

Ok, one more observation ... notice that, in the story ...

**4. Everybody enjoyed the “finished product (the wine)” but only *the servants* got to see the miracle.**

Remember what John wrote?

*The master of the banquet ... did not realize where [the great wine] had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.      John 2:8-9  
(NIV)*

The servants, the ones who had put in all the behind the scenes effort – *they* knew what Jesus had done. They were part of the miracle.

And that's the way it works around here, too. When people serve, they get to be part of the miracle of God transforming lives.

Fortunately, there are a lot of us who experience that. Every week a lot of us get to see Jesus turn water into wine (so to speak). But, I wish that more of us – *all of us*, in fact – could have that opportunity.

## **Response Time**

So as we close, I want to invite you if this is your church to get involved in serving if you're not already.

See, the truth is ... even though things are running fairly smoothly, we are low on wine around here in some places. We started this church over 20 years ago and some of the folks who have been carrying the jars for a long time,

they're retiring and moving on. And we have some jars that need to be filled, quite frankly, by younger people; by people who are new to this church; by people who will be the future of this church when the rest of us geezers ride off into the sunset.

In just a minute, we're going to end our service a bit early so that everyone can go out into the commons and check out the opportunities. Every ministry area has needs and you might be the answer. Just take a few minutes and check out some of the things that need to be done and if Jesus tells you to do something about it, then you do it. If He doesn't then don't worry about it.

A couple notes before we dismiss.

1. Please don't spoil the "mystery" for the next service. Mum's the word on what we did (or didn't do) this morning!
2. Leave kids in AL until finished

3. Speaking of AL ... We apologize for any delay on check-in. Database really was down (not part of the no-show).
4. Next week back to normal ...
5. Offering @door

Let's pray.

Endnotes