

Announcement – End of year finances and vision

- 1) 1.1 M to finish in the black
- 2) Athletic Fields - Upward Soccer, Infrastructure, Rivercrest

Week four – The past few weeks we have discussed emerging technologies. And while we have spoken of redemptive aspects, we have focused on trouble spots – how technology makes us lonelier, more divided, more angry, more anxious, more addicted. Today, we are going to zoom in on technology from a theological perspective and focus on technology and Christmas.

A brief History of Technology

- Adam and Eve – three commands in the garden
- God gave them his blessing and said: Have a lot of children! Fill the earth with people and bring it under your control. Rule over the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky, and every animal on the earth. Genesis 1:28 CEV
 - Make Babies
 - Tend the Garden – bring everything under your control. Use it, shape it, make it better and more fruitful.
 - Rule over every animal
- And then God created technology to help us do these things. He gave us minds to think up better ways and opposable thumbs to hold tools that improve life. These are the factors that enable us
- In the ancient world, they found ways to improve things around these key commands
 - Midwives found techniques, postures, and methods to make delivery easier and more safe.
 - Ancient people learned how to plant seeds, irrigate, harvest, use a hoe or shovel or horse drawn plow. They discovered natural resources like bronze and iron and gold and learned to master and fashion them into tools
 - In time, herding was introduced, fences, pathways for grazing, shearing and breeding made people ever more fruitful as they mastered the environment around them.
 - All of this is technology improving life. And heading somewhere.
- Pointing ultimately to a city that is filled with streets of gold, jewels and such complexity that it would blow our mind. Our trajectory is from garden to city and to get there we would need innovation and technology.
 - Technology has improved – Ultrasounds and IVF and Epidurals make the baby process better. Anybody glad for the epidural?

- In the arena of the garden, we have vastly improved food production with GPS driven tractors. Precision fertilization. Point source irrigation, desalination...
- And of course, in Nebraska, the home of steak, we can't ignore the amazing ways that we rule over the animals. production of cattle, chicken, and hogs have become a blessing that will be enjoyed in every home this Christmas – conveniently packaged for consumption at a supermarket near you. Moo!
- Live in a world filled with the blessing of technology and the temptation of sin and needs of billions. And I for one, do not want to go back to the days of less developed tech. I like my car, my central air, my gps and my blue jeans with the stretchy stuff that makes them comfy.
- So, here we are, East of Eden and West of the Great city, journeying with God, holding smartphones.

And we misused our technology... in the place of obstetricians, we gave ultrasounds to abortionists. We placed so many chemicals in the ground that it poisoned our waters. We abused animals on the course to provide food for billions, and utterly destroyed once flourishing populations like the buffalo.

- And, of course, technology at its worst is in instruments of destruction. A nuclear missile, An RPG, or a roman cross... technology designed to showcase the death of a criminal.
- But here is the kicker. God is a redeemer. Even the worst technology... even the cross can be redeemed. In fact, God can USE all things in his sovereignty to bring about his purposes.
- This my friends is the gift of Christmas. It is the gift of an interception. God caught technology. He caught depravity. He caught instruments of death and destruction. You remember a few weeks ago, I told you that God's plan is not to get you out of earth and into heaven... it is to redeem heaven and earth. And this redemptive plan was kicked off at Christmas.

For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulders... and his name shall be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

- A world that is filled with depression needs a wonderful counselor.
- A world that is filled with helplessness needs an almighty God
- A world that is filled with abandonment needs an everlasting Father
- A world that is filled with Anxiety needs a Prince of Peace.

The Ultimate Gift – in an unlikely package

- He crossed the milky way and crashed into planet earth. Not by accident, but because he was aiming here. Aiming for humanity. He knew that the people he would encounter were violent, were broken, were abused, were argumentative, were politically difficult, and notoriously stubborn. But he came because he wanted us.
- You would think this kind of a gift would come wrapped in glorious reflective paper with tinsel and a giant bow, but it came wrapped in rags and lying in a lamb's feeding trough
- He was the infinite who became infant. The victor who became vulnerable. The king who became a kid. Lying in the arms of a first time teenage mom and carried by the calloused hands of his hard working Dad. He plunged into hostility
- Romans 6:23 – ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in^{al} Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notice the problem – sin and death. And the solution is the gift of God. By his power, he gives us eternal life. It is a life that starts now. A life that is filled with goodness and gifts. It is a life of power over darkness and love from the universal source of love.

The gift of God began in Bethlehem, but it ended in Calvary. Jesus became a victim of the technology of the cross. A tool designed to embarrass criminals with a slow death. Crosses were put at prominent intersections in order to display what happens to those who dare defy Rome. The execution was purposely slow, painful asphyxiation with cramping muscles and deep tearing. It was brutal.

But the payment had to be brutal because sin and death are brutal. My sin. My death. Paid for at calvary. Today, we wanted to take the balance of time to **focus on three gifts.**

Communion Music

The first is to give you a small gift. The gift of silent reflection. And I'd love to have you pray for a moment as we approach communion. Now, that word, communion, is significant. It is our opportunity to commune – or intimately relate – with the living God. We reflect on his gift – purchased with flesh and blood – and symbolized by bread and wine. We inventory our lives and confess what is wrong. And we consider the opportunities to be Christ in our environment. Then we actually ingest the bread and the cup... symbolizing the mystical union with Jesus and the communion we experience with God.

Gift of being undistracted with the Lord for a moment. Gift of life. Gift of communion. Take a moment to reflect backward and look forward as we come to the table of the flesh and blood of Jesus.

(after some time). The communion time is for everybody who calls on the name of Jesus for forgiveness and new life. Not members of CCC, but members of God's family. Now, lets participate in Jesus death and resurrection by taking the cup – the new covenant, signed in blood by Jesus our savior. And lets remember his body – brutalized and broken so you could be whole.

Now, the gift of God is your salvation and your hope for eternal life it is the gift of God that brings us wholeness and life. Lets thank God for such an amazing gift! **End Music**

Gifts for you- And in the spirit of the Father giving good gifts, the church would love to give you four great gifts – all in the vein of redeeming technology this Christmas. Here they are!

- **Right Now Media – With Code**

- An incredible library. Pre-curated to be the kind of stuff that fits the Biblical paradigm I gave last week “Whatever is good, whatever is true, whatever is honorable...” There are adult and kid shows. Great fiction and great Bible teachers. Hundreds of hours and we have bought a license for you so if you attend CCC, you get it FREE! What does it mean to attend? The fact that you are online or onsite today counts. Don't share the code on social media or text it to friends, but if you point people to watch this message today, then they can get in too.

- **Financial Peace – With Code**

- Dave Ramsey is perhaps the most famous and respected financial advisor of our day. He designed an app to help with getting out of debt, planning a budget, classes for kids on how money works, investing and growing wealth and more. His material is all FREE

because we bought a license for the entire church. Again, if you attend, you can have this content, worth hundreds of dollars if you bought it all as a gift from CCC to you.

- **Christmas Services**

- We will have Christmas EVE services that will be spectacular around the theme of the star and how God communicates his love. But Christmas Day, next Sunday, we pictured a very different experience. As you are with family and loved ones, gathered around the living room, we have moved the Sunday experience to one you can have decentralized with your family and in your houses. Jed and Allison and I will lead your family through some interactive moments that could prove to be powerful and special – so be sure to connect on a device everyone can see and spend some time as a family with the Christmas message at the center.

- **Bruce Kuhn - LUKE**

- The following Sunday, New Year's Day, we launch a brand new series from the Book of Luke – Jesus through the eyes of the unlikely. But instead of our standard service with singing and a sermon, we are going to focus on getting the big story of the book of Luke. So Bruce Kuhn – a Broadway actor from Les Mis and other plays will do a one man performance of the book of Luke – word for word, from memory. I have seen it a dozen times and can't wait to have him again to kick off our series on LUKE. You may wonder about the tech connection – so, cameras, lights, sending it via internet... it is a very tech heavy endeavor. So bring a friend and show up with anticipation at 9 and 10:45. Or invite your friends to watch online.

So, four gifts and all ways that technology is being redeemed for God's purposes in your life and this church!

Our last of the gifts of this year is an encouragement for you to BE the gift of God this Christmas.

You be the gift

- I have noticed that most people love seeing most people in their families this time of year
- But often times there is that one person. That one person who is just a challenge. They have a long pattern of dysfunctional behavior. They are not engaged. They have oppositional views. Their anger boils just below the surface. Or, they are just plain weird.
- Show of hands – how many have one person at least like that in the extended family. Yeah...
- If your hand is down, you are that person!
- Seriously, we had a prayer time the other day and I was in a group with six church staff praying for our upcoming Christmas. Everybody had a hard person... six out of six.
- So, here is the truth. You can't control how weird Uncle Calvin will act. But you can control how you will react. I want to challenge you this Christmas celebration to BE JESUS in this moment. Advent reminds us of four characteristics of Jesus that we celebrate this time of year. Peace, Hope, Joy, and the final week is LOVE. What would it take for you to BE love, to BE joy, to BE hope, to BE peace. Especially with Uncle Calvin. Consider in advance how you might diffuse, change the subject, love well, create peace, instill joy.
- You know there is one extended family member in my family who came to our house a few years back and he was a pill. We will call him Uncle Calvin. Argumentative, provoking, for 3 HOURS and he knew it. We tried to change the subject, to agree to disagree, to distract and

diffuse, but he just kept coming back to being unreasonable and argumentative... which made for a BRUTAL afternoon. Then, we had to go and see Uncle Calvin for Christmas... Not sure what was going on behind the scenes, but God prompted me to start our next visit real positive. So, soon after showing up, I didn't confront him on his toddler like behavior, but just said "thanks so much for being good to my aunt Patricia. You have loved her well, provided for her, travel with her and help her to thrive. Thank you." I know you matter so much to her and I am grateful that God brought you to play that role in her life. – Total demeanor change. He moved from combative to congenial.

- So, what about you. When you see family – even the hard ones – this Christmas time, what can you do to be loving, kind, to bring peace and joy. What can you do to pull them aside and find something to affirm? Maybe you are the conversation starter, the question asker, the game bringer, the one who reaches out to the one on the margin...

But, its sOOOO hard, Mark...

- Well, we have a model. There is one who crossed every barrier in order to enter into hostility.
- He wanted to speak a word with us... a word of love. A word that says "I know those things you did... and I still want you in my family." You matter to me.
- Friends, you can do it at the family gathering because Jesus already did it for you. The forgiven turn into forgivers in God's economy. The wounded become healers.

Can I get practical? Here are ways to BE love, peace, hope and Joy in the digital landscape this year. Use the power of technology to BE the embodiment of the gospel.

Tech ways to be love –

- **Share Pictures** – "I wonder if grandma would like to see that picture..." YES!
- **Share apps** that make life wholesome, drive discipline or help you grow in your faith – Blue Letter Bible, Read Scripture, Bible Head, Bible for Kids
- **Zoom with family** – They'll love to see your shining faces.
- **Call somebody** who would be totally surprised to get your call, but LOVE IT!

Tech ways to be peace

- **Put the technology away** when someone is talking to you... especially at the dinner table
- **Call somebody** who needs reconciliation. Make peace with an old conflict.

Tech ways to be Hope

- **Email somebody** who has nowhere to go this Christmas to join you for Christmas Dinner
- **Text Encouragement** – to ten people who might be lonely or sad this Christmas time

Tech ways to be Joy

- **Show hilarious videos** – our family tradition –
- **Play** relationally, but tech based games like Jackbox in the living room, or the online version of Code Names with people far away

Friends, more than giving gifts, I want to encourage you to BE the gift of God. The gift of God for your family and friends and network. You can be inspiration and joy and life for all who are around you – including Uncle Calvin.

Close

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 1 John 4:10-12

Lets pray for the strength to do and be that in all of our Christmas encounters this year.