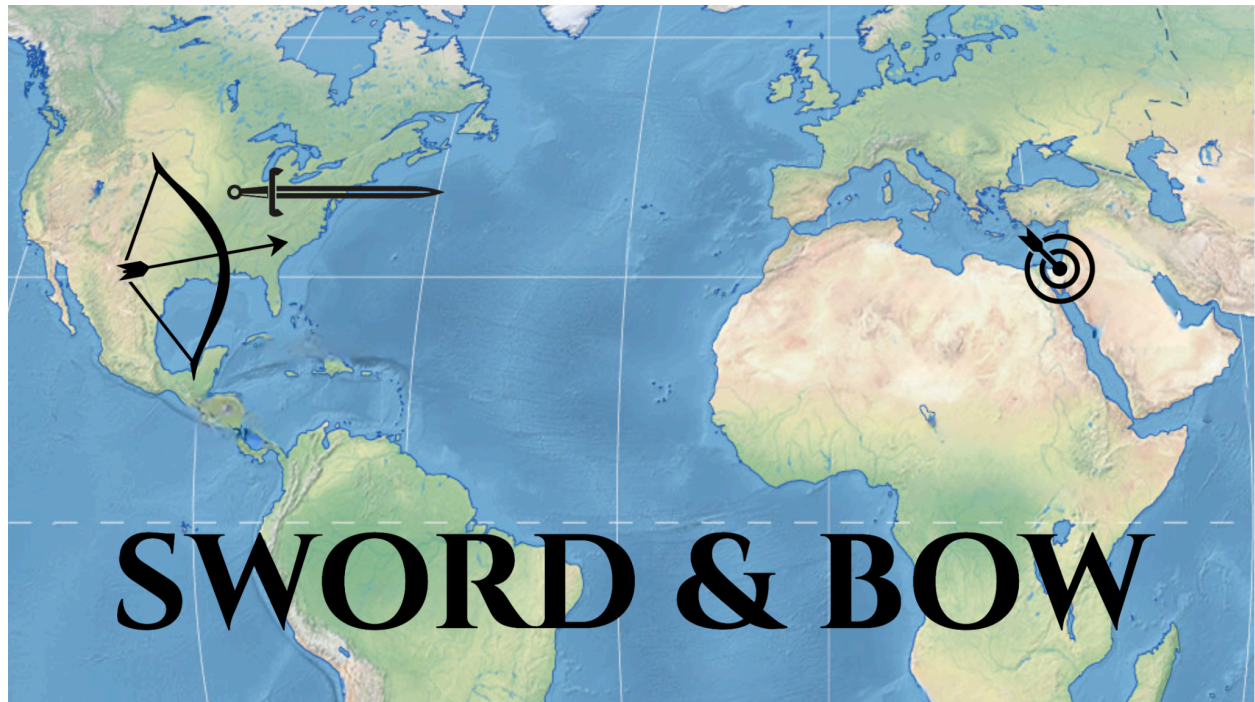


Introduction

Good Morning Arising Church,



We have had an incredible two weeks since preaching the message: Sword and Bow. We have seen all of you take this message to heart in your daily walk for Christ. We have heard incredible testimonies. God has ordained our mission and its evidenced by the many interactions you all are having out in the community!

- Ian at Conscious
- Rob and Aaron ran into a Hindu and a Sikh
- Rob and friend with Muslim roommates

It may be cold, but we are going to find a way to love the unlovable and reach the lost.

Additionally, I want to make something very clear. We have been making some comments recently concerning Islam...You may be wondering why.

Does anyone remember a French educator named Samuel Paty? He showed a satirical video depicting Mohammed in his classroom in France in 2020. In response, a man named Abdoullah Anzorov, attacked him outside the school, beheaded him in public, and posted photos of his decapitated head.

Just this morning in Australia 11 Jews were shot dead celebrating Hanukkah by Muslims.

We do not take our words lightly, they are not jokes, or merely sensational. We are making a bold claim to the demonic powers exactly what we think about them. So, let me say it again: Mohammed was a pedophile. Islam is evil, and **Allah is the devil**. There is no two-state solution and we are proud to be unapologetic Zionists. We will see Muslims saved by the power of Jesus Christ.

If you still do not understand, we ask that you stick around the next weeks as we will continue to attend and all of this will become Crystal clear.

Why don't we all stand to our feet - pray.

We are going to read the word today and hopefully, give you more direction and inspiration for your daily walk. Our message is titled:



Let's begin where all good things do: Torah.

- **Numbers 24:5–6 (NIV)**

⁵ “How beautiful are your tents, Jacob,
your dwelling places, Israel!

⁶ “Like valleys they spread out,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes **planted** by the Lord,
like cedars beside the waters.

This is part of the oracle from Balaam! You should remember Balaam from his brief mention on Wednesday. Despite his character, you cannot argue the beauty of this passage. Its incredible to us that he describes Jacob as a

- valley spread out
- gardens beside a river
- aloes planted by the Lord

- cedars beside the waters.

Not only is Israel beautiful, so is the place that God has called them to dwell. This is especially interesting because they were in the wilderness! But even so, their character and LAW was so incredible, they are described as cedars by the water and a garden by a river.

Families who belong to the Lord are beautiful when they walk in His ways, and the place they are planted is ALSO beautiful. We are very excited about our mission outward, but you all need to hear that the place where you are planted is beautiful.

Why is the place Israel is planted beautiful? Because it is fruitful! It's a garden, a tree, an aloe! If we are to accomplish our mission with the Sword and Bow, it must begin with a daily devotion to be fruitful right where he has planted you, which is a beautiful place! Let's move to the prophets:

- **Isaiah 37:30–32 (NIV)**

30 “This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah:

“This year you will eat what grows by itself,
and the second year what springs from that.
But in the third year sow and reap,
plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

31 Once more a remnant of the kingdom of Judah
will take root below and bear fruit above.

32 For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant,
and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors.
The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

I want to begin by emphasizing that no one should hear the illustration of first year growth, second year spring, then third year reap and think it's a prophetic word for your timing. Not at all. What you should glean is this:

The call to serve in another location can only be realized through faithfulness in your current location. God's timing is perfect and unquestionable. The key is to demonstrate true Kingdom advancement locally as a prerequisite before seeking any other opportunity.

Your focus must be on genuine, visible fruitfulness by establishing strong roots where you are, and the upward growth will follow naturally. You first must grow and produce fruit in and of yourself in your current soil, then eventually the reaping will follow.

The Zeal of the Lord for tomorrows mission is only realized by fruitfulness today.

Mature believers understand that there is no conflict between local and international focus; the conflict lies within the immature who are always waiting for a special season to serve God.

(We do this in more ways than just waiting to start ministry in another location)

When you thrive where you are currently planted - the future call to ministry and that appointment is inevitable.

Let's do a writings to fully round this out.

- **Psalm 92:12–15 (NIV)**

¹² The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;

¹³ planted in the house of the Lord,

they will flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴ They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,

¹⁵ proclaiming, “The Lord is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”

When the Lord plants you, you are meant to flourish! Age is not a determinant, locale is not a determinant. Those whom the Lord plants—should flourish! You do not need new soil, you need new devotion to produce fruit here!

We cannot overstate the importance of this principle. Despite Sword and Bow, Bar-Love and Talmidim, we still get questions about how people can get closer to their future destination. So let's say it again:

You must all demonstrate true Kingdom advancement locally as a prerequisite to any other opportunity. That local advancement should be so sincere and abundant that you are like a cedar rooted and planted by the water.

Let's move to the Newer Testament and see what kind of instructions Jesus gave his disciples at his ascension.

- **Acts 1:6–9 (NIV)**

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.” ⁸ **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

When Jesus gave his final instructions, the dates and times of future events was not a part of the battle plan—do you hear that? Jesus did not want them, despite them asking more than once, knowing or focusing on the exact timing of his return. The same can be said of you. The times and dates of future events is not a part of your daily battle plan, Jesus will not let you know them until the appointed time. What is even better, is that he does say what they can know for certain:

- Receive power
- Be witnesses!

Jesus is giving us the key to current advancement and future fulfillment. Walk in power and be a witness! These 11 knew they were called to be witnesses in several regions: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and ends of the earth. But the times and dates of specifics of that instruction was not given.



On the topic of things uncertain, think about this for a moment: these men had been in a large team for three years, sometimes splitting off in two's. Do you think they maybe hadn't thought of the idea of being spread out across the world in separate places away from their dear brothers?

What we are going to see through the book of Acts, is that not only is the timing uncertain and changing, God also will at times move around teams for his purposes. He will also change the kind of people the Apostles are ministering to.

- **Acts 8:1 (NIV)**

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

- **Acts 8:4–5 (NIV)**

⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there.

Just as the momentum in Jerusalem was growing, the people were scattered and began to preach in many different regions outside Jerusalem. This change was sudden, but the gospel continued to be preached as they advanced across the regions Jesus said it would.

Let's move through the book of Acts and see how the Apostles ministry changed, and also what stayed the same.

- **Acts 9:28–32 (NIV)**

²⁸ So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ He talked

and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. ³⁰

When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

³¹ Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

³² As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda.

Saul had become a new disciple, and one shrouded with a bad reputation, but he was moving powerfully. Do you think that Barnabas expected to be with Saul for only a little bit? Or that the disciples would send off this new and powerful man a very long distance away?

Jerusalem → Tarsus

1. Acts 9:1–30. Jerusalem–Damascus–(Arabia)–Jerusalem–Tarsus (690 miles, excluding his trip into the Arabian desert, the distance of which cannot be calculated, cf. Gal. 1:17–19; see map 108);

Barry J. Beitzel, The New Moody Atlas of the Bible (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009), 253.



Probably not, but they send him on a 690 mile journey to Tarsus. Not only that, Peter, who was the leader of the Apostles and the church, begins to

travel outside of Jerusalem around the country. What would that have been like? This is such a new development for the church. The men who were the bedrock are moving around to new places. This continues in the book of Acts

- **Acts 11:27–30 (NIV)**

²⁷ During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹ The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. ³⁰ This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Barnabas and Saul are sent on a mission to Judea from Antioch together, listen to what happens next:

- **Acts 12:25–13:3 (NIV)**

²⁵ When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. **13** Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

What I love is how their assumption when they got into Jerusalem was not *"now we get to stay here for awhile with our friends"*. They held their

location and their team completely up to the Lord, and the LORD had to speak.

Is that how you hold your future? How tied are you to aspects of your future that God truly has not given full clarity to? Do you think God is big enough to actually change your team? That's a wild thought. This passage directed our steps for the forming of RCM

- Testimony

What is the point? So many things in this life and especially in your future are uncertain. Location, co-workers, can all change for the call to make disciples of all nations. We must be ready for that and instead of forecasting the unknowns of the future, simply demonstrate faithfulness now.

- **Acts 15:36–41 (NIV)**

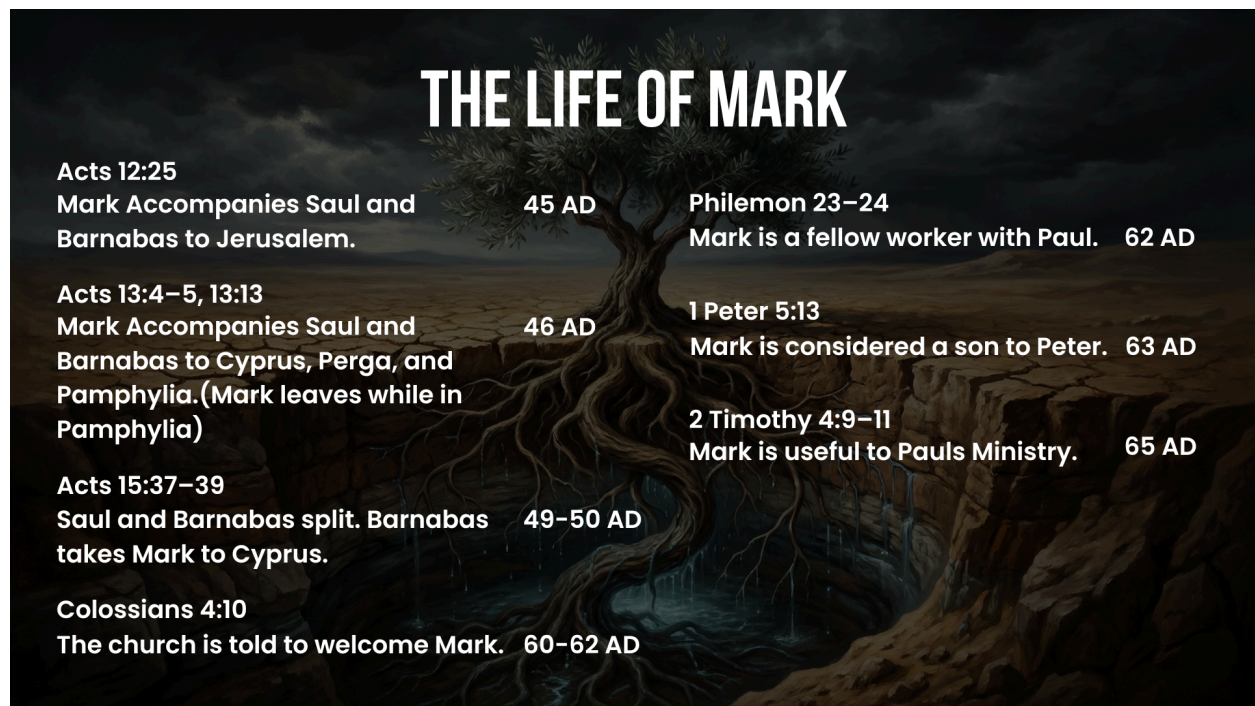
³⁶ Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, ³⁸ but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Much could be debated on the split between Paul and Barnabas. But you can see how the location and men they are ministering with changes. Do

you think they anticipated a disagreement leading to a split? This is a facet of ministry they could certainly not predict.

Yet, it happened and they all were faced with the opportunity to either give up or continue in the work.

While we could discuss the split *ad nauseam*, it's more worth our time discussing the results:



The result of Barnabas faithfulness to John Mark/the high standard of Paul is that a genuine brother is developed who is an essential part of the apostolic work.

Which leads us to another essential member of the Apostolic work on this day: Timothy.

- **Acts 16:1–5 (NIV)**

16 Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose

father was a Greek.² The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.³ Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.⁴ As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

This relationship is clearly quite intimate, like a father and son. Timothy became essential in strengthening churches. Do you think when Paul brought along Timothy it was on the top of his mind that they would travel together for years but then be separated for long durations in different location? Eventually their relationship is separated by long distance. Take a look at these slides:



PAUL AND TIMOTHY: TOGETHER

<p>Acts 18:5 (NIV) 5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.</p>	<p>1 Thessalonians 3:6 (NIV) Timothy's Encouraging Report ⁶ But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love.</p>
<p>Romans 16:21 (NIV) ²¹ Timothy, my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.</p>	<p>2 Thessalonians 1:1 (NIV) Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:</p>
<p>Philippians 1:1 (NIV) Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:</p>	<p>Philemon 1 (NIV) ¹ Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and fellow worker—</p>

PAUL AND TIMOTHY: SEPERATED

Philippians 2:19–24 (NIV)

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

Acts 19:22–23 (NIV)

²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer. ²³ About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way.

Acts 17:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea.

1 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Thessalonians 3:1–3 (NIV)

So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. ² We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.

This separation is clearly difficult. But they nonetheless did it with faith and diligence towards the work.

MINISTRY CHANGES:

MINISTRY CHANGES: PT. 1

Romans 16:3–15 (NIV)

¹⁶ I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a deacon, of the church in **Cenchreae**. ² I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me. ³ Greet **Priscilla and Aquila**, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. ⁴ They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the **Gentiles** are grateful to them. ⁵ Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend **Epenetus**, who was the first convert to Christ in the **province of Asia**. ⁶ Greet **Mary**, who worked very hard for you. ⁷ Greet **Andronicus and Junia**, my fellow **Jews** who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. ⁸ Greet **Ampliatius**, my dear friend in the Lord. ⁹ Greet **Urbanus**, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend **Stachys**. ¹⁰ Greet **Apelles**, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet those who belong to the **household of Aristobulus**. ¹¹ Greet **Herodion**, my fellow **Jew**. Greet those in the **household of Narcissus** who are in the Lord. ¹² Greet **Tryphena and Tryphosa**, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend **Persis**, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. ¹³ Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. ¹⁴ Greet **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas** and the other brothers and sisters with them. ¹⁵ Greet **Philologus, Julia, Nereus** and his sister, and **Olympas** and all the Lord's people who are with them.

- **Romans 16:3–16 (NIV)**

16 I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a deacon' of the church in **Cenchreae**.² I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

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¹⁴ Greet **Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas** and the other brothers and sisters with them.

¹⁵ Greet **Philologus, Julia, Nereus** and his sister, and **Olympas** and all the Lord's people who are with them.

¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

MINISTRY CHANGES: PT. 2

Colossians 4:7–18 (NIV)

⁷ **Tychicus** will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. ⁸ I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹ He is coming with **Onesimus**, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here. ¹⁰ My fellow prisoner **Aristarchus** sends you his greetings, as does **Mark**, the cousin of **Barnabas**. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹ Jesus, who is called **Justus**, also sends greetings. These are the only **Jews** among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹² **Epaphras**, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³ I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at **Laodicea** and **Hierapolis**. ¹⁴ Our dear friend **Luke**, the doctor, and **Demas** send greetings. ¹⁵ Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at **Laodicea**, and to **Nympha** and the church in her house. ¹⁶ After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from **Laodicea**. ¹⁷ Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord." ¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

- **Colossians 4:7–18 (NIV)**

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¹⁷ Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."

¹⁸ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

MINISTRY CHANGES: PT. 3

Acts 20:1–6 (NIV)

20 When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. 2 He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, 3 where he stayed three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. 4 He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. 5 These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. 6 But we sailed from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

- Acts 20:1–6 (NIV)

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Your expectation for your own walk should be to accomplish the specific work He has given you to accomplish in the place He brings you...most people live without any awareness of what God has actually brought them there to do...and they leave when they become discontent...better vision and helps you understand what you must be obedient to do which will bring further clarity...this is truly the heart behind "obedience brings further clarity" and Acts 1 "wait" for the promised Holy Spirit...then you will be my witnesses...

- **Acts 1:6–9 (NIV)**

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”⁸ **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

The Douglas family has been learning what it means to be rooted and fruitful exactly where the Lord has us. As many of you might know, Libby and I were apart of Refuge City Ministries 1.0 in Elgin. We both felt the Lord calling us there and it was exciting and beautiful to be apart of. When we heard in October 2023 that we were all coming back to Arising, we wrestled with feeling like we were all taking a step backwards. It took us a minute to recognize the grace of God that it was. We had no idea the training and discipleship the Lord had prepared for us here that was essential for our growth and development.

Early on in our time back, I knew in my head that we needed to plant ourselves here again, but my heart was still set on rejoining Refuge when

they eventually returned. This struggle went on in my heart up until as recently as a few months ago, and it showed in my family and I's lack of commitment and fruitfulness in discipleship. I didn't realize it, but I was hesitant to pursue intentional discipleship, working in a team, and giving my all because I was looking to where I felt my family was going to be, rather than focusing on being completely rooted and invested into this house.

Within the past 4 or 5 months, the Lord has made it clear to my family that we are to plant deep roots here because this is where God has brought us. He has completely shifted our vision from seeing our time here as merely a waiting period, to seeing it as a beautiful place in which we will grow deep roots and produce fruit for the kingdom.

The Zeal of the Lord for tomorrows mission is only realized by fruitfulness today

The Lord may very well call my family back to Elgin one day, but we are no longer going to spend our time here unaware of what God has brought us here to do, wishfully dreaming of how fruitful we will be in Refuge without demonstrating a full commitment through faithfulness here. This clarity for us has only came about through allowing the Lord to refine our vision so we can be obedient to the things He has called us to do in this area with this body.

As the Lord has been revealing vision for this church to plant churches locally and minister to Muslims, many of you have an eagerness to go, myself included. The message we will continue to preach again and again is that as you are obedient and faithful with what the Lord has called you to do here, God will reveal further clarity to you on the next step to take. Stop worrying about an end goal or destination and start dedicating every part of your life to being completely rooted and faithful where you are at. There really is no other way.

As we walked through, many things in ministry can change—location, your hearers, even the people who are ministering alongside.

But the variables of ministry, there are some things that never change.



First, the method of our ministry never changes: we must always preach The Israel Dependent Gospel. Regardless of location or team or time, this message never changes. This is a topic we are most certainly going to cover in the coming weeks, but just to give you a brief sampling. In John 4, Jesus point blank claims that the origin of Salvation is the Jewish people.

- **John 4:22 (NIV)**

²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

No Israel—no salvation. If the Jewish people did not exist, you would not have salvation. If they had not preserved the perfect Law, salvation would not be available. Not only is the gospel Israel dependent, your salvation is Israel-dependent.

- **Revelation 22:1–2 (NIV)**

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

At the end of the age, the healing of the nations is sourced from the river of the water of life flowing from where? The throne in Jerusalem! So yes, the salvation of the world is certainly dependent on Israel.

- **Romans 11:11–12, 15 (NIV)**

¹¹ Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹² But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!... ¹⁵ For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

We spent several weeks this summer talking about the importance of living with the resurrection in mind. Do you know what the fuel for your resurrection from the dead is? The salvation of Israel! I'd say that's an Israel-Dependent Gospel.

And now, the reconciliation that is now available to the world through that rejection, is now our responsibility to bring to Jews and Gentile alike. And that is our mission.

MINISTRY CONSTANTS:

METHOD: Israel-Dependant Gospel

- John 4:22
- Revelation 22:1-2
- Romans 11:11-15

MISSION: Reconcile the World

- 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- 2 Timothy 3:13-4:5

The Method is the same, and so is the mission:

RECONCILED

Colossians 1:21-23

*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 **he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death**, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."*

Romans 5:10-11

*"For if **while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life**. 11 More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **through whom we have now received reconciliation**."*

Ephesians 2:13-16

*"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 **and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross**, thereby killing the hostility."*

The state you were in when Christ died for you to bring you to God, was weak, broken, wicked, and helpless. You weren't deserving of the love He

showed you through His sacrifice for you. You were His enemy and a sinner, and yet... Christ died for you so that you might be justified, saved from the wrath of God, and ultimately reconciled to Him.

Most Christians stop there and are satisfied. They are content with being justified before God for themselves without recognizing the purpose of why they were justified.

- **2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

“So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!** 18 All this is from God, who reconciled **us** to himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And **he has committed to us the message of reconciliation**. 20 **We** are therefore **Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us**. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him **we** might become the righteousness of God.”

Notice Paul’s language in this passage: “we,” “anyone,” “us.” He does not use any singular verbiage aside from attesting to what God and Christ have done and given. Every believer is called to be a minister of reconciliation. Anyone in Christ is a new creation who has been reconciled to God through Christ and GIVEN the ministry of reconciliation. This ministry is not given to specific people with certain skills, status, or calling, it is the calling and function given to every believer.

If you are in Christ, you are not a part-time minister or just merely a follower. You have been given a full-time ministry and are therefore a full-time minister. You have been made new in Christ and set apart as His

ambassador for Him to make His appeal to those around you, THROUGH you.

When you reserve the concept of being a minister and operating in full-time ministry to only the pastorate or ordained leadership in the church, you are selling yourself short and are settling for less than what you have been called to and given by God himself. There is a quote from D.L. Moody in which he says:

"It is better to attempt something great for God and fail than to do nothing and succeed."

The point is this: We inevitably fall short of the things we aim for. If your aim is to simply do your best at having a good personal relationship with God, you may at best do well for yourself and possibly your family, but you will fall immensely short of doing anything meaningful in advancing His kingdom here on the earth. If your aim is to live out your God-given ministry of being His instrument of reconciliation to the world around you, you may not get it right all the time, but at the very least your life will be marked as one who is actually attempting to reconcile this lost and dying world back to Him. Do you see how not viewing yourself as a full-time minister of reconciliation and ambassador for Christ actually lowers the standard and fruitfulness that God could bring about in your life and the lives He places in front of you?



Colossians 3:17

*"**Whatever you do**, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus..."*

1 Corinthians 10:31

*"...**whatever you do**, do all to the glory of God."*

Colossians 3:23-24

*"**Whatever you do**, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."*

There aren't specific people, situations, or circumstances that determine if you are to be His ambassador or not. Your location will change. The team you are operating in and the people you are walking alongside with will change. The people you speak and minister to will change. **The one thing that never changes is the mission you were given, and the method in which you carry it out.** Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whoever you are doing it with, and whoever you are speaking to, you are His ambassador and you have been placed there to be a minister of reconciliation.

This is what functioning as a full-time minister actually looks like. This is not a conviction that just ordained pastor's need to have. This is the conviction that every believer who has been reconciled to God through Christ **MUST** have. When you live as a full-time minister, every circumstance and setting becomes an opportunity for God to reconcile people to Himself through you.

Take everything we just said and put it in view of the vision God has been revealing through the past few sermons: we live in an area that has the highest concentration of Muslims per capita in the nation.

STATISTICS & HISTORY (CONT...)

MOVEMENT BUILDING IN U.S.

- **IMMIGRATION- 56% OF ALL MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS ARRIVED AFTER 2000, AND BY 2015 THERE WERE 3.3 MILLION FOREIGN-BORN MUSLIMS IN THE U.S. (2.5 MILLION HAVE IMMIGRATED SINCE 2000)**
- **BIRTH RATE- MUSLIM AMERICANS HAVE THE HIGHEST FERTILITY RATE OF ANY RELIGIOUS GROUP IN THE COUNTRY (2.8 VS U.S. AVERAGE ~1.7)**
- **INSTEAD OF DISPERSING EVENLY, MUSLIM COMMUNITIES OFTEN CLUSTER INTENSELY IN: CHICAGO METRO, DEARBORN/DETROIT, MINNEAPOLIS METRO, NORTHERN NEW JERSEY, HOUSTON, DALLAS, ORANGE COUNTY**
SMALL AREAS + HIGH CONCENTRATION = LARGE POLITICAL INFLUENCE.

We have been quite literally placed directly in the face of the enemy of Islam. It is our divine mandate to reach Muslims and see them reconciled back to the Father. This is not an easy task or a light calling. This will require you to see yourself and your family as nothing less than a full-time minister of reconciliation. God will make His appeal through us to reconcile Muslims to Him through our commitment to be His ambassadors.

We spoke last week of reigniting a true love for people that we don't deem as worthy of it. 2 Timothy 3 tells us that the world will only continue to get darker as the end approaches. This calls for every individual to take personal onus of reconciling the world to God. Look at what Paul says to Timothy:

- **2 Timothy 3:13-15**

"¹³ ...evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

If you're not careful, you can read this as justification for secluding yourself from the wicked world and staying inwardly focused on your personal salvation, but that is not Paul's full instruction to Timothy. Continuing on into verse 16 and chapter 4...

- **2 Timothy 3:16-4 (ESV)**

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 **that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**"

Paul's application into becoming wise for salvation is to teach Timothy that the entirety of scripture is from God and is meant to train and equip Timothy in the truth of God's word. But this was meant to go far beyond his personal salvation. It was meant to enable him to carry out every good work prepared for him. This was the method and the mission Paul left to Timothy as he closed out his second letter to him. Listen to how Paul concludes this charge to Timothy...

- **2 Timothy 4:1-5 (ESV)**

4 "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and

teaching.³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, **do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**"

Put yourselves in Timothy's shoes. If one of our pastors was telling you these things, would you have the confidence that you are already doing them? Now take it a step further, if he was telling you to do these things to the same quality and better to how he currently lives out these things, would you be challenged to push yourself more? If all the pastors and elders of this church disappeared, would you take it upon yourself to carry on the mission God has given this church? Are you beginning to see the necessity of viewing the ministry of reconciliation as your personal task, not just the pastors or ordained leaders?

Paul expected Timothy to do what he did and to carry on the work of ministry. Not simply working in Paul's ministry, but taking personal ownership of it and viewing it as his own. If we leave this kind of ministry and duty to Pastors and ordained leaders only, our method and mission for reconciling Muslims, Jews, and the world to Christ will end with them. Imagine what this church can accomplish when all of us take personal ownership of the ministry of reconciliation you were given by God Himself?

As the western church at large descends deeper into accumulating teachers to suit their own passions, Paul's charge to Timothy is what you must personally aim your life at: always being sober-minded, enduring suffering, doing the work of an evangelist, and fulfilling your ministry.

What do you want your life to look like? Simply attempting to live a good Christian life and trying not to sin? Or do you want to fulfill the ministry God has given you, now that you have been reconciled to Him? My family and I

are aiming at the latter, and there is still much growth to take place in us in this area. It is my deepest desire that all of you aim for the later as well. People you haven't even met yet are counting on it.

- **Ephesians 2:8–13 (NIV)**

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

The mission and the method has not changed since the day you were born. While the people and place around you may change, the works God has for you do not!

Moreover, the good works God has planned for you are intrinsically tied to the nation of Israel, meaning that your salvation came through a Jewish messiah, grafting you into citizenship in Israel and the covenants made to their fathers. Without the nation of Israel, there is no hope for the redemption and restoration for all human-kind!

What must you do in response to this grace you have received?

- **Romans 10:14–15 (NIV)**

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to

them? 15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

- Beautiful feet are sent
- The sent preach
- The preaching causes people to hear
- Those that hear believe
- Those that believe call out
- Those that call out are saved

You must give your LIFE for the witness of the gospel. The message that saved you and brought you near to Adonai is exactly what others need, even the nation of Israel!

With this in mind, can you see how we are must be the ministers of reconciliation that knows your purpose, is diligent in the work God has given you to do now, and is going out to accomplish this call of reconciling all back to God.