

Advance: Our Church in the Next Century
The Church's Opportunity-Sharing our Provision

Introduction: This is a historic day at Glad Tidings. A day of Good News and a day to share

Let me remind you where we are:

1. On the verge of entering our 100th year as a church (great celebration ahead)
2. We are discovering our Church's Vision for the Next Century
3. This vision is to **ADVANCE: Building on the Values of our Past While Pursuing the Vision of our Future**
4. Advance Campaign (Fund) a chance to invest in the next century
 - a. Student Ministries Center
 - b. Dunkirk
 - c. Missions projects
5. We need everyone to participate. We need sacrifice. We need generosity.
6. Our church has:
 - a. A Challenge (world upside down)
 - b. A Call to the nations
 - c. A Future (youth)
 - d. An Opportunity
7. This opportunity
 - a. Must recognize this opportunity (Esther: I will go and if I perish, I perish)
 - b. Must maximize our potential (Nehemiah: So built we the wall and revived the burned over stones)
 - c. Today: Share our provision

I. The Story of the Four Lepers

- A. The city of Samaria was under siege to the Arameans (Syrians) and consequently there was a famine in Samaria and the people were starving to death (siege was around the walls of the city)
- B. Then God gave a prophecy to Elisha that all would soon change

"Elisha replied, "Listen to this message from the Lord! This is what the Lord says: By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, six quarts of choice flour will cost only one piece of silver, and twelve quarts of barley grain will cost only one piece of silver. "2 Kings 7:1 NLT

C. The king's officer said it could never happen (Elisha said it will but you won't get to enjoy it)

D. 4 Lepers sitting on the outskirts of the city where lepers were sent

1. They too were starving
2. Why sit here?
3. We could go into the city and die. No food, or try to approach the Arameans and maybe they will have pity on us and feed us. *"If they kill us we would have died anyway."*

E. The supernatural work of God—He caused the Arameans to hear chariots and armies and they fled in the middle of the night leaving their tents full of provisions

F. The desperate lepers stumbled into unending provision

1. Immediately they ate and enjoyed
2. Till one of them interrupted the party

"Finally, they said to each other, "This is not right. This is a day of good news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone! If we wait until morning, some calamity will certainly fall upon us. Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace." 2 Kings 7:9 NLT

G. They told the gatekeepers who told the king...too good to be true

1. Sent out scouts
2. It was true and they all ate
3. The one who doubted was trampled at the gate and never tasted himself

II. Lessons From the Lepers

A. The lepers were desperate and dying without hope

B. God made a way for them to be spared

C. For a while they were hoarding the provision themselves

D. They realized that to hoard and not share was to do evil

E. Even when they shared they were met with doubt and resistance

F. Ultimately the city was saved when the lepers shared what God had provided

III. The Opportunity for Glad Tidings Brings us a Great Challenge

A. We were once the lepers

"For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!" Ephesians 5:8 NLT

B. God has provided for us

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“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.”Romans 5:8-11 NLT

C. It is expected that we will share...this is a day of Good News

*“Go and announce to them that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!”
Matthew 10:7-8 NLT*

1. Jesus taught the need to share what God has given us in Parables
2. One of those was the parable of the 3 servants
3. One with 5 bags of silver one with 2 bags and one with 1
 - a. He left but said he would return
 - b. $5 \times 2=10$
 - c. $2 \times 2=4$
 - d. But the one with 1

“Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn’t plant and gathering crops you didn’t cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.’ “But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”Matthew 25:24-30 NLT

- D. We must not be like the servant with one talent...like an ungrateful leper
- E. There will be some resistance and doubt...but we must share what God has provided
- F. This is a day of Good News!

Conclusion: What would have happened if the lepers had not shared?

1. A city lost
2. What if we don't?
3. We will have plenty for now but an opportunity missed
4. Youth in Delaware County who don't know who Moses and Jesus are
5. Dunkirk and other communities that need the Gospel witness
6. Martins who need 24K to train leaders won't train those leaders to reach and pastor the Muslims in Morocco
7. This is a day of Glad Tidings...we must share
8. What will you do to invest in the next century for Christ?

Learning to Fly

In Run with the Horses, Eugene Peterson writes about seeing a family of birds teaching the young to fly. Three young swallows were perched on a dead branch that stretched out over a lake.

"One adult swallow got alongside the chicks and started shoving them out toward the end of the branch--pushing, pushing, pushing. The end one fell off. Somewhere between the branch and the water four feet below, the wings started working, and the fledgling was off on his own. Then the second one.

"The third was not to be bullied. At the last possible moment his grip on the branch loosened just enough so that he swung downward, then tightened again, bulldog tenacious. The parent was without sentiment. He pecked at the desperately clinging talons until it was more painful for the poor chick to hang on than risk the insecurities of flying. The grip was released, and the inexperienced wings began pumping. The mature swallow knew what the chick did not--that it would fly--that there was no danger in making it do what it was perfectly designed to do.

"Birds have feet and can walk. Birds have talons and can grasp a branch securely. They can walk; they can cling. But flying is their characteristic action, and not until they fly are they living at their best, gracefully and beautifully.

"Giving is what we do best. It is the air into which we were born. It is the action that was designed into us before our birth. ... Some of us try desperately to hold on to ourselves, to live for ourselves. We look so bedraggled and pathetic doing it, hanging on to the dead branch of a bank account for dear life, afraid to risk ourselves on the untried wings of giving. We don't think we can live generously because we have never tried. But the sooner we start, the better, for we are going to have to give up our lives finally, and the longer we wait, the less time we have for the soaring and swooping life of grace."

Legend

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After Jesus had been resurrected and ascended to heaven, the angels welcomed Him with great honour and gathered around Him. They had all kind of questions about his death, resurrection and ascension.

"What was it all about?" they asked him.

"The salvation of the world," he answered them.

"But now you have returned here. How will the world bear about it?"

"I trained my people."

"To evangelize the entire world," they asked.

"Yes, every corner of the world."

"How many people did you train for such a gigantic task?"

"Some twelve people."

"Twelve people? But what if they fail?"

"If they fail, I don't have other plans."

"But isn't that a risk?"

"No. They will not fail."

The Lord has this trust in us...