

Sunday November 27, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

"If the LORD had not been on our side— let Israel say— ² if the LORD had not been on our side when people attacked us, ³ they would have swallowed us alive when their anger flared against us; ⁴ the flood would have engulfed us the torrent would have swept over us, ⁵ the raging waters would have swept us away. ⁶ Praise be to the LORD, who has not let us be torn by their teeth. ⁷ We have escaped like a bird from the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. ⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."

Let us pray. Dear Lord and Father of mankind thank you that we can come to you for help in our time of need. We come this morning to praise you for your power and for your passion, your sovereignty and your sincerity, your faithfulness and your fellowship, your control and your care.

Where else can we go to for help? Who else is able to save us from our sin? From ourselves? From our world? From all that is around us? But you. You alone are worthy of our worship. You alone are the one we want to live for. You alone are the one whom we can trust.

So we turn away from all other distractions and come to you. We place our sins before you and ask for forgiveness. We offer ourselves to you as living sacrifices, wholly & pleasing to you and you alone. May this be our spiritual act of worship this day & may you again become our God, our father and our friend. Amen.

Song – 10,000 reasons

[Matt Redman - 10,000 Reasons \(Bless The Lord\) \(Lyrics And Chords/Live\) - YouTube](#)

Chorus Bless the Lord O my soul
O my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

2. You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

1. The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

3. And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then for evermore.

Bible Reading – Acts 19:1-23 (NIV)

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior & arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. ⁴ Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them & they spoke in

tongues & prophesied. ⁷ There were about 12 men in all. ⁸ Paul entered the synagogue & spoke boldly there for 3 months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. ¹¹ God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. ¹³ Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. ¹⁷ When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. ¹⁸ Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. ²¹ After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." 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.

Announcements

Focus for November – One2One. Can you think back to when you were a new Christian or when you were taking responsibility for your own faith. Was there a minister, Sunday School teacher, youth group leader, friend who helped you? Supported you? Modelled the faith for you? If there was you will know the power of One2One ministry. Now is there someone you could do that for next year?

Upcoming Events

- Fri 2/12 JOY at 16 footers
Snow Gums pool party at the Taylors.
- Sun 4/12 Lords Supper. Please prepare your hearts and minds.
- Sat 10/12 Gather Round Christmas Celebration. Keep the date. More details a bit closer to the time.
- Sun 11/12 Kids Church Presentation.

Vanuatu. This year we are hoping to send a team to Vanuatu in January for a short term mission to the towns of Walaha and Hog Harbour. This will be a mixture of building work, kids and youth ministry and teaching and training the locals in Christian discipleship. At present we are looking like we will have a team of up to 10 people which is really exciting but may also cause some logistical issues. Please pray that the doors will be opened for us to send such a team. And if you would like to support the team prayerfully then email/text Stephen and he will send you regular prayer updates. And if you would like to support the team financially, please mark your contribution "2023 Vanuatu". The cost to the Church will be approximately \$6,000. Not everyone can go on this years short term mission but everyone can be a part of it in one way or another!

Complementarian Ministry. This week many of our small groups have completed a study on complementarianism. If you would like to give our elders your feedback on this important topic please could you do so before their next meeting on Wednesday 31st November.

Giving (if room). Would you like to give regularly to the work of the church so that our ministries can be sustained or even grow? If so the easiest way is by setting up a direct debit from your bank account. You just decide you much you would like to give on a weekly basis and then organise that amount to go to our Church each week. If you would like help to set it up then please speak to Letitia. Otherwise, the Church Bank details are Charlestown Eastlakes Presbyterian BSB 062 611, account # 1007 5420.

Kids Spot: As we continue our way through the book of Acts, we learn about Stephen, one of the seven chosen helpers from the story last Sunday. We will learn from Stephen that the Israelites rejected God again and again, so it is no surprise that when God's Son turned up, they rejected him too. Their big mistake was that the one they rejected is the one who rules. Question of the week: What can we learn about the way Stephen lived his life and apply it to us?

Gather Round – Sat 10 Dec. 5.30pm. Join us for a festive family event in the yard the church. Carol singing, kids activities, dinner, Christmas stall. \$5 pp (kids under 5 free). RSVP to Suzie by 4 December

Christmas Day Services:

Christmas Eve	6pm	Charlestown
Christmas Day	8am	Swansea
	9:30am	Charlestown

Prayer Points for 27th November 2022

Psalm 34:6 "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him from all his troubles."

Pray for Kenya: Pray for the end of government corruption that continues to broaden the gap between rich and poor. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out among the majority, though nominal, Christian population.

Pray for Churches: Pray for Australian churches to grow in size, spiritual maturity, and effectiveness in discipling believers. Pray that many more Australians will turn to Christ and find a church home to belong to.

Pray Webb's: Thankfulness for recent family holiday to Perth and Uncle's farm. Praise God for Friday ladies bible study connecting with God and each other as they study Philippians. Kimberley Leaders training weekend led by Chris learned how to share the story of the prodigal son. Thank God for the eagerness of Christians in isolated communities to learn more from God's word.

Bible Reading – Acts 20:17-38

¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. ²² "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. ²⁵ "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God,^[e] which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. ³² "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " ³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all

of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

Song – Onward Christian Soldiers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa_qE3hpVas

1. Onward, Christian soldiers!
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.
Christ, the royal Master,
Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle,
See his banners go!

3. Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
Where the Saints have trod.
We are not divided;
All one body we:
One in hope and doctrine,
One in charity.

[Chorus] Onward, Christian soldiers!
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.

2. At the sign of triumph
Satan's host doth flee;
On, then, Christian soldiers,
On to victory.
Hell's foundations quiver
At the shout of praise;
Brothers, lift your voices,
Loud your anthems raise.

4. Onward, then, ye people;
Join our happy throng
Blend with ours your voices
In the triumph song:
Glory, laud, and honor
Unto Christ, the King.
This through countless ages
Men and angels sing.

Sermon – Church Planting (in Ephesus) - Stephen T

I might not be the best person in the world to talk about Church Planting. You see I have had 5 serious attempts at Church Planting and four of them failed! While at Tweed Heads, we employed someone to plant a church but after a couple of years they had almost no one in their launch group. So, we tried another tact, I set up a small group with the aim of us being the launch group but after two years of meeting together and with plans fairly well developed the group fell apart because it didn't want to give up what it had for others.

So, then we decided to move our evening service to another suburb to connect with non- Church people. After 18 months of working through things almost no-one wanted it to become a reality. So we devised a plan to start a midweekchurch, meeting at a regional school on a Wednesday night, helping out with homework, a free meal, Church and kids Church and all home by 7:15. It proved a winner and in a couple of years we grew to about 70 people with over half of them being people who were previously not going to Church.

But when we tried to reproduce midweekchurch at another location on a Friday night a few years later to looked like a goer before crashing and burning spectacularly. So rather than speak on church planting I should write a book on **how not to plant** a Church. What is that great quote from Thomas Edison about what he learnt in developing the light bulb? "I have **not** failed. I've just found 10,000 **ways** that don't work."

But another way to learn about Church planting is to look at the Apostle Paul. For after about a year's furlough in Antioch Paul starts out on his third missionary journey. And as Luke recounts this journey, we can see his main emphasis is on how Paul plants the Church in Ephesus. It seems to me to be a model for the rest of us to follow in our own cities.

For one of the most effective ways to see people converted is to plant Churches. We see that in our missionaries – the Webb's, the Parson's & the Appleby's are all involved in church planting. But we see it in our town as well. There might be lots of Churches around but if we are going to reach all of Lake Macquarie we need more, much more gospel centred Churches that will connect well with their local environment. So, whether our future is planting a new Church or a new congregation, Acts 20 & 21 will show us an excellent model.

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1. (Ephesus Environment. (19:1-8))

So what was the Ephesus environment like? Well Ephesus was the capital city of the province of Asia, the province that God wouldn't let Paul and Silas come into a few chapters ago and so they had headed off to Europe instead. But it was a big city, say 350,000 people. And it had connections to plenty of other local region towns, Colossae, Philadelphia, Laodicea & many others. It was a harbour town which had become rich on the back of trade.

And it was the home of the Temple of Artemis (or Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. In fact, this temple was 4 times bigger than the Parthenon. And because of its connection to cultic worship, it was also the epicentre of evil powers. The occult was a big thing in Ephesus. Now this city looks like it might be a hard nut to crack for the gospel.

And there was currently no Church in Ephesus. But there were some people open to the faith. People who had been told and believed in John the Baptist's message of repentance and baptism but had never heard anything about Jesus or the coming of the Holy Spirit. You see it is not enough to just repent. You must also believe in the Lord Jesus as well. Paul finds these religious men and he patiently fills in the gaps of their knowledge before witnessing their faith in Jesus, their repentance from their sins as well as their baptism and the coming of the Holy Spirit. There are now 12 new believers on which to plant a fledging Church.

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But not just yet, because next Paul heads to the synagogue as was his custom. ⁸ *Paul entered the synagogue & spoke boldly there for 3 months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.* Paul's aim is always to pick the low hanging fruit. People who believed in God and wanted to worship Him but hadn't been properly taught as yet about Jesus Christ. Which is what Paul does next, for he wants the basis of any new Church to be built on

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2. Persistent Preaching (19:8-10, 20:20-27)

So he spends 3 months in the synagogue. Speaking boldly. Arguing persuasively. Teaching about the Kingdom of God. He was encouraging the religious to use their brains. This was no take it or leave it message. Instead, he marshalled arguments to make his case, he answered questions, he dealt with doubts, he understood rival ways of thinking. You see the religious still need to be evangelised and evidently some but not all did come to faith.

⁹ *But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So, Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.* ¹⁰ *This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.*

You see you might start with the religious but we can't limit our evangelism to do just them. And yes, religious people can often be reached in religious buildings but secular people will need to be reached in secular buildings. So, Paul goes to the lecture hall of Tyrannus (which is the Greek word for tyrant, I wonder why he was named the tyrant?) and he mixes with unbelievers of all shapes and sizes, so much so that the message of Jesus goes out from there out to the whole province of Asia.

Slide 6

Now one of the old manuscripts of this Bible text adds an interesting footnote. And that is that Paul taught at this lecture hall from 11am to 4pm each day. In other words, he sought to grow believers during the time that the whole town stopped for their siesta.

So, let's think about this for a moment. Paul was financing his own ministry at this time through making tents. So, he would do that in the morning, then head off to Tyrannus hall to talk with whoever would come by and then go back to finish his tents in the afternoon. That intense, isn't it? Paul paid his own way plus for 5 hours a day, 6 days a week for 2 years straight he proclaimed God's Kingdom. That's over 3,000 hours' worth of teaching!

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And it works, because God opens up heart after heart. Listen to the words of Demetrius in Acts 19:26, *"You see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus & in practically the whole province of Asia."* Something truly amazing is happening in this place. Some of that growth is directly due to Paul's teaching of people, while others come indirectly through people like Epaphras who gets converted by Paul and then proceeds to plant the Church in nearby Colossae.

So what exactly does Paul do in those two years? He preaches repentance and faith to bring people into the kingdom. And then he teaches, trains, builds, mentors, disciples and sends out people into the regions to grow the members of the Kingdom. But he also models what living in the Kingdom looks like. Listen to what he told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20.

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²⁰ *"You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from **house to house**.* ²¹ *I have declared to both Jews & Greeks that they must turn to God in **repentance and have faith** in our Lord Jesus ...* ²⁴ *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to **finish the race and complete the task** the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."*

Slide 9

That's pretty comprehensive, isn't it? He wants to unleash the word of God onto all people, because that is the power of God for salvation. I wonder if you would agree with John Stott's comments on what Paul is doing. He says, *"When we contrast much contemporary evangelism with Paul's, its shallowness is immediately shown up. Our evangelism tends to be too ecclesiastical (inviting people to Church), whereas Paul also took the gospel out into the secular world; too emotional (appeals for decisions without an adequate basis of understanding), whereas Paul taught, reasoned and tried to persuade; and too superficial (making brief encounters and expecting quick results) whereas Paul stayed in Corinth and Ephesus five years, faithful sowing gospel seeds and in due time reaping a harvest."*

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You see the gospel needs to go to the religious and the secular. And so, we need both preaching and teaching in our Churches but we also need to talk, and engage and discuss it with those who might not darken the door of a Church. So, if we were to learn from Paul's example, we will train up the believers and equip them and send them out to mix with unbelievers. In university lecture rooms, on the internet, in our community clubs and pubs and amongst our non-Christian friends and families.

Slide 11

3. And when Paul does this, we find there is next **Evil Encounters. (19:11-22)**

¹¹ “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.” Don’t forget that Ephesus is a dark place. A stronghold of demonic activity.

And so the gospel proves to the casual observer that light is stronger than darkness. That God is mightier than the devil. That Jesus is sovereign not Diana. Why even Paul’s work rags and aprons had the power of God in them and were able to heal people who touched them. And it is so obvious that this is true that some guys want a piece of this action.

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¹³ “Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” ¹⁴ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵ One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know & Paul I know about, but who are you?” ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them & over powered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.”

It’s a bit comic, isn’t it? Trying to fool the devil, who is the father of lies, by just bandying around the name of Jesus or Paul. But playing with spiritual forces is a dangerous business & these guys end up being over powered by the power of evil. You see the name of Jesus is not a lucky charm. Jesus is not someone you use to get what you want but a Saviour who will give you what you truly need. But the power of Jesus is shown up in another incident.

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¹⁸ “Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.”

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Much of the idolatry of Ephesus ends up on an ash heap. For people show they are truly converted by not just turning from the life of evil but getting rid of their way back to the evil one. As a result of the preaching of the gospel there is the equivalent of the yearly salaries of 150 men being burnt up in smoke. That’s real repentance, isn’t it? Its costly and its public. Rather than selling these things to others & making a motza, they destroy them completely.

I wonder what the modern equivalent would be of burning of black magic books? Well what sorts of things are stopping people from coming into the kingdom today? Could you imagine the crushing of a whole pile of our mobile phones? Or the returning of a large number of set top boxes? Maybe a destroying of a lot of our expensive and fashionable clothing? Or the dumping of a whole lot of costly sporting equipment? But when the gospel comes into our life there is a change, a real change & there should also be an ongoing change as well. And we see in Ephesus that the whole economy begins to shift. But when the balance of power shifts away from the dark towards the light, Satan fights harder than ever. And so

Slide 15

4. We see a **public persecution (19:24-41)**

²³ “About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way.” In fact, it’s inevitable that wherever there is a growth in the Church, there will be a push back from the people around them. Because our message is subversive. It is designed to break the allegiances that we have to the world and its idols. When we become Christians, we change sides in the great global conflict.

²⁴ “A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. ²⁵ He called them together... and said... “this fellow Paul has convinced & led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia...(Slide 16) ²⁷ There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess

Artemis will be discredited; & the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout Asia & the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

The growth of the Church is affecting business. Less people are now worshipping Diana. Less people are buying the trinkets, souvenirs & idols that Ephesus wants to sell & so Demetrius stirs up the crowd and in a just an hour or two the crowd has whipped itself up into a frenzy.

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"The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theatre together. ³⁰ Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. ³¹ Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theatre." Paul thinks this is the opportunity to speak to a massive crowd but others know this crowd is not for reasoning.

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"They all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ³⁵ (Until) The city clerk quieted the crowd" with some wise words and a cool demeanour. Well, that's what seems to happen but obviously God's hand is also upon them & he keeps his servants safe. But the writer of Acts Luke also points out that the city clerk notes that the Christians haven't done anything wrong & the best way to get justice is through the courts.

Slide 19

But there is a lesson in this for us all. The closer you are to the Lord and his will for your life, the more likely you will draw the fire of the people around you. For if you want to change this city. If you want to grow the number of believers. If you want to plant a new Church, there will be a backlash. Because we are entering the arena of evil encounters. We are going to get out the sword of the spirit with our persistent preaching. And that will lead to public persecution. So, to be ready for that we will all need leaders who are

Slide 20

5. Serving Shepherds. (20:17-38)

Paul's time in Ephesus is about to end. He leaves and continues to preach the gospel around the province of Asia before deciding to pick up a collection for the poor in Jerusalem. Which means he again finds himself in the vicinity of Ephesus. Now he hasn't much time to lose but he also doesn't want to lose the opportunity to say his final goodbye to the people whom he ministered to for 2 years. So, he calls for the Ephesian elders to come to Miletus.

¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you."

He has four points. Firstly, I was your **guide**. I have modelled for you how to live the faith and how to lead the people of faith. You need to do it with humility, there can be no pride or arrogance in the Church's leadership. And you need to be willing to shed tears for your people. Leadership is costly. It will push you to the edge. Its an emotional roller coaster. You get to see the best and worst of people. But the people of the church have to see the character of Christ in their leaders. And to do that you will need to be on your **guard**.

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²⁸ "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise & distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."

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The leaders of the Church are on guard duty but the first thing they have to guard is their own hearts. A.W. Tozer, once said, *“Do you know who gives me the most trouble? Do you know whom I pray for the most? Me. Me. Just myself. That’s the one that gives me the most trouble.”* Friends, we can’t lead others to Christ if we are not currently walking with Christ. And so, it is important that our leaders are not spending all their time chasing up others and no time spending it with the Lord. Slide 23 As Spurgeon once said *“We shall be likely to accomplish most when we are in the best spiritual condition.”*

We guard ourselves and we are to guard the flock. There will be danger to the sheep out in the world. Many things that will tempt them away from their Good Shepherd. And there are dangers inside the Church as well, false teachers, sinful shepherds, people they should be able to trust but are ultimately untrustworthy. People who care not for the sheep but only care for themselves. It is the job of the leader to protect the flock from these sorts of people. You see they are the flock of God the father, purchased by the precious blood of God the Son and supervised by overseers appointed by God the Spirit. The job of the shepherd is to protect the sheep for their owner and that will involve tears, many tears.

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These serving shepherds are guides, guards and need to rely on God’s grace. ³² *“Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”* God’s hand is needed. God’s grace is essential. Ministry leaders need to recognise the inability of human strength to produce supernatural results. The task is so great only God’s grace is capable of achieving God’s will.

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And that should mean that all our leaders are givers not full of greed. ³³ *“I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing.”* ³⁴ *You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs & the needs of my companions.* ³⁵ *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

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So, to plant a Church and to look after God’s flock, you will need serving shepherds who will persistently preach and who are willing to withstand evil encounters & public persecution.

But do you know what? The Church of Ephesus didn’t survive. According to Revelation 2 it lost its first love. In fact, the town of Ephesus didn’t survive either. Nor did the cult of Diana or the temple of Diana. And neither did my own successful Church planting exercise it merged with our main church after 15 years. But the message of the gospel continues to survive. You see it is not about really about Churches but people. It’s not about buildings but flesh & blood & that is what God wants us to build here & elsewhere

So, will we work hard to understand the environment that God has planted us in? Will we support the preaching of the whole counsel of God whether it is in season or out of season. Will we guard our hearts and our minds from the dangers that are all around us? Will we shepherd our homes, our families, our friends, our fellow believers, guarding them against the pit falls that surround us all? And are we signing up for an encounter with evil and with public persecution? For God has planted us here for a reason & he wants us to grow in maturity & numbers. He has even given us a blueprint, Ephesus. And he is calling us all to plant his gospel in our hearts and the hearts of the lake mac community. Let’s go out & do it

Song – O Church Arise

[Keith & Kristyn Getty - O Church Arise \(Arise, Shine\) \(Lyric Video\)](#)
[ft. Chris Tomlin - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. O Church Arise and put your armour on
 Hear the call of Christ our Captain
 For now the weak can say that they are strong
 In the strength that God has given
 With shield of faith and belt of truth
 We'll stand against the devil's lies
 An army bold whose battle-cry is Love
 Reaching out to those in darkness</p> | <p>3. Come see the cross where love & mercy meet
 As the Son of God is stricken
 Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet
 For the Conqueror has risen
 And as the stone is rolled away
 And Christ emerges from the grave
 This victory march continues till the day
 Every eye and heart shall see Him</p> |
| <p>2. Our call to war to love the captive soul
 But to rage against the captor
 And with the sword that makes the wounded whole
 We will fight with faith and valour
 When faced with trials on every side
 We know the outcome is secure
 And Christ will have the prize for which He died
 An inheritance of nations</p> | <p>4. So Spirit come put strength in every stride
 Give grace for every hurdle
 That we may run with faith to win the prize
 Of a servant good and faithful
 As saints of old still line the way
 Retelling triumphs of His grace
 We hear their calls and hunger for the day
 When with Christ we stand in glory</p> |

Benediction.

³² *"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)"*