



Sermon Growth Guide

August 15, 2021

Vision Sunday - Motivated for Ministry

Ephesians 5:8-20

Key Verse: Ephesians 5:14 "This is why it is said, 'Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead and Christ will shine upon you.'"

Big Idea: We are called to be a life-changing, thriving ministry of Jesus Christ in our city.

Foundations

As we enter our 150th year of ministry in Colorado Springs, Pastor Tim has challenged us "to boldly follow Jesus into the next chapter of ministry for our church." As we do that, the best place to look for guidance is Scripture. Ephesians 5: 8-20 is almost a summary of the entire letter. It describes a great deal about the promise of the gospel, the lostness of the world, and specific ways in which followers of Jesus can shine the light of Jesus into darkness.

The prominent metaphor in this passage for life-giving good news is "light." We know what it's like to stumble in the dark—it's tentative and frightening. Even the smallest point of light can give some assurance of direction. But when the lights go on, there is a sense of relief in knowing where you are and seeing where you are going.

We are called to navigate in the darkness, shining Christ's light to show others the way. That means waking up to what is going on around us. We are not called to run away from those who live in darkness but to bear "fruit of the light" for the life of the world.

That means we are kind instead of dismissive, truth-tellers instead of quibblers, good instead of selfish, pleasing the Lord rather than seeking our own desires (v. 9-10).

Understanding God's Word

The writer of Ephesians warns us to have nothing to do with the "fruitless deeds of darkness." (v. 11) We rightly think of the "deeds of darkness" as visibly abhorrent evil, and they are. But how would you describe "fruitless" deeds?

Read verse 16 in several translations. What would life look like if disciples "redeemed the time, making the most of every opportunity?" Frenetic? Calm? Purposeful? Engaged, etc.?

Applying God's Word

It's not enough to just "wake up." We are to wake up to live in a way that shines light into dark places, that demonstrates that real life is possible in a broken world. That is a huge task and one that seems impossible to sustain over a lifetime. "I could do that on a mission trip or working with the homeless for a year or two, but my whole life? I'd burn out." As you read verses 18-20, what do you discover about the source and quality of your life in union with the triune God?

Witnessing God's Word

As you seek to live into the things that please the Lord and which bring light into darkness, look around. What do you think you need to "wake up to" as each of us and all of us together move forward in ministry?

That's a challenge, folks. We have a challenge in front of us, don't we? It's time to stake a claim and gain the future. We can do it. In fact, we already have 40% of the resources either given or promised! We can do it. We have done it in the past. Or, more clearly, God has done it. The Lord has carried this ministry for 149 years. When the Prophet Samuel was leading the people of God through a season of revival, he set up a stone for all to see—he called it an Ebenezer—and he said, "Thus far the Lord has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12). Thus far the Lord. He set a marker. We are setting a marker, First Pres. Thus far the Lord has helped us. But you don't gain the future by thinking only of the past. You don't gain the next 150 years by driving with your eyes over your shoulder or looking only in the rearview mirror. It's time to make a mark, stake a claim, and faithfully follow Jesus into the next season! It's time to wake up, rise up, and gain the future. This isn't a pledge campaign. We are asking you to pray, prepare a gift and give a gift, to bless your church on her 150th birthday with new legs to go after a new future ready for the next chapter. Five years ago we did this for the new Worship Center. We had 507 participants who gave to that project. Now it's time to refresh the Sanctuary. It's time to build a common space to gather as one church. Let's get 1,000 gifts this time! Let's all jump in.

Some have asked me, isn't the future what we're doing down in the Worship Center? Why invest in this Sanctuary? Let me say again, the Worship Center and the Sanctuary are both our thriving future. I firmly believe from my core that when I come to my own retirement, and cut my cake, I will be handing off a church that worships in strength in two, beautiful, powerful styles in two beautiful, reverent, powerful venues. A Worship Center in the heart of downtown to match every bit of what you find out in the suburbs and a Sanctuary that invites you to walk into our long-proven worship style, but today—it doesn't invite you to walk into the past, but to experience this style of worship with new relevance to shape your soul today! We need people to walk into the future when they walk into our Sanctuary. We will have both. That will be our signature. That will be what makes us unique. We stand on both pontoons, we drive over both bridges, we balance across two equal weighted modes of excellent, powerful, Christ-centered and gospel-focused, life-changing patterns of worship.

We celebrated the retirement of our beloved Music Minister, Jim DeJarnette, this weekend. I have a little more news to share. We have located the leader God is calling to serve here next! You will meet that leader in two weeks. But he won't join our staff until November 28. Jim has agreed to keep on with us all the way through December, including Christmas Joy 2021! Jim's retirement is a big moment for our church. Our church is at a strategic inflection point. The 150th year, the retirement of a 40-year leader, recovery from a global pandemic. A new chapter begins right now. It's time to lean forward, restore and refresh this worship space, build a Commons for the cultivation of relationships and spiritual conversations, and get ready for the next great chapter of ministry at First Pres. Prepare a gift; give a gift. Gain the future. Christ is calling us to move forward.

General Palmer founded Colorado Springs in 1871 for the natural beauty God made here. In 1870, the church planter Sheldon Jackson had already recruited Henry Gage to pastor First Presbyterian of Colorado City. In 1871, Gage started preaching here too. Colorado Springs filed its papers as a city in 1872. Our church was already meeting. August 17, 1872, First Pres was formed with eight members on the rolls. Sheldon Jackson had been told he was too weak to go to India as a missionary. He walked up a hill with friends in Iowa and looked west. A biographer recounts: "They talked about the opportunities for the church in the West and the importance of keeping pace spiritually with the men and women who were on the distant frontiers... The church, they felt, had to assume the responsibility of going after these people." (*Alaskan Apostle*, p. 31) Jackson went on to plant over 100 churches from Arizona to Alaska. Ours was one. So, a church was built before the city. A church was built to build the city. A church was built under the conviction, the calling, the divine mandate "to go after these people." We carry that same mandate today. Are we **motivated for ministry**?

Today is about the future. As we enter our 150th year of ministry, it's on us to honor and celebrate the past, but even more, it is on us to gain the future. Just as our founders did; just as our leaders have done along the way for 149 years, just as Jim DeJarnette has done for 39 years, it is time for us to step up and gain the future. To boldly follow Jesus into the next chapter of ministry for our church. We can only do it together.

I hit my own five year mark this June. I arrived in 2016, and since then, we have made some changes. Some of you might remember the very first words I said to you as a church. I pointed to three things: We are going to worship well, we are going to give ourselves away to the next generation, and we are going to learn to preach the gospel as heard good news. A few things have happened in the last five years:

Contemporary Worship – The Fellowship Hall became the Worship Center. We used to have a banquet hall where we experimented with contemporary worship. Now we have a Worship Center we occasionally use for banquets. From the day we made that commitment until we closed the doors for COVID, worship in that space went from 500 to 750. That’s an indication of God at work. The Worship Center is not an experiment. As we look forward to First Pres 2040, the next chapter, we can expect the Worship Center to be a thriving, signature place of life-transforming, relevant, Gospel ministry in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs, reaching next generations with the love of Jesus. Who knows what we will need to match that vision? Now the Sanctuary is moving forward too. We step forward again, continuing the excellence, retaining the mode and culture of proven, choir-supported, liturgical, reverent and classical worship style; and moving forward with Jesus to remain relevant and meaningful for our times. **The Worship Center is not an experiment; the Sanctuary does not have an expiration date.** First Pres 2021, 2030, 2040, and beyond will continue to be a thriving, rich, powerful place of worship in the heart of downtown Colorado Springs.

We have fought to be All In for Kids – It’s not the easiest thing to reach the next generation for Christ, and it’s not the easiest thing to be a family-oriented church in the heart of downtown. But we can do it. We have always been all in for kids, and since we made the radical commitment in 1997 to turn a car dealership into a Student Center, we have been committed and resolved. New staff is on board and being recruited with a solid philosophy of ministry and strategies to fulfill one promise: First Pres is a Great Place to Raise Kids in the Lord.

First Pres Fellows began in 2019. We are an aging church. That means we are full of

wisdom. It takes intentional thinking to match the wisdom of mature Christian disciples with young believers who need it. Our third class of First Pres Fellows is arriving right now.

First Pres 1P Logo – We changed our logo and brand to make a new mark on our city and begin new conversations.

Light and Life for the City – We clarified our mission statement to point ourselves out to the world on mission for Jesus. We share His Light. We demonstrate and invite people into His Life. We prove our worth and prove our love, always being “for” our city even as God is for us, and for our city as we look forward to the City—the City of God. **Light and Life for the City.** Gospel and Mission in a helpful, serving posture. That’s us.

First Pres Way: 7 Values – Then we came to clarity around seven values to direct our life together. The **First Pres Way.** If we all just run our own direction and sow our own seeds wherever we’d like to scatter them, God may use that—God can do amazing things! God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick. But if we will walk together in one accord, one mind, one heart, one Spirit, helping one another out on purpose toward the clear mission Jesus has given us, who knows what God can do?

We have come a long way this past five years. God has been faithful to First Pres for 149 years. There are no limits to what the future may hold, as First Pres steps into her 150th year. I believe we are about to enter our best chapter yet.

Ephesians 5 reveals a church ministry active in a sea of worldly confusion. Whenever you think our world is going to heck in a handbasket, study the first century cities where the church was born. Ephesus. Philippi. Corinth. Phew! The city was full of what Paul called “deeds of darkness.” Do you know what deeds of darkness are? Yeah. I don’t have to tell you. We all know. In the middle of them, there is a gospel ministry. There is a new way of life. “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs

from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:15-20). When confusion sets in, in the middle of a roiling sea of deeds of darkness, temptation and challenge, how do you stay wise? How do you stay joyful? How do you stay grateful, giving thanks, singing joyfully, for all that God is doing? The answer is in verse 14, “This is why it is said: ‘Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you” (Ephesians 5:14). Wake up! Wake up to Christ. His light will shine on you.

In the middle of COVID, we kept on task. From the last Vision Weekend until now, we kept the ship on bearings in the middle of the fiercest storm and heaviest crosswinds I have ever known. We must worship, we live for God. We held Good Friday and Easter Sunday on the roof of the church. We found that God had prepared us with an Easter Series of pre-cut videos from Israel to study the life of Jesus. We felt connected and cared for. At Christmas, we made much of being safely outside together—Wonder Village. We had to worship—that’s how we learn to **Live for God**. We put it all online. We are strong online still. We had to grow in discipleship. We pushed people to get together over the internet. Alpha met. Discover First Pres. Life Groups. We put out daily devotional videos from pastors and staff. **Keep Growing**. We had to stay engaged with the needs of the world. Global partnerships went online for prayer gatherings connecting to Egypt, Cuba, Mongolia and Guatemala. Locally, ESM closed its doors, but Crossfire Ministries was able to take huge leaps forward. We donated \$120,000 to set them up in a new building. Springs Rescue Mission moved forward with a new dining hall and other resources. We turned Café 225 into Samaritan Coffee @225, a new second-chance training opportunity for Springs Rescue Mission to help people become baristas. **Deploy Generosity**. Vacation Bible School last year was at home with take-away boxes. This year it was 400 kids in our Worship Center. You gotta keep going, folks. We have to keep going.

Wake up, sleeper. Rise from the dead. The world is ready for a new story. The world is hungry for the good news of Jesus. Who will we be now? The world has been through a storm. I see a city on the hill. I see a warm island refuge. I see us as the sun-heated stones the shipwreck survivor crawls up onto, to recover! People are hurting and in need of new foundations. We need to stake a claim;

we need to make a claim on the future. Right now. What do you want First Pres to be in 10 years? We are ready to be an answer. The world has questions, we have the answer. The answer is Jesus. How do we present that answer? We keep listening; we teach; we build conversations; we stay relevant. We are not inviting our city into yesterday; we are pulling our city into tomorrow—a tomorrow with Jesus.

A friend said once that when we talk about First Pres, we talk about legacy, but when this new church plant talks, they talk about what the Holy Spirit is doing now. I say, Amen! Let’s take that as a challenge. When I talk about 150 years of ministry, I am talking about the Holy Spirit at work. Not a flash-bang moment, but faithful growth, like an oak of righteousness, steadily growing and bearing fruit. First Pres is not a monument, museum or memory. First Pres is a movement, a thriving Gospel ministry, Spirit-driven, Scripturally-sound, Christ-focused, where God is changing lives every day.

I’ll never forget a young family who came to our church a few years ago. They were neighbors to a family in our church. When their cat died, our folks went over to knock on the door and ask if they could pray for them or help in any way. The man said, “Well, we need a shovel.” They got a shovel. After a while, there they were in church together. The father renewed a childhood faith. The mother came to Christ in a totally new way. She and the kids were baptized. She stopped me once after worship. “Sometimes you say ‘gospel’ and sometimes you talk about ‘the gospels’ plural. What’s the difference?” That’s new faith. New knowledge. New relationship with Jesus. It changed their marriage, changed their lives, changed their kids’ lives, changed eternity. That’s just one story. What’s yours? This is a thriving, life-changing, transformative ministry of Jesus Christ. That’s First Pres. Yesterday, today, tomorrow. Jump in. Motivated for ministry.

Wake up sleeper. Rise from the dead. Well, how do we do that? How can I do that? Jesus died for you so you could rise to life. Jesus slept, the sleep of the dead, so that you could come awake. Awake to life, eternal life in Him. How do we wake? How do we rise? We rise in Jesus.