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God, I come before you today and I confess that I am weak and I do not have what these people here need today. But in you, they can find what it is that they're longing for. You can find what it is you want them to hear and learn and the ways that you want them to grow. So God, I ask that you please speak through me, open eyes and ears of our spiritual understanding, that we can learn from you and that we can grow and that we can walk away changed. Help us to see and understand what you're saying to us this morning. Please don't let me get in the way of that. I pray in Jesus name, Amen. Well, we are going to continue today with what we've been discussing for the previous two weeks. When we started two weeks ago, we laid the foundation that God is amazing and ultimate and perfect. In other words, glorious. And when the Bible says he's worthy of all glory and honor and praise, we Christians choose to believe that and we make all our decisions big and small for the rest of our life like this. How do I do this in a way that gives the most glory to God? Whether it's big questions like what person do I marry or little questions like how do I dress today? We answered. The answer to every question starts with how can I give God more glory? And we do this because we love him and we were created to glorify him. Then last week we began discussing how one of the greatest ways to glorify God is to give up our plans for our lives and to take up his plans for our lives. We looked at how Jesus commanded us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And then after claiming all authority on heaven and on earth, he told us to go make disciples of all nations. And so we discussed ways to love the Christians in our lives by building them up with our spiritual gifts. And we discussed ways to make disciples of the non-Christians in our lives by simply loving them with all the love God has for them. But doing so in the name of Jesus, passing on to him any glory we receive. This week we're going to continue talking about how we can glorify God by obeying his command to love others and make disciples of all nations. And we are going to focus on doing that with Christians and non-Christians who are not in our day to day lives. Our slides ready? So that was our quadrant that we had there. And last week we focused on these two, the Christians and the non-Christians in my life. And we're going to move on to those two this week. There we go. Our first slide deals with Christians not in our lives. What does the Bible say about that? Hebrews 13.3 says, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also." Some of the Christians around the world are blessed and doing fine, such as most of us, and that's great. But there are so many places in the world where people are imprisoned and tortured and killed just for choosing to believe in Christ. Christianity is a crime in many countries, and our brothers and sisters are suffering simply for choosing to believe in God's message of love. This verse exhorts us to remember those people as if chained with them. It's hard to forget about someone you're chained to. And as we constantly remember those who are imprisoned and mistreated, the first thing we should be doing for them is praying for them. The fact is that God chooses to work through our prayers. Because the blood of Christ has cleansed us from all unrighteousness, we can approach the throne of God with confidence. The person you were, the sinner, would never have been able to get an audience with God. But Jesus lived a perfect life. Jesus had the right to approach God and make his requests. Because we are in Christ, we also can approach the throne and make our requests. Christ's righteousness is credited to us. Anything Jesus had a right to ask of the Father, we can now ask of the Father. And so we need to be praying for our suffering brothers and sisters. We need to pray for an end to their suffering. We need to pray for transformation of their cultures to be open and accepting to Christians. We need to pray that the hearts of their persecutors would break and soften and submit to the glorious news of Christ. And we need to pray that these Christians are strengthened and encouraged, and that even in the face of persecution, they would continue to hold fast to the promises and preach the word with boldness. These people need our prayers. But we can do more than pray. We can provide all manner of aid to them. Maybe we need to partner with a church and provide them with Bibles in their language or money for a building. Perhaps we can lobby our government and put pressure on their government to end religious persecution. And once our hearts are full of love towards these people, then we can step out in boldness and join them in their suffering. They want to know that their brothers and sisters in Christ haven't forgotten about them. Just to come and visit and pray and encourage them is such a worthwhile use of our time and resources. In a country like China where Christianity is growing but illegal, they are desperate for teachers to come over and share with them all of the great teachings we get on Sunday mornings. They don't get that, but they hunger for it. And when you do this for them, you will be blessed. Because you will see a people literally risking their lives to believe the gospel. A people who pray with tears for the unsaved in their families and their neighborhoods. And that will convict you, but it will also encourage you just as you are encouraging them. Now that we are talking about visiting our brothers and sisters around the world, it is appropriate to mention another group of Christians not in our lives that we care for. And that is the missionaries who are taking the gospel to the difficult areas of the world. Our next verses talk about them. 1 Corinthians 16, 1 and 2. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there may be no collections when I come." A friend of mine was just telling me how they opened an email from someone they knew and read this long detailed story about how this person bought a boat. But that boat wasn't right, so they traded it in for another boat, but that boat was too small. So they also got a big boat, and that one cost $300,000 to go along with their little boat. And the very next email they read was from a missionary in Mali, where people still sacrifice children to false gods. And the email started with, "Help, we need $12,600 to build a home for these children who are being offered up in child sacrifice." That just destroys me to know that the money someone spent on a boat could have built 23 homes for children who are being murdered. This verse in 1 Corinthians tells us that we should be using our money for the kingdom of God. We need to look at our income and our resources and ask ourselves, "Do I really believe that God provided me with this money, that He provided me with the opportunity and the skills that I use to make this money? If He's blessed me with this talent and opportunity, then why has He orchestrated all this? Is it because He thinks I'm super awesome and deserve to live a good life? Or is it because I am His hands and feet in the world, and He has a mission that He's trying to accomplish through me?" Think carefully about this. You are no more deserving or special than the Christians living in poverty and persecution. So why do you have money and they don't? If we are all parts of the body, what part are you? What purpose do you serve? There is no body part that sits around the body and flourishes while the rest of the body suffers. If one part of your body is sick, it affects the rest of the body. If there's something in your body flourishing while the rest of you is getting sick, we call that a parasite. Don't be a parasite on the body of Christ. Find your function and do it well. So that was my soapbox. I'll back off now. It's true that the missionaries on the field need money, but they also need prayer and love. It's so easy to feel like you've been forgotten when you're over there. The people over there need a support network over here. I'm sure many of you have said, "Oh, I could never go be a missionary overseas." Why? Because it's difficult? Exactly. It's no less difficult for the people who go. There is spiritual oppression. I remember going to shoot video for my parents in Japan for one of their Waiting World videos, and I was only there for a short-term trip, but I was overwhelmed with feelings of despair and worthlessness. Guess what the major spiritual strongholds in Japan are? Despair and worthlessness. Suicide is a major problem in Japan. And I went over thinking, "Oh, this will just be a short-term trip. I'll be fine." But the devil knew I was going over there on Team God to make a strategic attack against his kingdom, and he was having none of it. So I came under attack. Just think of how much more our full-time missionaries have to go through. In addition to spiritual oppression, there's also culture shock. They can't buy American comforts like Dove soap or Skippy peanut butter. They don't have someone to invite them out after church if they even get to go to a church. They probably don't even have access to nice American toilets where you can actually flush your toilet paper instead of having to throw it in the trash can. It's difficult to go somewhere and experience every little detail of your life become strange and unfamiliar. And that's why they need people here loving them, praying for them, keeping in contact with them, and doing any little thing to let them know we are remembering them. Finally, our last quadrant on the last slide is the "Unsafe People, Not in My Life." Well, there are billions of people in this group, and you might not be able to make a difference to all of them, but maybe you can make a difference to one or ten or a hundred or five hundred. Our verses for this section are Romans 10, 13 through 15. "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things." And Luke 10, 2. "Then Jesus said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'" I know we talked in the last slide about supporting missionaries, but we also need to think about sending missionaries. This is hard for me to imagine or understand, that there are places in the world where you can say, "Jesus," and people will respond, "Who?" And you'll say, "You know, Christianity," and they'll just shake their head in a shrug. They will be born, they will grow up, and they will die without ever knowing their Savior. And you're probably thinking, "That's for someone else. I could never do that." But the only thing preventing you from doing it is that thought. So maybe you can't move there for the rest of your life. Can you go for a week or a month? There are people who easily accept that they could go to China for a vacation, but when the idea of missionary comes up, suddenly everything's different. Why? Just go over there, love on some people, and do it in the name of Jesus. Any little bit helps, and I'm not just saying that. To a man dying of thirst, a cup of cold water is a huge difference. If that word "missionary" is what's tripping you up, just call it a "love vacation." It's a vacation where you love on some other people and bless them. Sounds like fun. It may not be as relaxing as other vacations you've been on, but it will be the most rewarding vacation you've ever been on. And the best part, it's the only vacation you'll ever go on that will cause God to say "well done, good and faithful servant." You'll never hear that for going on a self-serving vacation, only for a God-serving vacation. You don't even have to go over and do the traditional missionary stuff. Just go over with a bag full of treats and supplies for the missionaries who are already over there, spend time loving them and blessing them so they get recharged and can keep doing their work. And let us not overlook this verse we just read. "The laborers are few, therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers." You can pray. Prayer really works. If you feel your heart breaking for the lost overseas, pray for them. Pray that someone brings them the gospel. And look around this church for anyone you can encourage and support to go overseas, short or long-term. We've sent out missionaries before, but let's keep it up. Let's be a sending church. So now we've talked about all the ways God wants you interacting with all the people of the world. Christian and non-Christian, local and foreign, God has a plan. That last verse we read said we should pray to the Lord to send people out into His harvest. It is His harvest, and He's inviting us along. What an honor. Let's not drop the ball. I'm sure you've all felt the disappointment of asking your kids to help out around the house, only to come home and find them in front of the TV. Let's not do that to our Heavenly Father. Let's start thinking about everyone in our lives and everyone in the world and say, "How can I share God's love with that person?" What could be keeping you from this? If you're like me, it's the things in my heart that I hold before God. It's my precious time, my precious resources, and my precious reputation. It's all the things I won't give up for God that stand in the way of my obedience. God, I would do it, but I've been so busy, and I'm kind of tired and grumpy, and you don't want a tired, grumpy person. I would serve in that homeless shelter, but if I don't put in some extra hours this week, I might end up living in a homeless shelter. God, I'm really bad at articulating, and I'd look like an idiot if I tried, and I don't want to misrepresent you, so for your sake, I'm going to sit this one out. We're so good at coming up with excuses to get out of stuff. When I started dieting, I had to face the full force of my own excuse maker. And so many times, I just had to end up telling myself, "If I was going to get paid a million dollars to accomplish this, could I find the time or energy or whatever to get it done?" And I would say yes, and then I would do it. Today, God is asking, "Do you love me, and do you trust me?" We have all these promises about God knowing our needs and taking care of us, especially when we are seeking His kingdom. One hundred percent of the disciples that stepped out of the boat walked on water. No one that has ever put their trust in Him has been abandoned or put to shame. God always comes through for His children. He doesn't promise luxury. He doesn't promise comfort. But He promises He will be with you, and He will take care of you, and that you will achieve your destiny. And when you get to heaven, you will be rewarded for all the things you did and sacrificed for Him. Get this now. There will be nothing in heaven for the person with the biggest bank account. Your house up there will not be based on the size of your house down here. If you put all of your effort into growing your house down here, you are neglecting your house up there. There will be no rewards up there for the accomplishments down here. Fame and popularity and reputation do not transfer. The more time you spend getting people to recognize you down here, the fewer people will know you up there. And the more effort we put into this temporary life, the poorer we make our eternal life. Only what's done for the kingdom will transfer. So let's fall in love with God. Let's fall in love with His people. Let's joyfully seek out the work that God is accomplishing in this world and eagerly take part in it. Let's pray for the lost and for the persecuted church and for the missionaries. And let's use whatever resources God has blessed us with to minister to all three of those groups. Let's be creative and clever in getting the gospel to all nations, because once we have, Jesus promises to return. And we can all leave this sickness and misery and decay behind and begin our eternal lives with Him in heaven. Hallelujah. Heavenly Father, we are so humbled and blessed that in Your infinite goodness, in all of the good, wonderful things that You are doing around this world that You have called us and invited us to take part in that. Please spark our imaginations and our hearts to fall in love with what You're doing and give us creative new ways to see the people around us and the people around the world. Help us to be clever and to open our eyes to their need and their hurt and our suffering and find the ways we can use the resources You blessed us with, whether financial or just time and money and prayer and anything, to help you accomplish what You are doing in this world. It is so amazing. It is the most wonderful thing we could do. We are so blessed to have the opportunity to be a part of it. As we go through this week, God, open our eyes to the opportunities around us where You are working and that You are calling us to join in. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.