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All right. Good morning. Our children may be dismissed to Children's Church. And I am going to get right into my message. So let's start with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, thank you for this beautiful day for this chance to get together and to worship you and to glorify you and to be your children and experience your presence here among us. I ask now that you will please guide the words of my mouth that they will bring honor and glory to you and that they will encourage and build up my brothers and sisters here. I pray in Jesus' name, Amen. All right. Well, I hope you guys have been around for the past couple of weeks because we have had an amazing time. Our incoming pastor, Mr. Keith Glasgow, has been here. He flew with his wife, Marge, from Australia and they spent the last two Sundays and all the time in between with us. He brought the sermon every Sunday and they ate every meal with someone here at this church. You guys who did a fantastic job of showing hospitality and that was wonderful. So we had a really, really fantastic time getting to meet and know our incoming pastor. Now the reason he was here, in case you still haven't heard, is that there has been a delay. His wife, Marge, has been going through cancer treatment, as you all know. You've been praying for her and that's amazing. They did the surgery, they got the cancer out, but they said that the type of cancer that she has is so aggressive that if even one cell of it got out of there and got somewhere else in her body that she would have relapsed. And so they said, "What we really need to do is we really need to get you on this medicine and before we can put you on this medicine, we have to put you on chemo." So long story short, she's got another 12 months of treatment ahead of her and they won't be able to come here and take the role of pastor until next October. When we first found this out, I started calling around to the other people on the search committee and I explained the situation and there was a thought that had popped into my head about this whole thing and when I called Jerry Myers, he had the same thought pop into his head and it's a thought that I think a lot of you have felt since you learned about this. And that thought is we can't wait any longer for the pastor, the incoming pastor to come and take the reins and lead us. We need to start coming up with our ideas and our changes and implementing those on our own right now. We've been kind of like a boat with a full crew but without a captain and we've been kind of sitting there for a while and it's time to get that boat moving. We can't wait on the captain anymore and we need to get to work and so that was the feeling I had and that's a feeling that I've heard a lot of others of you repeat. And so that's kind of the first part of my message today. As we've been meeting with Keith, as we've had this time to process it and everything, I've been really blessed to see the people who are itching to do this, who are just excited and getting on fire about dreaming dreams for this church, coming up with ideas and implementing those ideas. I've been here for a couple years, I've been attending here, I haven't been the pastor but I've been attending here for a couple years and I've heard a lot of people say, "Oh you know I wish we would do another hog roast or I wish you would do another birthday bash or I wish we had more small groups." And while there has been a lot of people wishing for that stuff, there has not been people doing the hog roast or the birthday bash or whatever and yet now I'm seeing that start to happen. We have someone who's going to do another hog roast, we have people planning small groups and birthday bashes and it's happening. People are stepping up and making these changes and I feel like it's kind of like, remember in the story of David and Goliath, you had the Israelites lined up against the Philistines and every day Goliath would come out and he'd taunt the Israelites and he would challenge one of them to come up and fight him and the Israelites would just kind of stand there and look at each other and "Are you gonna do it?" "No, I'm not gonna do it." "Are you gonna do it?" And finally, David said, "You know what? I'm gonna step up and do it." And it doesn't matter how small or insignificant I am in comparison to him because I know the God who is on my side and that's how I know I'm going to be victorious and so I see that spirit of David emerging in people's hearts. I see people stepping up to face the Giants who are opposing this church. So in the coming weeks, people are going to be start brainstorming about what steps we can be taking. MNC is going to be meeting, we're going to be Skyping with Keith and getting his input. I know some of the other boards have already been talking about what more they can be doing. Actually, MNC has put some suggestion boxes underneath, will be putting some suggestion boxes underneath the mailboxes and there's going to be two of them. There's going to be one that's suggestions, things for like new ideas that you think we should be doing and then there's going to be another one that's called discussion items and that's things that you think we should be doing differently and it's not a complaint box. It is a place for you to say here's how I think we could be doing this better. You need to offer a suggestion on how to improve something you think that we are weak in. So new ideas, improved ideas and it would be really fantastic if you also said and I will help lead this because our church has no shortage of great ideas but we have a shortage of people who say I will spearhead that. You know, I've had a lot of people say if someone leads the hog roast I'll help with the hog roast. We've had a long wait for someone to say I'll lead the hog roast. So put your ideas in there, that's great. We will listen to all of them, pray about all of them but if you're gonna be someone who's gonna lead the charge on that it's a lot more likely to happen. So that's kind of my first half of my sermon is step up, get excited, start brainstorming, pray about it too because you know we could go out there, we could find the most successful church in the nation and say well they have this small group so we're gonna do this small group and they have this program and we'll do this program and that could all completely bomb and fail for us. The thing that will work for us is if we get inspired with God's ideas and get on board with his plan for this church. So come up, brainstorm your good plans but pray about them for sure and make sure you feel the Holy Spirit in whatever ideas you encourage us or help us to pursue. Don't worry about the fact that our pastor's not here yet. I keep telling people this church was around for 60 years before we had our first senior pastor so I'm sure we can hang on for just one more. Alright so that's the first part step up, get excited, start brainstorming. The second part that I wanted to talk about is be excellent, be excellent. God has given us our lives, our bodies, our minds, our families, our friends, our money, our job, our community, our stuff. God has given us everything we have. Everything we have is from him and for him and he gives us these things to glorify him and to accomplish his work in the world and so as we use the things that he has given us, as we use our body and our minds and our money and our friendships, we should pursue excellence with every one of those things because these things are for God, because we live our lives for God, we should pursue excellence in all areas. 1 Corinthians 10.31 says therefore whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you all to the glory of God. Colossians 3.23 and 24 says and whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance for you serve the Lord Christ, for you serve the Lord Christ. It doesn't say you could serve or that you should serve the Lord Christ. If you are a Christian, you serve him. That's what it means when we call Jesus Lord. That word Lord in the Bible, it's really saying slave master. When you become a Christian, you are laying down your whole life and your whole will to him and taking up his purposes for your life and for this world. Yes, God is a father who loves us like dear precious children, but because of his greatness and because of his love for us, we give up our will for him. In the Old Testament, it talks about if you have a slave, your slave will be released after this many years, but if you're slave, when it comes time to be released, if he loves you and he loves being part of your household and he wants to stay on with you, he wants to volunteer to spend the rest of his life as your slave, it's like here's how you go through to make him your lifelong slave and it involved the slave putting his earlobe up on the door post and they would stick an awl through it and that would symbolize that this slave has volunteered to serve you out of love for the rest of your days. And I realized that our country has had a bad history with slavery and there's a lot of stigma and stuff around slavery, but God is so good and so lovely and pure and wonderful that to commit ourselves in slavery to him is a beautiful, glorious thing and it is where you will find the most fulfilling life that you've, more fulfilling than any dream you could ever come up with for yourself and I know if you haven't gotten that yet, it sounds like I'm talking crazy, but it's true. If you lay down your interests completely and just completely take out God and say, "God, I'm just gonna live for you and do everything for you and stop worrying about my own life and interest and future," he will take care of you and he will bless you in ways you couldn't believe. In 2nd Corinthians 11.23 Paul says, and he's bragging about himself, "Are those guys ministers of Christ? I am more. In labors more abundant." In other words, Paul is saying, "I work harder than all y'all." He's like, "You guys can't hold a candle to how hard I work. You have no idea how many times I've been shipwrecked, how many times I've been persecuted in the jungle and in the city and by Jews and by pagans and how many times I've been thrown in jail and beaten." He's like, "I work harder than everyone," and he brags about that and he does it for the glory of God and we should have the same mindset. It doesn't mean that he enjoyed being shipwrecked or persecuted, but that stuff didn't matter because of his love for God. So as you consider your body, you can say to yourself, "God, you gave me this body. This body is a gift from you and I'm going to use it to bless you and serve you and I'm going to take care of it and not put so much junk food into it and I'm gonna exercise a little more because this is a gift you have given me and I'm going to use it to bless you. And when it comes to my mind, God, I'm going to stop filling it with a bunch of junk from television, but I'm going to buy a book and actually learn something new or maybe learn a new language or keep that filth out and actually keep my mind sharp and learn new things. And God, when I think about the money I have, I'm going to take what I need for my food and my clothing and my house, but then I'm going to take the rest of it, God, and I'm going to figure out some way to bless you and to accomplish your purposes. And when I think about the people in my life, God, I will stop focusing on what they can do for me and how they make me feel good and instead I will work on blessing them and serving them and showing your love to them. And when I look at that empty room in my house, I will stop thinking about how much more hobbies I can cram into that room and I'll start looking for an orphan or a kid that needs a foster parent. Be excellent in all the little areas of your life. Go through everything you have and everything that you are and commit each one of those areas. God, I commit my body to you. I commit my mind to you. I commit my finances to you and lay it all down and say, "I'm going to be excellent in this area of my life for you, God." Now, you won't be able to do this unless you have the key and the key is understanding God's love for you and really believing and experiencing his love for you. If you try and do this out of duty, you'll just fall flat on your face. You won't have the strength to go on if you think that you're trying to earn salvation or any of that nonsense. You have to believe and accept that God forgave you, that you have been adopted into his family as his son or daughter and that he loves you and he loves you so much that he sent his son to die for you. And out of this great love, if you can believe and accept and comprehend this great love, you will find it so easy to commit the parts of your life in excellence to God. It's like, I'm sure most people here have fallen in love and before you fall in love, there are things that you can't do or that you'll say you'll never do like, "Oh, I can't get out of bed early or I can't go to see that kind of movie." And yet when you fall in love, all the things you said you couldn't do before suddenly, you're doing them for the person you love. It's so easy to go see it, you know, a chick flick if you're a guy, if you're going with the girl you love. When we fall in love, our burdens become so light and so that's why love is the key to this. Fall in love with God. Fall in love with God and let that love be the power that that motivates you and spurs you on. It will lighten your load. And also commit, so commit each day, spend time each day, just spending time thinking about how lovely God is. And in your mind, fall in love with God every day and also pray God for help to be excellent because as you pray for that, it will remind you, "I am pursuing excellence today for the one I love." So now we're going to have our quiet time, our open worship, and as we do, as we sit and wait upon God's spirit to dwell with us and to speak to us, I would ask that you would please spend a little bit of time reflecting on God's love for you, reflecting on what areas you haven't given up and committed to Him, what areas you haven't been as excellent as you could have been for Him, and also be thinking about this church and the ways that God is leading you to love and serve this church. What new ways that you can be a blessing to God through this church. Heavenly Father, thank you for this love that you have placed into our hearts and that binds us together. If there's anyone here who has not experienced great love that you have for them, I pray that you would fill their heart to overflowing with this new this new experience that will change their life, that will reset all their priorities, what caused them to walk in the destiny that you had prepared for them since the beginning of time. We thank you for all the blessings that you have given to us in our lives. We ask that you will please help us to see how we can be more excellent and how we use those things for your glory. As we go about this week, God continue to show us the ways that we can step up and we can be more effective in accomplishing your will in our families and in our jobs in our community. I pray this in Jesus name.