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Good morning. Children may be dismissed to Children's Church. Our verse, our central verse today, I'm gonna read that and then we're gonna open with prayer. It's from Hebrews 10 24 and let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we've come together here now to learn from your word but we need your Holy Spirit in our hearts opening up our understanding and teaching us. So please breathe your spirit into the heart of every person here, open our eyes of understanding, help us to hear what it is you're saying and how we can grow and become more like the people you want us to be. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. It's been mentioned a couple times in monthly meeting in places and it was in the bulletin once but in case you hadn't heard connection church, the church that rented our building on Sunday evenings has closed down and they it's we're real sorry to see that happen and they felt like they just didn't get the traction that they needed to keep going. After it was all over I met with Rodney the pastor of connection church and I we sat down and we talked about you know what happened and and then we started talking about Keith and because that was just before Keith got here and we talked about what all Keith wanted to do and the plans he wanted to make and and you know we're talking about vision and stuff for our church and one the the one piece of advice that Rodney had for us he said he said I don't know what it is about Carmel Indiana but you can make the nicest best church in the state in the country. The people of Carmel Indiana won't just come in. You have to go out and bring them in. You have to invite them in. You cannot expect people just to come in. He says I don't know what it is but that's just the town we live in. It reminds me of the movie field of dreams with Kevin Costner. Some of you seen it. It's this guy and he owns a cornfield and one day he's out in his cornfield and he hears this voice say "if you build it, they will come" and he's like "what?" and he looks over and he sees like this vision of a baseball field and he's like "okay" and so he doesn't know who will come if he builds it but he decides to tear down part of his cornfield and he builds a baseball diamond and long story short a bunch of ghosts come and play baseball. It's a great movie. The ghost of great famous dead baseball players. Anyway but that phrase "if you build it, they will come" that is that is something that we would really like to believe here but unfortunately it's not gonna happen. No matter what we build, no matter how great and wonderful and attractive we make it, they're not just going to come. They have to be brought in. It's like we have to change from the mindset of baiting a trap in the hopes that somebody's gonna run by and get caught in it to change that mindset to we are preparing a room to adopt. We're putting in you know all of the stuff for our little child that we're going to be adopting and bringing into our lives and I don't know if any of you have ever adopted before but you can't just put in the bed and the clothes and the toys and then just sit there and wait for orphans to come by and then suddenly you've adopted that that's not how it works you have to go out and find the orphans and bring them into your home and that is how our church needs to operate. We must be like Jesus when he said in Matthew 23 37 "O Jerusalem Jerusalem the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her how often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings but you were not willing." Jesus wanted to gather in the children of Jerusalem he wanted to go out and bring them in that was his heart his heart was a heart of love that wanted to adopt and bring in. Keith spoke on the importance of prayer in this process and prayer is very important but it's for two reasons one's a real obvious reason and one's a very not so obvious reason the obvious reason is that prayer works prayer unlocks the power of God in this world and and changes the world it makes things happen as Jerry was just testifying this morning but the not so obvious side effect of prayer and one that's very important is that prayer conforms our heart to God's heart and it prepares us to be the people the church that that the people out there need us to be. Prayer converts your heart to like that of God's heart. It's very easy to focus on the planning on all of the the programs and the and the stuff that we want to do and then forget to love those people out there it's real easy to get so caught up and involved in our plans that we lose sight of our love and 1st Corinthians 13 brings us back into line when it talks about how we can give away all our money and and to the poor and speak in tongues and do miracles and all of that stuff if we don't have love it's all meaningless and worthless and so that's why my message today is we must stir up our hearts to love we must stir up the love in our hearts. Your heart is just like everything else in the universe it kind of it's affected by entropy everything just eventually settles down and gets still and calm and and so we have to stir it back up I'm sorry and entropy is kind of a scientific thing and I'm kind of a nerd and happy Star Wars Day. Yeah may the fourth be with you. Your heart grows still it calms down it and you have to stir up that love and the sad thing in our lives the sad thing the thing that ruins marriages and friendships and churches is that people think that that that love is just something that is this force that is out of their control and it comes and goes and you fall into love and out of love and that you have no control over it and if you just don't feel that love anymore then maybe it's time to move on and and that's not biblical and that's what we're gonna talk about. For example a few months ago people kept coming up to me and saying Matthew what's wrong and I'm like well nothing's wrong well and and it kept happening over and over and and I finally that why do you think something's wrong with me and they're like well it's your expression and I thought about it and the expression that I was wearing around at the time it was just this and for those of you listening at home this is the expression that you make when you are using none of your facial muscles. I wasn't really happy but I wasn't really sad I was just kind of bleh and my expression was kind of bleh but I wasn't you know nothing was wrong and I said well I want people to stop asking me what's wrong because nothing's wrong and so I decided that I was just going to every time I caught myself with a bleh face I was going to put a smile on my face so throughout the day I was just like oh I'm not smiling and I just start smiling and and it took care of my first problem which is that people thought that I was depressed or something was wrong but it had an unintended side effect is that it started cheering me up and that was real backwards to my thinking because you know in my experience your expression is the result of your emotion but now I found that I short-circuited that and my expression was causing my emotion by wearing a smile that I was actually cheering myself up and in addition to that people would see me and they'd start smiling I was cheering up other people around me too so it turned out to be really fantastic in fact one time Jim and I were grocery shopping and he was off getting shampoo or something and I was standing there at the end of the aisle and I was just kind of standing like this smiling at the meat section and I wasn't in like I wasn't right in front of the meat section I was a good 20 feet away and there was a you know like stuff in between me so there's no way I could be shopping you know I couldn't reach and grab anything I was just sort of smiling off at the meat section and there's this little old lady she goes walking by and she looks at me and she starts slowing down and she looks at the meat section and and she she didn't really want to stop but but right before she kind of got out of my eyeshot she said what's so good and I just kept smiling because you know it's like there's nothing good about the meat section but but I do but there is something that we all have to be very happy about you know we our sins have been forgiven a God who we estranged ourselves from and abandoned ourselves from has taken our place and brought us back purchase us back so we do have something to be very happy about and even if your world is falling apart around you you can always think back to that important thing and let that bring a smile to your face so this whole idea of your being in control being able to affect your own emotions a few days after that meat section experience I read something that confirmed this in me there's a man named Mike Rowe he got his start on a TV show called dirty jobs that man I bet his start start but that's where he got really famous and he would go around and just do really disgusting jobs and that was the TV show is he would be working with filth and sewage and animal parts and just really horrible things and people would watch him do these gross things and they wanted to see Mike Rowe get dirty so anyways nowadays he works helping people find jobs there's a lot of people out there who think oh I can't make good money because I don't have a college degree or anything and he's like no I mean if he's like if you can learn to weld you can get a really nice fantastic salary you might have to move to North Dakota but he's like there's plenty of jobs out there well paying jobs for people who don't have college degrees and he's helping people find good jobs and helping people realize they don't necessarily need a college degree to do it anyway someone sent him an email or a letter saying you know I'm looking for my dream job I want you know I want something that really makes me happy and I can't really seem to find it and this was part of his reply he says happiness does not come from a job it comes from knowing what you truly value and behaving in a way that's consistent with those beliefs many people today resent the suggestion that they're in charge of the way they feel but trust me those people are mistaken that was a big lesson from dirty jobs and I learned it several hundred times before it stuck what you do who you're with and how you feel about the world around you is completely up to you I find that so often we allow ourselves to live at the mercy of our emotions I'm not gonna do that because I feel I'm gonna do this because I feel whatever and we our emotions are our excuse to do or not do certain things but what I've learned from my smile experiment and what I've learned from my grow is that you can control your mood your attitude your outlook your emotions and some people don't like hearing that that was part of what my growth said they want to feel miserable and moody and depressed because that's their excuse to be lazy and to quit when the going gets tough I'm not gonna do that because I'm not in the mood to do that and I can't control my mood I'm at the mercy of my mood so I'm just not gonna do that and when you tell them ah but you are in control of your mood and you can change your mood and then you can do that they're like I don't want to hear that don't tell me I'm in control of my mood my mood controls me you can control your mood and so they don't like hearing that you're taking you're taking away their excuse but you know what there are so many people in this world who have had such a worse life than you who have faced such insurmountable odds and have managed to do so with joy in their heart people who have been who have had to watch their families get murdered people who have been maimed and disfigured and they've lived life with joy there's we got that book out there and I can't remember the guy's name it's Nick and something with a V but he was born with no arms and legs and yet he is a motivational speaker and he's full of joy every day and you know there's so many people who could who have every right to choose to be miserable and and sad and give up and they don't if they choose to fill their hearts with joy and they choose to press on the best example is God himself when we sin against him we deserve to be immediately just wiped out of existence you know our sin is is a criminal capital offense to God and he could just choose to to feel justice just not not even anger he could just choose to feel justice and just wipe us out but instead he chooses to show love he chooses to show mercy praise God that you can choose your emotions and so this brings us back to prayer as you pray you as you pray for difficult situations as you pray for difficult people God takes your heart and begins to break down all of that hurt and pain and anger and soften it towards the person who's causing that to you and that is why I think so many verses tell us to keep praying I'm gonna go through a lot of them very quickly here but they're listed out in your bulletins first Thessalonians 5 17 pray without ceasing Romans 12 12 continue steadfastly in prayer Ephesians 6 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit collagions for to continue earnestly in prayer and be vigilant in it first Peter 4 7 the end of all things is at hand therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers Isaiah 62 6 they will pray day and night continually take no rest all you who pray to the Lord first Thessalonians 3 10 night and day praying exceedingly just pray pray pray the Bible emphasizes over and over people who just pray and don't stop keep praying that is the message of the Bible and and I'm not I'm not at all diminishing the fact that when you pray you are unlocking the power of God and and Jesus gave a parable about that Luke 18 then Jesus spoke a parable to them that men always ought to pray and not lose heart saying there was a certain city there was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man now there was a widow in that city and she came to him saying get justice for me and my adversary and he would not for a while but afterward he said within himself though I do not fear God nor regard man yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her lest by continual coming she weary me then the Lord said hear what the unjust judge said and shall God not avenge his own elect who cry out to him day and night though he bears long with them I tell you that he will avenge them speedily nevertheless when the Son of Man comes will he really find faith on the earth Jesus is saying even with heathen earthly wicked judges persistence pays off how much more is it going to pay off with a God who loves you God will hear and will answer your prayers but you must be persistent but will the Son of Man find faith on earth when he comes the prayer of faith means to believe that your prayers will be heard and answered it's you know I I know I spent a big portion of my life with a really poor image of God and the prayers that I prayed I believed that weren't being heard and weren't going to get answered and that's ridiculous it's not ridiculous that the state I was in because this is that's kind of the world we live in we live in a world where people let you down we learn live in a world where people don't go out of their way to help you and so of course we tend to apply these attributes to God now he's just not gonna listen he's not gonna help whatever but that's not the God of love that we serve and the cross of Jesus is the perfect example of how much he loves us we did nothing to deserve that and he did it anyway so pray and believe that your prayers will be heard and answered and I promise you that no matter how long you've been praying no matter how well I know you are not I'm confident that I can say you don't trust in God's goodness as much as you should I don't trust in God's goodness as much as I should there always comes a point in my prayer where that doubt creeps into my heart is he really hearing this is he really gonna answer this yes because he's better than you think he is he's better than you can understand his goodness is without end and without question and when one of our prayers fail rather than viewing that outcome through the goodness of God we rely on our human wisdom and doubt we say we make up excuses to doubt the goodness of God rather than it's actually seeking God and saying God why did this prayer fail and if he's not gonna answer the prayer he'll at least help you understand what's going on if you've been praying and that prayer hasn't been answered that's when you must keep praying that is the point of spiritual growth and you must rely on the goodness of God and if you ever aren't sure of the goodness of God look at the cross if you give up on that prayer it demonstrates that you never really believed God would have answered your prayer if you have a spouse or a loved one and you go to them and and there's something that they're totally able to do it's completely within their power and you say you know hey would you please do that and they go no if you say oh well and walk away then you probably that kind of response demonstrates you didn't really believe that they were ever going to do it but if it's a good thing and they are capable of doing it and you say do it and they say no you'd be like what do you mean no this is a good thing and you can do it do it and no matter how many times they say no you you trust in in the goodness of this person that you know you say stop saying no and get it done and God tells us we can approach him with boldness and we can trust in his goodness and we should keep relying on that goodness over and over scripture says keep praying keep praying and don't wait until you feel like it start praying and then your feelings will fall in line just like the smile exercise I started smiling and then my emotions followed suit when you start praying for people that you really don't feel like praying for I had some people like that this week there are some people I was just really angry at and just they hurt me and they'd fun of me and made fun of my faith and and I and I just did not want to pray for those people but I started praying for them and as I prayed my heart started filling up with love and forgiveness for those people so stop letting your emotions dictate start doing the right thing and let your emotions fall into line and even better in addition to the transformation that takes place in your heart you will be unlocking the power of God in the lives of those people you're praying for so pray for this church as we continue to plan our visions plan our our outreach programs and everything that we're trying to do pray for the leaders pray for the people who are in the positions actually getting the work done we have a Tuesday 10 a.m. prayer meeting if you if you want to come and have corporate prayer time or you can arrange your own corporate prayer time if 10 a.m. on Tuesday is not convenient or just pray at home you know alone there's there's a time and a place for personal prayer and there's a time and place for corporate prayer start praying for the people we're trying to get in here start praying for the broken families in Carmel start start praying for the single parents that we want to reach out to pray for the the children pray for struggling marriages pray for overworked parents there's a lot of people in Carmel who are hurt and needy and they need your love and if you want to build that love for them start praying for them stir up your love like our like our scripture verse said let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works it's through that considering it's through that praying and let me just say the prayers that we're talking about here is you don't just write down a list of names and say bless him bless him bless him that's not the kind of prayer we're talking about we're talking about a kind of prayer where you actually sit and think about that person and you think about what they're going through and you really consider them and our verse says consider one another in order to stir up love and good works and as you pray for them like this as you really consider them as you pray for them it will stir up love and that love will then move you into the realm of good works and they'll transform us into the kind of people we need to be to reach this city for Jesus we're going to have our time of open worship now and during this time I encourage you to pick pick someone and just start praying for them maybe it's someone difficult in your life right now maybe it's someone difficult from your past like a parent you didn't get along with or some bully from a school when you're a kid that you just haven't been able to let go of that maybe it's someone in your neighborhood maybe you just want to start praying for the people in general outside this church pray for the people inside this church but just just pick someone and just start really consider them and really start stirring up your love for them during this time I hope you all prayed for someone during that time and I hope that you all felt your heart soften towards the person you were praying for we need to keep that up we need to make that a regular habit and we need to especially do it towards the difficult people in this world because the difficult people are the ones that are not going to get love from anywhere else in the world but they're going to get it from God and it's going to happen through us and so we need to focus on the difficult people but the good news is that God will soften your heart and build up loving your heart as you pray for them and those difficult people will who have experienced just rejection and hurt from everyone because they know they're difficult when they experience love from us then they will experience God I'm about to close in prayer but I'm supposed to make a couple quick reminders number one Mark Dolan will be only available by phone this week if you need to contact the prayer chain so please don't email her this week and number two it's on the back of your bulletin but the school is putting on a pray play Friday and Saturday night and I encourage you all to attend I'm gonna be there at least one of the nights but we really want to support this school and the hard work these kids have done let's close in prayer Heavenly Father we thank you that you are a God who chose love for us we thank you that you love can be chosen it doesn't have we don't have to wait around for it to feel it we are not at the mercy of our emotions thank you God that we can choose love just like you chose love help us to pray for the difficult people and as we do that God please soften our hearts open up the love in our hearts towards everyone in our lives until we become bright shining cities on a hill radiating your love and your glory into this town in Jesus name amen