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Heavenly Father, we thank you for the chance to get together here today. We thank you for the beautiful rain to nourish our earth. We thank you for the freedom to learn about you and to worship you. We thank you for the opportunities to serve and to bless those around us. And we thank you for your word. And God, now as we study from your word and as we learn from you, we pray that you speak to our hearts through your Holy Spirit and help us to understand your truth and what you would have us know today. In the name of your Son Jesus, amen. So I'm going to start today by talking a little bit about what's going on. Those of you who are new here today, we just spent the last month with our incoming pastor. His name is Keith Glasgow. He is going to be here permanently starting in mid-October, but he was here just for this past month with his wife and they were looking for a house and getting prepared to move here. And I'm the interim pastor and I'm just here to fill in until he gets here. And I wasn't able to be here the whole month, but for the time I was here I was able to listen to him and I was real blessed by what he shared with us and I hope you were too. And I'm looking forward to him being here permanently. But since my time here is coming to an end, I have been, instead of just hitting delete on all the job offer emails that usually flood my inbox, I've started responding to some of them. And so I have gotten a couple local businesses who are interested in hiring me and that's a good thing because I need something after this. And so one of the businesses has said, "Hey, you know, we're thinking about hiring you and did you come in for the next two weeks as a contractor and kind of evaluate you." And I said, "That's perfect because we have guest speakers already lined up for the next two weeks. Next week, Carl Hinkle is going to be here performing and doing his ministry of music for us. And the week after that, we have Bob and Hope Carter, a missionary couple at our church supports. They will be here presenting, talking about what they do, what's been going on with them." And so I said, "You know, that's perfect. I can come in because, you know, I got two weeks where I don't need to prepare a sermon and anything." And so I think that was providential. Now, expressed to them, I said, "You know, our pastor doesn't get here to mid-October and so, you know, I really need to stay around till that." And they said, "Well, we're really desperate and so we're trying to work out all the details and I'll let you know how that turns out." But anyways, I'm talking about the future here because when I started doing the interim pastor position, you know, it really felt like a time of transition. You know, we had just, we lost our last pastor and then I stepped in just to kind of be here in the meantime and it really felt like transition. But then I ended up being here so long that it kind of went from feeling like transition to just being ordinary. And now, once again, Keith's finally here and now it's starting to feel like transition again. And so since we're in transition, I'm talking about the future. And the message I wanted to give you today, the little bit that I wanted to tell you, and it's something that I've kind of touched on for the past two years, but I really want to hit it home today, is that the future of this church is in your hands. Philippians 2 12 says, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." A lot of people hear that verse and they misunderstand it. They think that that means we have to work to earn salvation and that's not what he's saying. He's saying now that you have salvation, work it out with fear and trembling. He's saying you've gone from guilty to not guilty, but now you still have this whole process of spiritual growth. You know, that anyone here who's been a Christian for more than a month can testify that the moment you put your faith in Jesus, you didn't suddenly become a perfect person, right? You didn't suddenly, you're no longer in this instantly, you know, free from temptation. You did not instantly believe everything exactly right about the Bible. You know, there was still a growth process involved and that's what scholars refer to as sanctification. And you know, they say justifications when you go from not guilty to not guilty, that's justification, but now we have this sanctification. So the verse, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," is talking about now that you're justified, work out your sanctification, work out your growth and development with fear and trembling. In other words, take it seriously and that applies to us individually, but it also applies to us corporately. As a church, we need to consider our growth and our development and our maturity as a group with fear and trembling. We need to take it seriously. You see, we are Carmel Friends Church, not the building, not faith and practice, not it's not organization, it's us, it's people. We are Carmel Friends Church and if you haven't said that to yourself in a while, if you haven't said, "I am Carmel Friends Church" in a while, then do that a few times this week. Look in the mirror and say, "I am Carmel Friends Church," because it's true and we as a group are Carmel Friends Church, because Jesus didn't die for brick and mortar. He didn't die so that this building could keep existing or so that our particular faith and practice could keep existing. He died so that this group of people would be brought together and that we would be united in love and in purpose. We are the ones Jesus died for. And I wanted to find a Bible verse that talks about that, how the church is not a building, the church is the people, but the thing is is when the Bible was written, the church was brand new and they didn't have all the buildings and stuff and they didn't they didn't really have that problem of people confusing, you know, the organization with the people, because all it was at the time was the people. So I couldn't really find a good verse to say, you know, "the people are the church," but as you read, if you go through every reference that talks about the church, it's real clear that it's talking about people. Titus 2.14 says, "Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works." That's what Jesus has done here. He has created his own special people to be zealous for good works. And in addition, as you look throughout the Old Testament, and you see that the church or the temple or whatever it was called at the time, was the place where the Spirit of God dwelled. In the Old Testament, he dwelled in the tabernacle in the Holy of Holies, but now because of the work of Jesus on the cross, the Holy of Holies has become in us and the Spirit of God dwells in each and every one of us. And so it is not, it is not any exaggeration to say that we are the church. We are now the building where the Spirit of God dwells. But it's interesting that the Bible seems to emphasize that yes, God dwells in each and every one of us, but even more so, he seems to be more magnified, more put on display when we come together as a body. Matthew 1820, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them." 1 Corinthians 5, 4, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together along with my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ." God places this special emphasis on us. And there's been people who talk about how we're slowly becoming an isolated culture, that we used to be more communal and we've been, because of technology and stuff, we're kind of breaking away into these little isolated, we just want to be individuals. But the truth is, is that God wants us as a group, as this group, as this body. And he works more powerfully when we are together and when we are in unity, in love, he wants us to be together and he wants to work through us corporately. As I was growing up in this church, sitting in that pew, the very first pew right there, because that's where my family all was at, I used to think, I used to look at the people up here and I would think, "Wow, they are special, you know, they are the pastor, they are the clergy, there's something special about them." But having transitioned up here, having gone from just right there to right up here, and now, being about to go from right up here just to right back down there, I realize that that's, it's not the case in Christianity. Other religions, yeah, they, you've got to be the special person and all this stuff and you meet this certain standard, but the thing about Christianity is the spirit that is in me, and this is, Quakers were one of the first ones to really hit this home, the spirit that is in me, the spirit of God that lives in me, is the same spirit that was in the men who laid their hands on the sick and watched them get well. It's the same spirit that was in people who healed the blind and the deaf who walked on water, and it's the same spirit in me that was in the men who authored the Scriptures. The same power is in me and in you, if your faith is in Christ, that same spirit that did all those things through all those men is in you, and so that idea of clergy and lady doesn't really exist for Christianity. We are all clergy. We all have the Spirit of God in us, empowering us to accomplish whatever he wants us to do. Now, there are some caveats, of course. Certain people have certain giftings, all right? Some people have the gift to stand up here and teach, but not everyone has that gift. Certain people have an evangelistic gift where they can walk up to a complete stranger and just start telling about Jesus. There's different gifts. There's gifts of hospitality, making someone feel welcome. That's a spiritual gift. There's gifts of administration, being able to to run a board or a monthly meeting or stuff like that. These are different gifts, okay? And not everyone has every gift, and so the spirit that's in us is that Spirit of God that has done all those amazing things, and he is going to do amazing things through you, but you're not going to do everything, all right? And that's why God brings us together, because some of us will do one thing, some of us will do another thing, but everybody's doing something, and everybody can do something because it's God working through you. Carmel Friends Church has a ministry outreach at your job because you're there. Carmel Friends Church has a ministry outreach in your neighborhood because you're there. We have ministry outreach all over the city because that's where you guys are. I've been skipping over some verses, let me read them. 2 Corinthians 4.13, "We have the same spirit of faith." 1 Corinthians 12.4, "There are diversities of gifts but the same spirit." It's the same spirit that's in me, that's in you, that's in the men who did all the amazing, wonderful stuff. And I also want another caveat. There's different gifts, there's also different levels of maturity, okay? And any of you who have spent long enough as a Christian to have matured enough to look back and see where you were and where you are, for you it's easy to say, "Wow, I'm glad God didn't put me into too important of a position back then because I was still kind of a mess and He's been fixing me." And I wouldn't ask a brand new Christian to come up here and teach because there's just a lot he doesn't know yet. There's a lot of the Bible he hasn't read and studied and a lot that the Spirit of God hasn't revealed to him yet. So the Spirit of God is in us to work through us but it's going to be different areas because of the different gifts and it's going to be at different levels because if you're still, because of your maturity, maybe God just wants you ministering to one person or maybe he wants you ministering to a big group of people. It depends on what he wants for you. But no matter what, I talked about all different kinds of ministry, talked about you know preaching and evangelism and all that stuff and how each of us has different gifts but all of us have one ministry that we all share in common. It's the one thing that every one of us has been called by God to do and it's the one thing that he's enabled us all to do and that is the ministry of love. You and I and every Christian are called to love, love, love, love, love the people of this world, the people in the church and the people outside the church. The ministry of love is something that no Christian is excluded from, no one is exempt from. Matthew 5 starting in 43, "You have heard it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.' For he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust. If you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do that and if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Even the tax collectors do that. Therefore, be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect. We are all called to the ministry of love, every single one of us. And as 1 Corinthians 13 points out, any other ministry you do, if it doesn't come out of the ministry of love, it is a waste of time and effort. If you, no matter what other way you find to serve in this church or in this community or whatever, if it doesn't come out of love, it's a waste. It's worthless. That's what 1 Corinthians 13 teaches us. But how are we to love? With excellency. Excellency. I was talking with the guys who were part of Alex Shryker's bachelor party. They went to a really fancy steakhouse and I was talking with Kyle about it afterwards because he was there and he was saying the steak was good but what you're really paying for is the service. He's like the people that come in and they push your chair in and pull it out for you, they put your napkin on your lap for you. Just way too fancy. You're paying for that servants. You're paying for excellency in service. My friends don't you realize that we have been purchased by the blood of God to be his servants. We are called to serve God and God does not deserve any less level of excellency than some steakhouse downtown. God deserves a level of service from us that makes people go, "Wow." You know my neighbor baked some brownies for me and the brownies were okay but man they really loved me and they prayed for me and they took the time to find out what was wrong and excellency in our love, in our ministry of love. Luke 17 10 I read this before Keith was here. "So likewise you when you have done all those things which you were commanded say we are unprofitable servants we have done what was our duty to do." We are servants, servants of God but we're not supposed to be the kind of servants who grumble and complain like we've been shanghaied and chained to a bow and have no choice in the matter. We're supposed to be servants who realize the greatness of the one who has made us his servants and we are supposed to say I owe him excellence and honor and glory in everything I do. Excellence. Excellence in your higher level ministry, in your higher level acts of service but most importantly excellence in your ministry of love which is the core of everything you should be doing. This world, man some stuff has happened over the past few weeks that has just made me realize how this world is starving for love and there are people around you who are smiling and saying everything is fine and inside they are hurting and broken and they just need you to stop and show them love. In this church, outside of this church, everyone needs to be just have their socks knocked off by love and that's what God has put you there in their life. Show sock knocking off love. The future of this church is in your hands because you are the church. Keith, when he gets here, we can't just put this all on him. We've talked about this before. See Keith, Keith is just our coach but we are the team and we coming in here on Sunday to be coached but then we go out to the field. Carmel French Church spreads back out onto the playing field to accomplish our ministry, our love and our service out there where it needs to happen. The Carmel French Church doesn't cease to exist at 1130 each day when we flip off the lights. Carmel French Church at 1130 just goes out and spreads out into the community, into the field. 1 Corinthians 10 31 whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. I say that verse so much. Do everything to the glory of God. You've been made a Christian, you've been purchased with the blood of Jesus and that means you have responsibility and as long as I'm here and I'm up here, I won't let you forget it. There are other churches out there. If it makes you uncomfortable, there are churches who will let you just sit there and do nothing and I really hope you don't go there because you're gonna waste your life. You're gonna miss out on all of the blessings that God has for you. We all have a call to ministry. No one is exempt from love thy neighbor and no one is exempt from excellence. We are all called to excellence and that's why I tell you this all the time. You got to get up early in the morning and you have to at that moment get right with God. Get your head focused, your heart focused. I'm going to live today loving God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. In other words, loving God excellently and I'm going to love my neighbor excellently throughout this day. You start each day adjusting your compass, setting your mark as love in excellency and at any point throughout the day when you realize your compass has drifted, you stop what you're doing and you readjust. Love in excellency throughout the day. And so there's two, two futures, two ways this church can go. Either Keith gets here and we prop up our feet and we lean back and say do it Keith go and do a good job or we'll send you back to Australia. That church has no future. That church closes its doors. The other way, the other future that this church has is we come in here on Sunday, Keith coaches us, we say thanks coach and then we walk out that door and we say all right what am I going to do for my ministry this week? What is Carmel Friends Church going to do in my neighborhood job life this week? If we take hold of it, if we look for the ways to be the ministry of Carmel Friends Church out in this community, then this church has a beautiful future in store. But it all begins with the ministry of love and we're going to take a minute right now to think about these things. If there's one thing I'm confident that this church understands is the concept of a potluck. A potluck is something that this church has mastered. So my final metaphor for my message today is this. The ministry of Carmel Friends Church is to be a potluck where no one is responsible for everything but everyone is responsible for something. If you say that you were a Christian, if you say that Jesus is your Lord, then you have a call to bring something to the ministry of Carmel Friends Church. It doesn't have to be big and fancy, just something. Something that comes from love and something that is done in excellency. And maybe whatever your ministry is changes from week to week. That's okay. As long as it comes from love, as long as it's done in excellency, everyone here needs to contribute to the potluck ministry of Carmel Friends Church. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we glorify and acknowledge that you are our King and our Lord, that you have purchased us. And we praise you and thank you for the love and the grace and the mercy that you have shown, but we are not going to take it for granted. We are going to accept your call to the ministry of love and to whatever other ministry you may put in our path. And it may be a great amazing thing or it may be just a simple common thing, but God, we know that you will be well pleased as long as it is done in love and excellency. And so we affirm right here and now that we accept your call on our lives, each and every one of us, in the name of Jesus. Amen.