

When Ohio State played for the NCAA Championship in 2003, Coach Tressel wanted to encourage his players to step up to another level. In his pre-game speech he asked a tough question: “What do you want to be remembered for?” Do you want to be remembered as champions or losers? Tressel asked – **What do you want your legacy to be?** Did you know Solomon was concerned w/ the same question?

*A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.* Pr. 22:1

Unless you've been living on a deserted island, it'd be hard to miss that for the last few weeks we've been focusing on the idea of our church being UNLEASHED for the sake of the Gospel; more specifically, how we can participate in making disciples around the world. **And today is go time!** Today is commitment day. Today is when we put feet to our faith – and we step up/out together in faith to reach out and grab the baton to run our leg in this great spiritual race. Today is about our legacy for the cause of Christ.

**legacy** – a legacy is an inheritance or trait handed down from a previous generation. We're all here today b/c a group of people stepped out in faith 45 yrs ago to start FBCPTC.

Just the other day I saw a picture of my (3) predecessors together and was reminded that so long as the Lord tarries – I'm just the next runner of this ministry baton – and that one day I'll hand off the pastor mantle to the next pastor. Until then, my job is to keep us on course w/ the GC and to leave it better than I found it. **And it is for all of us.**

This means we're all living a legacy. If the Lord took me home tomorrow, I'd leave a legacy here at FBC. If you were to step into the arms of Jesus today, you too would leave a legacy for those who will come behind you. (Estate Sale)

What does this mean to leave a legacy? **It means how we live, what we live for, and how we invest our lives make a difference.** As followers of Christ, we're not called to engage in the world's strategy of legacy, we're called to live and leave a legacy that will count for eternity.

A few years ago there was an interesting discovery made in the family trees of (2) families from American History: Max Juke, a backwoodsman known for hard living and weak ethics left a legacy for no one would envy. To his children, Max left a name to be ridiculed, values to be forgotten, and a faith that was non-existent. As a result, Max's family tree of 709 known descendants includes: 280 paupers; 140 known criminals; 60 thieves; 6 murderers; 128 prostitutes; 67 known to have syphilis; w/ 300 dying early in life.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> man, living at the same time, was Jonathan Edwards. Known as a Godly, compassionate pastor, his family tree of some 1,394 members includes: 100 lawyers; 30 judges; 13 college presidents; 100 professors; 62 physicians; 100 clergymen, missionaries, and theologians; 80 elected to public office including 3 mayors, 3 governors, several congressmen, 3 senators, and 1 vice-president (Aaron Burr); 60 were authors who wrote 135 books; 75 were military officers. While we can't say all those in the Edwards family tree were Christians, we can see the sharp contrast to that of Juke's family tree. It's safe to say Edwards' faith in God, along w/ the character/conduct exemplified by he and his wife made a lasting impact for generations to come.

As we look into our future, my hope/prayer is that our faith legacy will reveal a people **unleashed** by the Spirit of God whose lives touched the nations for the sake of the Gospel.

Over the past few weeks I have attempted to share my heart about who God wants us to be as a church as we continue to grow into our calling as a church. I've attempted to chart out a course as we seek to be relevant in ministry, tethered to the GC, yet always building on those who have gone before us.

Critical to our future, like the church at Ephesus, we must remain committed to the mission of Christ, diligent to know and live God's Word, and always standing unwaveringly for righteousness in a fallen world.

But unlike the church at Ephesus, we must not lose our first love. We must remain steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord having our eyes fixed on Jesus – in the world but not of this world – hearts abandoned w/ a growing affection for God.

We also must remain humble in heart – neither thinking too highly or too lowly – realizing that to whom much is given, much is required – and God has entrusted us w/ much! Thus, we must step out and invest in others – whether it is an individual called to plant or revitalize a church, or whether it is to partner w/ another church/ministry to help them to health/sustainability – God has given us much!

And the key to both of these is a commitment to **crossover** – to step out in faith, to grow up, and to invest our lives in others for the cause of Christ. It's time for us to move beyond our personal ambitions to invest Jesus in us into the nations beginning right here in our community and unto the nations. And this is the new mission and heart of the Bridge – to launch every member and our church into the GC. The only thing required is your YES!

As we come to our time of commitment for unleashed – I want to share w/ you one of my favorite passages of Scripture found in Mark 14. It is a passage of legacy; a passage of love; and passage of unbridled generosity.

*The Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. “But not during the festival or the people may riot,” they said. While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came w/ an alabaster jar of expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly. “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have w/ you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.” Mk 14:1-9*

**What would ever cause someone to take the most valuable thing in their life and use it as offering to Christ?**

**Even those who had followed Christ so closely for 3½ yrs missed it. She was compelled by her love for Jesus – she was compelled b/c she was convinced – and b/c she was convinced she was abandoned – Jesus was her heart!**

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Mt. 6:19-21*

**Don't miss the point of the lesson** – the call has never been to equal giving but to equal sacrifice. The call is to give God your first and best b/c of your love for Him and what He has done for all of us. And the call is to support the work of God in this place. Thus, for some of us, a sacrificial gift might be \$5.00 a week for the next 156 weeks, while for others it might be much more. **It's not the size of the gift but the size of the sacrifice.**

**This is what the Unleashed is about.** It's about taking the most appropriate and obedient steps to ensure that our church, and each of us individually, are going to leave a legacy of sacrifice for those who come behind us – a sweet smelling, fragrant act of worship!

During this campaign I've intentionally not spoken w/ you about your commitment to the campaign. This AM I want to ask you to consider what God wants you to commit to leave a legacy for future generations. What is your alabaster bottle? I can assure you of this – it begins in your heart.



Which makes this decision today about more than a financial gift – it is a step of faith into fellowship. It is a commitment to unleash your life into the GC. So as we bring our special offerings today – even more important is our commitment to give of our time, talents, and treasures to the cause of Christ.

Story of in College when I gave all that was in my wallet.

How do we unleash our legacy? We do it by committing new and afresh today to participate in the work/mission of Christ.

- We renew of pursuit of intimacy w/ the Father
- We recommit to the community of faith to serve together
- We step out in faith and engage the world around us
- We invest our blessings in what has eternal value

This is a simple truth – **invest towards eternity**. Invest in things that count for the kingdom and will impact others for God. This is what the “Unleashed” is about. It’s about leading our church to leave a legacy of hope for this community and the world around us.

Once there was a young captain assigned to an old ship. The day the captain arrived, he could tell his new ship was in need of some work and that the morale of the crew was low. And he wasn’t surprised when he was told the ship hadn’t left port in a long time.

The hull of the ship was rotting. The deck was stained – planks were missing – the sails were torn and tattered. Many of the crew had jumped ship for another ship so long as it was going some place – some where.

The next day, the captain called together what crew he had left and ordered the ship to be dry docked so the hull could be scrapped, sanded, and re-painted. Over the next few months, the deck was repaired. The cabins were cleaned and improvements made. New sails were sewn and hoisted to the yards. The old ship was coming back to life!

The day came when the captain called the crew together. Some of the old crew who'd jumped ship had returned b/c they heard what was happening. Others were new, bringing w/ them great excitement and love for the sea. So the captain said, "It's time we made plans to leave this harbor." Yet the crew seemed surprised. Knowing some of them were fearful, the captian said, "This ship wasn't made for the safety of the harbor... but for the horizon. You are the crew; so you must decide. Will it be the harbor or the horizon?"

For what seemed an eternity there was silence. The sound of wind/waves were all one could hear. Then, one crew member in a hushed voice, said, "Horizon!" And another, "Horizon!" And others joined in, "Horizon!" Until the winds and waves were drowned out w/ the shouts of – HORIZON!



The captain, so proud he could hardly speak, gathered w/ the crew to plan their first voyage. The excitement grew until the day arrived when they had planned to take up anchor and make way out of the harbor.

The captain gathered the crew on the bow. He asked them to bow their heads for prayer. "Lord of the land and sea, what a joyous day this is! A day most of us wondered if would ever come! But you have given this ship, this crew new life, new hope, and we praise you. But Lord, you know we're a little fearful, for we haven't set sail for the horizon for a long time. We fear what awaits us there. We know there'll be high winds/waves, storms, and difficulties. But we also know You created us for the horizon, not the harbor. Best of all, we know You will be our Captain, watching over and guiding us. So, our Captain, we've heard your order to set sail for the horizon, not knowing all that lies ahead of us, but knowing all we need to know... that you are w/ us. Amen."

The ship sailed out of the harbor that day, never to return to rest in the harbor again. The people on the shore heard all kinds of stories about the ship... how it sailed the seven seas, came through storms, and discovered new lands.

Like that ship, our church was meant for an adventure. We can rise to the challenge and aim for the horizon. Or we can cower in fear, avoid risk, and stay safely in the harbor. Which will it be for you? **Harbor or Horizon?**