



Sermon – 08/20/2023

Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered

Psalm 78:1 – 8, 68 - 72

Matthew 13:34 - 35

Well, let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to start this morning in Psalm chapter 78. Psalm 78. And if you're a guest with us this morning, especially if you're one of our college students, welcome home. Will y'all let our college students know how glad we are to have them back with us this morning? Pumped to have you with us. And if you're not aware, right after our worship gathering, I want to encourage our college students to make your way out these doors over to our Family Life Center. That's when our 180 College Gathering happens right after this. We'd love to encourage you to step into that space and check it out. And if you're a guest, this is a perfect Sunday join us. Why? It's because we're launching a brand-new initiative that we call NEXT as we move our way towards our 100th anniversary. And let me tell you, you're going to decide real quick if this is the kind of church that you want to be about. One that's got a legacy, one that's committed to reaching the next generation. One that's got a hope to mobilize our people in the future. And that's why it's so fitting that this Sunday right after the service, we have our next New Member Workshop right after this in our Grand Room. And if you haven't yet joined, we saved a few spots for you and we'd love for you to join us after our time together this morning.

So, what's next? That's a word that you're going to hear us talking about over and over again over the coming years. You've caught a little bit of a glimpse for it. But NEXT is our two-year initiative leading up to the 100th anniversary of the church. Where we, where we want to look back on our past and celebrate what God has done and we want to look ahead to our future and prepare for what He wants to do next. And to give you a little taste of what's in front of us. I want to turn your attention to our screens now to watch this video introducing NEXT to us.

What's next? What's next for a town steeped in tradition and growing quickly? What's next for this rising generation that faces challenges that we could never have imagined? What's next for a church with a century of faithfulness? What's next? In September of 1925, our church was born as 81 people came together in the Brazos County Courthouse and asked that same question, what's next? From the beginning, Central has been marked by one common thread; every generation reaching the next generation. From that small gathering at the courthouse, came a thriving fellowship that would transform lives, build families, and send missionaries all around the world

from the crossroad of Texas Avenue and William J Bryan. From its earliest days, our churches stood at the doorstep of a university with thousands of college students standing at their own crossroad looking for purpose. For a century, this church has had an answer for the longings of the next generation, not success or satisfaction or significance but a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the answer to what's next. As our church moved to its Coulter Drive location, we modeled that answer by continuing to be a community of believers who served one another, shared our faith with the lost, and showed the hope of the Gospel to our community. Many walked in, grappling with shame and regret, asking, what do I do next? And they left transformed by the message of the cross and the members of this church. And as time passed the Lord drew more and more to our church and as He did, bursting to the brim, ministries limited. They were forced to ask, what's next? And God provided a new place right here, where this church could continue to disciple, develop, and deploy people for the Gospel. Children and students and families were drawn in. They were built up and sent out. And I was one of those students. It was here that I was shaped and formed, molded and instructed, given every opportunity to see how the Lord could use me to serve His kingdom. The Lord, through Central, helped me wrestle with the question, what's next? And this church answered by taking me in and investing in me. It called me and prayed over me. It disciplined me and shaped me. It ordained me and sent me. And over the last century, Central has been a launching pad for raising up and sending out people like me to make a next generation impact. Our world is changing. Our children will face challenges that we've never faced and we can't predict. Yet, we have no need to fear. We can trust that God is with us and for us. Over the past 100 years, our church has thrived through all kinds of difficulties; economic crashes, political turmoil, and a digital revolution. Yet, through it all, we stepped in and loved our community and for 100 years, we have been reaching the next generation. We can't control what will come in the next century but we can step forward and ask, what's next? At Central, we want to be a church where every generation is reaching the next generation. We want to make disciples who make a difference. The NEXT Initiative is our opportunity to prepare for our next century so that we can empower the next generation to take next steps with Jesus. Will you join us for what's next?

How about that y'all? Isn't that exciting? September 11th, 1925, 81 people gathered in the Brazos County Courthouse in downtown Bryan and God began a movement in our church. That first Sunday, a missionary from China preached the first message on that first Sunday. An offering was taken for world missions and the Lord began to do a work that has continued all these years later. And if you'll notice up here at the front with me, I want you to see this picture right in front of you. It's a picture from the 1940s. Just a few years into when we had our own facility in downtown Bryan. And you'll notice if you look here closely, it's a multi-generational picture. My favorite, maybe you'll come by and see it after the services, there's a little boy over here on the left side who's pulled himself away by about 5 feet. He's turned his back to the camera. He's hunched over in frustration. People didn't want to take pictures when they were young boys back then just like they don't want to do it today. But what grabs my attention most is can see every generation there. Grandparents, parents, children, a heart to reach the next generation has been at the core of who we are ever since we launched this church nearly 100 years ago. So, what can we do today that's going to matter 100 years from now? Because when those 81 gathered in that courthouse, they were doing something that mattered. They were making disciples who made a difference. And we want to continue that legacy as we step into our next 100 years. And the heartbeat behind that commitment to every generation reaching the next generation doesn't just start at the beginning of our church's history. In fact, it's more ancient than that. We see it right here in Psalms 78 all the way back to the people of God in Israel. This picture of what it looks like to be faithful reaching

the next generation. And with that in mind, let's take up and read starting in Psalm 78, beginning down in verse 1. And here's what the text tells us. A Maskil of Asaph.

¹Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ³things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children, but tell to them the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.

And you'll notice that Psalms 78 is one of the longest Psalms in the entire book and it's written by a man named Asaph who was one of the appointed worship leaders for the people of God in that time period. And throughout the rest of this Psalm, it recounts story after story of what happened in the life of the people of God. But before it recounts the story, it reminds us of why it is important to remember the story in the first place. It's giving us this window of what it looks like to share God's work with the next generation. And what's at the heart of Psalms 78 is at the heart of who we are as a congregation. So, starting today, over the course of eight weeks, we're going to be stepping into a sermon series to launch NEXT. We're going to call it the Seven Marks of a Next Generation Christian. And we'll pick that up going through one mark at a time starting next week. But this is not just a sermon series. It's a season for us in the life of the church. And so, you're going to have materials. You picked some up on the way in these brochures. We're going to have our life group curriculum for our adults matching this starting with our lesson on first fruits today that called to give our first and best to God. And we're going to go on a journey together to seek God's heart for what's next for our church. And what I know is if we want to be next generation Christians, then we need to be a next generation church. And what we're going to find as we work our way through Psalm 78 this morning is that if we want to be a next generation church, Psalm 78 is showing us three things that have to be true for that to become a reality in our lives.

And you'll notice the first one back here in verses 1 through 4. It's celebration. A next generation church celebrates our past. So, if you look here at the text, we know, you hear this common saying that you replicate what you celebrate. You produce what you praise. And that's what we find here in Psalm 78, it's praising the past in a way that inspires the present and shapes the future. This celebration that we see here plays out in several things that should shape our season of celebration as we work our way to the 100th anniversary. So, back in verses 1 through 3, you'll see first that celebration declares God's faithfulness in our generation. See, there's this danger that we can become so focused on what He wants to do next that we forget about what He's already done. That some of us in our older generation may hear this as, we only care about the younger generation. When in reality, God's not done with you yet. The Psalm is showing us that reality in verse 2 when it talks about how we can declare God's faithfulness in the past. It says, that we need to do this. Listen to these words in verse 2. I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old. In other words, it's looking backwards to the rich heritage of the Lord that they have to tap into. And if these words sound familiar to you, they are echoed by Jesus Himself in Matthew chapter 13 as He's giving His parables to the people that are listening to his teaching. Matthew 13, starting in verse 34 says it like this,

³⁴All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, He said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

So, in both Psalm 78 and in Matthew 13, the words of Asaph and now the words of Jesus are pointing toward one thing. That we need to look back, that we need to recall those deep truths of old, that we need to celebrate God's work in the past. And if you look back at Psalm 78, we get a glimpse of what that like in verse 3, it tells us what we should celebrate. Notice what it says, things that we have heard and known that our fathers have told us. And if you're looking closely to text, you'll see it shifts from the singular to the plural here. This is a community celebration as we see what He's done not just for me and you but for us. There's this picture of celebration that is given there that should set the stage for how we celebrate over these next two years. You see, part of what we're going to be doing is highlighting God's work in our midst. If you're to look around this room and count up every chair that's here, you would number about 3,400 chairs. And I've been able to do some research in our archives over the past few months and I found a record from 1957, 32 years into our church, and in those first 30 or so years, we baptized 1,500 people who came to know Jesus in our church. And since 1986, moving forward, we baptized over 2,000 people. I don't know that stretch between 57 and 86 yet, but if you just take that first third and that second third, to put it in perspective, you could fill every seat in this room full of people this church has reached and baptized and still not have enough space. God's been on the move. We can celebrate that reality. He's moved by saving people, baptizing people, rescuing marriages, calling people to ministry. And I can't shake the stories that have come over the years of the way that God's been active. I remember the story of a college student that came through in the 90s named Matt and his friend named Chris. Chris was a worship leader who couldn't find many opportunities. So, Tim Skaggs took him under his wing and he was a junior high worship intern for a while. And Matt was discipled here. He wrestled with his call to ministry here. And they both went off from A&M and left from Central. And just a few years later, they got back together and said, we need to go to the darkest place in Texas and plant a church. And as Aggies, we all know where that is, right? And so back in 2002, Chris Tomlin and Matt Carter, who our church reached and discipled, launched the Austin Stone Community Church. And over 20 years, I want you to look at page three of this brochure if you got it. We have a testimonial from Matt about the way this church made an impact in his life. Look at what the start of it says. It's hard to put into words the spiritual impact that Central had not only on me but also the tens of thousands of University of Texas students that came through the Austin Stone Community Church over my 20 years as pastor and hundreds of church plants through my work at the North American Mission Board. Central family, God has been working through us to write stories just like this. And as we look back and celebrate those, we anticipate the stories He's going to write in the days ahead. And that points us back to verse 4 of Psalms 78. Because the text tells us here not just that celebration declares God's faithfulness in the past but it also prepares us for God's faithfulness in the future. So, notice what verse 4 says. We will not hide them from our children but tell them to the coming generation. We're going to announce them, to recount them because this text knows that we recount what we rejoice in. We celebrate those things that transform us. And what happens as a result of that, look at the end of verse 4. We declare the glorious deeds of the Lord in His might and the wonders that He has done. It speaks there of who God is in His might. It speaks of what He's done in His works. And those things, when we see how He's been working in the past, set us up for what He's going to do in the future. And we're trusting that during this NEXT Initiative, God's going to do that as we celebrate our story. If you'll turn over in that brochure to the next page, you can see a glimpse of what that celebration is look like. That timeline of God riding milestone moments into our story. But very intentionally, you'll notice on the far right side, the line keeps going. Because we believe God's not done with what He wants to do for us next. And even now, we're celebrating

impact that we see happening all across the life of the church. Just last weekend, we had our first ever church-wide garage sale to raise money for missions, to send our students in the next generation on short-term mission trips. And through your efforts and God's kindness, we raised \$33,000 for those scholarships. Amazing. Since we've come back to the new school year, we've seen record high attendance in our adult life groups, in our student ministry, in our kids wing. We're beginning to see God at work. And it's not about the numbers. It's not about church growth. It's about church health because healthy things grow; and we find that happening. One of those areas for growth that we're seeing is in our men's ministry. And I'm excited to tell you this morning that when we do our next Men's Steakout on November 12th. We're going to be welcoming Texas country music artist Granger Smith to be our speaker that night and to preach that Sunday morning to celebrate what God is doing. And one of the best areas for growth we're seeing in the life of our church is in our Hispanic ministry which is why I'm so excited to let you all know that starting next Sunday, the life group that they've been having on Sunday mornings and the Tuesday night worship gathering they've been having every other week is going to change. And starting next Sunday right after the service during the 11 o'clock hour, we're going to launch a Spanish language service for worship right here at Central every week. Central en Español. We're really excited about that for our Hispanic ministry. We want to celebrate what the Lord is doing now. And with that, we're echoing the pattern that we see here in Psalms 78.

But as we turn our attention back to the text, there's a second thing that must be true of every next generation church. It's not just about celebrating our past. The second reality is mobilization. That a next generation church mobilizes our people and we'll see that unfold here starting in verse 8 when it tells us,

⁵He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know Him,

And it goes on to say after that,

⁷so that they could set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments; ⁸and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

You see, we find this picture here in Psalm 78 both of celebration and mobilization. Remembering our past and preparing for our future. And that's at the heart of what we're doing in this next season in the life of our church. And this passage answers four questions about what this pull towards mobilization should look like that not only shape the people of God back then but should shape this season for us as a church. You see the first one back in what verse 5 has to say. How should we mobilize our people for the next generation? And what verse 5 shows us is that both through the word of God and the mission of God. You see em both there in verse 5 when it says, he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel. That's speaking about the word of God. But notice the mission; which He commanded our fathers to teach our children. The word of God and the mission of God to take that Gospel to the next generation. And that's going to be at the heart of who we are and what we do during this next season because it's been at the heart of who we are for nearly a 100 years. So, notice on your brochure that you received, the next page, you're going to see seven areas of focus that we have when it comes to mobilization. I'm also

going to put them on the screen so that you can see them here behind you. Because in the same way that the word of God and the mission of God mark the people of God in that era, He's calling us to do the same thing here. So, let me give you a sense of what this looks like. You'll notice that we have seven areas of focus with the first being that we challenge our church to grow 10,000 pounds of food right here on our property through a community garden to meet hunger needs all throughout the Brazos Valley. We've got the land, we've got the well water, I know we've got the people with the ag expertise. And we want to come together to meet the physical needs of our community. But the second thing that you'll see here is that we also want to challenge our people to have one thousand Gospel relationships. So, over the course of this time, we don't want to just plant seeds for crops. We want to plant seeds for the Gospel. And so in the weeks ahead, I'm going to be challenging you to ask the Lord to lay on your heart one person in your life who doesn't yet know Jesus who you want to commit to pray for and to pursue during this time period. And I want to see more than a thousand of us take that step to pray and pursue those people. But there's two others that come at the 100 level and they come annually. Our goal is that we want to send more than 100 short-term mission trip participants each year. We had about 70 or 80 this year and we know the way that a short-term trip can change your life forever as the, as the Lord works in you and through you. Along with that, we want to see 100 people each year stepping into our Training Program on Wednesday nights. That's our two semester deep discipleship to lay a solid foundation in Bible and theology to equip you to live the Christian life and serve the kingdom in a way that honors the Lord. You'll notice after that we have two targets at the ten level. We want to raise up 10 new ministry residents. That's our training program and our training ground for those primarily who are coming out of college who are heading towards ministry, to raise their own support, to serve here in our church and get practical experience that will prepare them for the future. Maybe even now, some of you students that are sitting right here hearing this today will be stepping into before this two years is up. The other pattern there at the level of 10 is 10 next level missions partnerships. Central is committed to missions. We do many things within our church walls and mobilized by our people but we also partner with outside organizations to do that. And we want to take ten of those partnerships either that already exist or that we might step into new and raise them to the next level, to fuel the that we have in the future. And along with that, the seventh of these areas of focus is we want to see our church working towards launching one new church plant and have that process initiated before this 100th anniversary hits. Because we've got a history of planting churches like the Austin Stone we already talked about and many others in this city, this state, and around the country. And we want to be a church known not for our seating capacity but our sending capacity. That's at the heart of mobilization. And as you look at that list in your brochure or you see it on that screen, what I want you to notice is that there is something for every one of you in these efforts. We want every one of us to jump in and participate in what's next. You saw in Psalm 78, it was the word of God and the mission of God that was at work in the people of God and we're trusting that that will still be the same today. So, that's the first question we see in Psalm 78 related to mobilization. What's the second one?

Look back at the text with me. Why should we mobilize our people for the next generation? And we see that answer down in verse 6. It shows us a purpose. It says that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children. So, what's that purpose? It's to know and to go. And we're going to that next generation. If you look closely here, what you see in Psalm 78 is exactly what you'll find on this image right in front of me. Multiple generations. He speaks about this generation. Then, he talks about the next generation. And then he speaks of the children yet unborn. That generation after that, that purpose of pushing

the Gospel forward to those that have not yet experienced. That's what it's all about. That's why we exist as a church.

Which takes us to question three in verse 7. What happens when we mobilize our people for the next generation? And verse 7 shows us the results. It says,

⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments;

In other words, when we live on mission in our generation, it creates a hope in the next generation that compels them forward to live on that same mission in the future. We're passing it forward. But this promise of these results is also followed by a warning that answers the fourth question that this text reveals to us. What happens if we don't mobilize the next generation? What if we become complacent? What if we miss it? You see the warning here in verse 8. It says,

⁸and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that was, whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

You see the danger there? That if we're not intentional, then that the next generation will become like the worst of what we've seen in the last generation. Hardhearted, resistant, hostile to the things of God. And what we need to understand this morning as we step into this next season of our church is we are faced with a choice. It won't take me much to convince you that our culture is becoming more hostile. That our lives are becoming more difficult. That our campuses are growing with more students. That our families all around us are becoming more broken. That the technology developments of tomorrow are becoming more challenging. And we can look at that change and do one of two things. We can either respond with complacency or commitment. We can either allow the darkness to push back on our hearts or for our hearts to push back on the darkness. And Central family, I want to go push back the darkness. Are you with me on that? That's the picture that he's calling us to here. To take the Gospel to the next generation. And that's been a part of our story from the very beginning. You can see up here right next to me this large book here. These are the minutes of our church from its very founding. It records our history. And if you were to turn it open right here, you would notice on this page that you would find a list of all 81 names of those charter members on that first Sunday that were gathered together in the Brazos County Courthouse. And right down here on this left side, you would see a person by the name of Benny Griffin. Benny Griffin was 13 years old when this church was started on that September 11th in 1925. He was there that day when that missionary from China shared the message and the church took that missions offering on its first Sunday. And I can't help but wonder if the Lord use that as part of a work he did later in Benny's life. Because after he went to school and married his wife, Alice, the Lord called him to the mission field. And in 1939, when the whole world was in chaos as World War II began, he sold everything, left everything familiar behind, and he got on a boat not to go to Europe for a battle but to go to Africa for a spiritual warfare right there in the country of Nigeria. And for 39 years, Benny and Alice Griffin served faithfully as missionaries sent out from this church. They did amazing work there to strengthen the churches of Nigeria. But at the heart of what he did was he led a boy's school that trained up over 400 students and educated them and disciplined them. Many significant leaders in the life of Nigeria came out of this school during that time period. Chances are it's not any of the Nigerian princes that send us mails from time to time asking us for money. But there were governors, speakers of

the house, senators, even one president of Nigeria came through the school that a man raised up in this church led so that he could show the love of Jesus to hundreds of boys in that country, thousands of miles away. But his impact wasn't just felt in what he did in Nigeria. It was felt in his own family. You see, not long after Benny and Alice were on the field, they were raising boys. And one of them, Benny Junior, came to know Jesus. And he came back to the States for his education and God raised him up to be the president of two seminaries in the United States training the next generation from the legacy that our church left to the Griffins. But it gets even better than that. It didn't just make a difference in Nigeria. It didn't just make a difference in his own family. It made a difference right here in the life of our own church. Some of you recognize the name of Margaret Young. She was a long time member in our congregation, served for years as our church secretary. And she was there all the way back in the early days of our church. And I was going through some records that she had kept of significant moments in the life of our church. And when she spoke about when Benny and Alice went to Africa as the first missionaries from this congregation, I just want you to hear what she wrote down. She said, "Sending Benny and Alice Griffin to Africa was exciting and scary and made all of us teenagers want to surrender for the mission field. It was so great to learn of missions through their ministry." Do you see it? Do you see the impact they had even on us? These teenagers watching them go out and saying, we want to get in on that too. And so it was no surprise to me that when I came across the church directory from 1975 on our fiftieth anniversary, that it had this to say. From this church, many preachers, missionaries, and religious workers have gone out. That's the legacy of mobilization that's been at the center of our church. That's the legacy of mobilization we see here in Psalm 78. And what I want to raise to us this morning as we get ready to launch NEXT is what could it look like to raise up another generation of Benny and Alice Griffins? Who take the Gospel to the nations and leave everyone of us here more committed to be front door missionaries right here in the Brazos Valley.

Which takes us to the last piece of this passage I want you to see. Slide over with me to the very end of it down in verse 68. It's a long passage and you would find that over the intervening verses that the Psalm has goes back and highlights all these major moments in the life of Israel. From the giving of the law to the Exodus, to the wilderness, to the promised land, and now to the raising up of future offspring. And as we come to the close of this Psalm, it brings us face to face with the third thing that needs to be true of any next generation church: it's renovation. That we see in this portion of the passage, a next generation church renovates our place. And so let's look at what that renovation looks like here in the passage starting in verse 68. It says,

⁶⁸but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves. ⁶⁹He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. ⁷⁰He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance. ⁷²With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.

So, what we find here in the text is it speaks to us about how God renovates his people. That He renovates his their place. He doesn't just allow us to become who we'd be on our own in our sin. And that renovation shows up in two ways in this part of the passage. We see first that God renovates the spiritual home of His people. That's why in verse 69 there, it talks about how He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which He had founded forever. You see, the people of God for much of this time had been without their own place to worship Him. And it's God that provides a place. And look at what it says there. It says, it's His sanctuary. Even

though they gather there, it's His. Even though they constructed it, it's His. And the same thing that's a reality for them in this, the renovation of their spiritual home that took place back then, God is saying is true for us today. This is His house. This is His sanctuary. This is His place. And as we step into this next season, we know that a renovation is ahead of us. You'll see it. If you'll keep looking in your brochure on the next page in verse 9, you can just get a glimpse for that there. And I want you to see on the screen some of the images to come of what we hope to do. You can look for more detail and study it closer in that brochure. But we believe that the next step for us as a church is to take our facilities to the next level. Starting right out here in our student ministry space. And so, this is a view of the hallway, the foyer hallway right outside here in the leading leading up to our our A Wing where the student space will be. And you'll notice on the lower level here, this will be for our middle school. And over on this left side, you'll have a large gathering space. You'll still have classroom space on the right side and some hospitality space for connection for our middle schoolers to meet on the lower level while we will have space for our high school in the upper level. Here's a glimpse of what that large group room on the lower level would look like. Set up with chairs and a corner stage but also for some fun activities to connect our middle schoolers to one another. And what's great about this space is it's intended to be multipurpose. So, when the students aren't using it the men's group together here, a women's group, our Hispanic ministry, so many others could use this space. Upstairs for the high school, in large part, that footprint will stay similar but will introduce a new high school student lounge where they can have some place to connect and hang out and get off their phones, get away from the technology, and get face to face with one another. We'll still keep classrooms up there but open up some of what's now the middle school space to be a larger auditorium for them. This will be the first phase of what we do in our renovation efforts over the next years but we want to keep going. Because in phase two, we want to overhaul all of our foyer and gathering spaces. We wanted to be that welcoming space that people don't just pass through but they come to to connect. And so this is a glimpse of what you see right out here in our main foyer lobby space. And along with that we want to take steps to enhance our worship center. It's got amazing bones. The seats are incredible. But we have things that we need to do to advance our efforts forward through upgrading our audio, our visual, our lighting to create the right opportunity for people to encounter the Lord in this place. In addition to what we'll do inside the church we're going to see the image of what we want to do on the outside to give our our space gathering points for ministry and community engagement. At the front of the church is a new front door. In the back of the church through a place right out here by our Family Life Center and our kids space where we can come together amongst ourselves and amongst the people in our community and see Gospel ministry happening right here in our midst. What I know is we can't disciple people who aren't here. And we want to take steps forward with our facilities to put us in the best position to reach and to serve and to equip the ones that are gathering with us.

And the reason that we're talking about a renovation of our spiritual home is because it points us back to the last key thing I want you to see in Psalm 78. That this text doesn't just talk about a renovation of our spiritual home but also renovation of our spiritual hearts. So, notice back in verse 68. It tells us

⁶⁸but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves.

And then down to verse 70, you'll see it again.

⁷⁰He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds;

And what we find here is that all of Psalms 78 is a story of failure. The people of God turning their backs on God again and again. But then in amidst of this darkness, there's light. In the midst of this hardship, there's hope. And that hope is rooted in a renovation of our spiritual hearts. It's rooted in these two people that God chooses and raises up. This man named Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. This man named David who would be anointed and appointed as king. And what the text is pointing us to is this reality. That there would be a Savior who would come and bring hope and renovation for our spiritual hearts from the line of Judah, from the offspring of David. He would come as the lion of the tribe of Judah. He would come as a new and better David. The sheep who lays down his life for the shepherd. Jesus Himself who makes a way for you and me to be made right with God when we don't deserve it. You see, our sin brings us guilt. Our guilt is worthy of judgement. And yet in Jesus, if we look to Him for the deliverance of our sins and not to ourselves, then this text is reminding us of the fact that God makes a way, that He can take even the hardest heart and make it new. To transform who we are. And the same Savior that Psalm 78 is pointing to is the same Savior that's still at the center of this church today. The same mission of reaching the next generation that we see in Psalm 78 is still at the heartbeat of our mission today.

So, what does that mean for us as a church? What it means is that we're stepping into a new season, this NEXT Initiative. And over the next two years, we want to mobilize our people like never before in those seven key areas and we want to give like never before to fuel that mission in the days ahead. So, what's it going to cost? The good news right before the service, Tim Skaggs just came to me, said he was reading the eagle this weekend and he found a 50% off discount coupon on what this initiative's going to take. Now, in reality, we know that to do all the ministry that God's calling us to in the future, we want to see our church commit to raise \$5 million over and above our normal giving. You see, our normal giving funds ministry today. Our over and above giving funds ministry tomorrow. And it's going to allow us to take these steps forward. And I want you to see on the screens here one more slide to let you understand how this is going to happen. See, we're going to do this in phases. We're doing this debt free. We're not taking on any new debt to make this happen. In fact, we want to see us pay down debt over this time. And so, if you look starting at the bottom, we're going to do this in phases starting with our student ministry and working our way up. And you'll notice that as we go, as we invest in the mobilization efforts and our celebration and these projects, the higher we climb, the more money that's given, the larger proportion will be used to raise down the debt in our church. And if you want a closer look this, we're going to have this up on our website, centralbcs.org/next, so that you can get a feel for the pace and the approach of how we will go about this. And all of this in the days ahead is going to culminate on September 24th in our Get in the Game commitment Sunday where we're going to be inviting you to come ready to bring your commitment for how you want to financially fuel this vision that the Lord has laying in front of us. But hear me, hear my heart. This initiative is not primarily about the money. It's about our motivation. It's not about what we give with our hands. It's what God does in our hearts. It's about preparing us to reach the next generation. And as we get ready to close, I want to leave you with this. Not long ago, a new story made national headlines because a group in Wisconsin wanted to build the world's largest jigsaw puzzle. And so there's this jigsaw puzzle that's available for purchase that has 60,000 pieces. And they were going to put it all together. Now, what troubled me a little bit is it said that the local funeral home was the one coordinating this community event. I'm like, what kind of place does a funeral home put

together fun events for the community, putting together 60,000 piece puzzles. But let's just leave that for another conversation. I want you to get a sense for what this puzzle look like. You can see it right there on the screens. It is compiled of sixty separate 1,000 piece puzzles that when they're combined, gives you this picture of the entire world and major landmarks and milestones. And as they came to the end of this construction of the 60,000 pieces, they realized there was a problem. One of the pieces was missing. Could you imagine that moment when they're like looking at the box, they're asking all the kids, hey, where is it? Do you know what happened to it? And you realize, we've got 59,999 but we're missing the final piece. You think if you were there, you'd be excited that you put together 59,000 or frustrated about the one. We'd all be frustrated about the one. Why? Because if it's missing a piece, then the puzzle reflect the design that it's creator originally intended. And what's true for them in Wisconsin is true in the life of the church in this next season. See, one of the things you might not have noticed when you looked at this image right in front of me, you might see more clearly on the screen here. Is that I had, I have taken some old images of our church and we've had custom-made jigsaw puzzles, carving them up, and you can see a picture of the one here. You can see another one of our current church and it will give you a sense for what it is that the Lord's doing. You can even see one from back on the Coulter days. And what you're going to find is during the response song, all around this room, you're going to have baskets on the tables. And each of them is going to hold a puzzle piece just like this. What I want to challenge us with this morning as a church is to ask the question, are we ready to commit to being a piece of the puzzle of God reaching the next generation through our church? And if your answer to that is yes, then during the response song, as we stand and sing, I want you to make your way to each of these tables and just grab one of these. Take it back to your seat as a symbol of your commitment, that you're in on what's next, that you're in on reaching the next generation. Because we can't form the picture that God is calling us to as a church if there are pieces missing. It's going to take all of us during this next season. And I just can't wait to see what God has next.

Will you pray with me?

Father, would You work in this room right now to help us be of one heart and one mind. Would You prepare us for all that You're going to do in this next season? And as people make their way to these tables to pick up these pieces, would You reveal to them what piece of the puzzle You're calling for them to be a part of? Would You show to all of us if there's anything that's standing in the way of taking a new step with You during this next season? And Lord we give all of this over to You now as we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.