

“Teamwork makes God’s Dream Work”

Ephesians 4:21-24

Sermon Series: Dream Team Week 2.

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The Woodside Church

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Good morning Woodside! For those of you I haven’t had the pleasure of meeting yet, my name is Linda Marr, Director of Growth here at Woodside and a member of our SermonTeam. Some of you may know me by my Eagles attire on Sundays in the fall. Makes it easy to find me, right?

For the past three weeks we’ve been looking at how we are called to help make God’s dream for our world come true. Pastor Doug highlighted how we need to “Get into Shape” so we don’t miss the Kick-off God has for us. This has nothing to do with physical fitness, but spiritual fitness - letting God shape and mold us to be more loving, patient and forgiving, striving to be more like the perfect model God gave to our world in Jesus.

Last week Scott Burgess spoke about the unique gifts we all have. God calls us to take time to discover our gifts and then put those gifts to work serving on His team - helping others in Jesus name. If you’d like a little help finding your gifts, here are two good resources you can use: a simple version – giftstest.com and a more in depth look which some of you may have used a few years ago - GPS - giftpassionstory.com. Both resources are private and free. Or reach out to me or Lisa Gayle, Director of Sharing and Serving, and we’ll help you get started.

This week it’s game time! Time to go out there and help make God’s dream come true. Anyone familiar with the saying “Teamwork makes the dream work?” Which made me think back to an ICONIC teamwork moment in Philadelphia sports history – anyone – The Philly Philly!! It’s actually used as an example in many teamwork articles and talks. It was just too perfect – had to work this Eagles trivia in!!

It was the ultimate dream of every Philly sports fan – to win our very first SuperBowl Championship! It was 2018. Our top-rated quarterback Carson Wentz went out in December with a season ending injury. But with grit, determination and a WHOLE lot of teamwork, the Eagles make it to the Superbowl Championship Game. Against the football dynasty the New England Patriots. No one gave us a chance against Tom Brady and his stacked team. They won FIVE Superbowls with Brady at the helm. Talk about underdogs.

SuperBowl LII 52. A game for the ages. It was 4th and 1; 38 seconds until halftime. Time out; and back-up Quarterback Nick Foles quietly confers with Head Coach Doug Pederson – “You want Philly Philly?” Pederson pauses for a minute; looks at his quarterback and confirming his trust in him, says, “Let’s do it.”

Foles moves up behind his offensive line. Jason Kelce instead snaps the ball to undrafted running back **Corey Clement**. **Clement** pitches the ball to Trey Burton, a third string tight end who had never attempted an NFL pass, who shoots it to a wide open Foles for the touchdown. The stadium erupts in disbelief.

Foles became the first player in Super Bowl history to both throw and catch a touchdown pass during a Super Bowl game. Incredible teamwork from a bunch of underdog players. Oh and did I mention that teamwork carried throughout the game leading to the Eagles 1st Superbowl win, making the dreams of thousands of thirsty Eagles fans come true!

If a bunch of underdog football players can make a sports dream work, just think what God's team can do for our world!

So today – it's time for all of us to get off the sidelines and go out there and start making His Dream Come True! What is God's dream? Jesus told us in the prayer he taught us to pray to his Father, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10. He wants our world to be restored to his perfect Eden. He wants heaven on earth. He longs for a world where justice, peace, mercy and love aren't the exception, but the reality. His dream is for a world shaped by His reign, not our brokenness.

And he wants US – his broken people – to fulfill that dream. How? Do we need a big master plan? A trick play like the Philly Philly? Nope; he makes it simple. Jesus tells us in John 13:34: "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other." Out of God's great love for us, we simply need to use our gifts – the unique way God has crafted us - to love others in his name.

Maybe you're thinking – not me. I don't have any gifts. Or you don't know my past. God can't possibly use me – he does not want ME on his team.

Wrong. God says that when we know Jesus, when we accept his free gift of unconditional love and salvation, we are a new creation. We can leave sin, shame, regret behind us – tossed aside like old clothes that no longer fit.(Ephesians 4:21- 22). The apostle Paul challenges us to "Put on our new natures, created to be like God – truly righteous and holy." Ephesians 4:24.

This may feel a bit like a New Year's resolution – *this* year I am going to be different! How many of you make resolutions? Ok, it's September – how many of you are keeping those resolutions? How many of you even remember the resolutions you so earnestly made! UGH right? So how do we make a new way of living – living in the love, peace and grace of God – a reality; something that sticks?

First off, Find support. When my family and I first came to Woodside, I have to be honest – I was looking for friends. Sure I had *friends* - neighbors, parents of my kids' teammates. I even belonged to a book club! People knew I had faith – would often ask me to pray for them – but weren't interested in going any deeper. "We don't talk about religion or politics; just books - and sometimes not even that!" What I was longing for were *Christian* friends, a community to talk about my faith with. A community to grow my faith.

I kept hearing about these "growth groups." Nothing we had at our old church. One day I finally decided to listen to Pastor Doug and try a group. I found one that met on my one day off from work, got up my courage and showed up 5 minutes early for the 9:00 am Friday group, not knowing a soul.

I sat by myself for 5, 10, 15 minutes until I got up the nerve to venture into the church office and timidly ask if the Friday Women's Growth Group was meeting that day. Judy Jones assured me they were – they make great food and they're just always late! And then I knew I was with my

kind of people. I made some of my most treasured friendships and learned so much about faith, what a relationship with Jesus looks like, and how important a supportive community truly is.

Growth Groups are the heart of Woodside because they speak to our hearts, supporting us as we experience the challenges and joy of this world and help us strengthen our relationship with Jesus. We don't keep talking about growth groups because we like hearing ourselves talk – we emphasize joining a group because we know first hand how fulfilling growth groups are! What are you waiting for?? Check out the groups on the handout in your bulletin and stop by the Connect Table in the lobby and we'll help you find a group.

And prioritize spending time with God. You can't get your head in the game if you don't listen to the coach. And what a coach we have!

A coach who is ALWAYS for us, who loves us unconditionally – no matter how many mistakes we make. A perfect coach!

How do you spend time with God? Maybe it's conferring with Him in the morning, spending time in His Word, asking him to guide your steps for the day. Or taking a walk with God in nature – letting the beauty of his creation draw you closer to him. Or before you go to sleep at night, leaving your worries and cares with Him, thanking him for all the blessings that day. If you haven't figured this out yet, start experimenting and see what works for you. Get up 10 minutes earlier in the morning, Take a break from social media and head outside – look around for signs of God's handiwork instead of looking down at your phone. Just make time to talk with your father in heaven. He's all ears.

When I was a teen I spent a week every summer at church camp in the Poconos. It was my favorite week of the year – a chance to break from everything else and really breathe in time with God. I can still picture my awesome camp counselors as well as sweet Mr. Bleesdale, an older gentleman from our church who gave each of us teens money to help us go to camp. I'm still thankful. Anyone find me in that awesome 70's group pic?

This past summer, you and I helped send some of our Woodside junior and senior high youth to summer camp with our "Send a Kid to Camp" outreach. Last year 30 kids went, this year over 62 campers experienced God in a lifechanging, personal way. Youth Leaders Markie Watson and Nathaniel Brodish created an incredible week where 62 teens felt the unconditional love of Jesus and learned what it means to live in that love in our daily lives and share it with others. And had lots of fun along the way!

Once we know God and accept his grace and unconditional love for us, how can we not share that with our families, friends and those God puts in our path? Here's a few tips to get started:

Pray, asking, expecting God to speak – Ask God to show you someone who needs His love. It is always amazing to me how many times God puts someone on my heart and I simply reach out with a text or call and they respond – "How did you know I needed that today..." I didn't; God did. I'm just following my coach's lead.

Act – Show kindness, serve, help those in need. It can be as simple as holding the door for someone – it's amazing how that little gesture, maybe said with "Have a Good day," or "Go Birds!" creates a small connection, shares a bit of kindness in our hurried world.

We have a great way to step out and serve coming up – join us for the Church has Left the Building Day of Service on November 2nd. Sign ups for everyone begin in October; right now we're looking for projects and project leaders! See a need in our community – maybe a neighbor who could use a little help with yard work? Area food pantries that need stocking? Houses that need repair? Stop by that Connect Table in the lobby and talk about project ideas with Missions Director Lisa Gayle.

Share – Tell others about how God works in your life. How his love and acceptance gives you strength and peace. How being part of God's family here at Woodside or wherever you Worship brings you joy.

Woodsider Michelle Martin shared with Pastor Doug and me a recent encounter with God:

My part in this story is small; It is all God. Out of a season of pain, came a great desire to seek God and His comfort. I focused on spending more time striving to listen to his voice instead of doing all the asking and talking. To slow down and seek quiet.

In that quiet, God asked me to love the people I work with well. To share my pain and God's healing as the opportunities arose. After a season of sharing and trying to love people well, God put it on the hearts of several of my co-workers to ask me to lead a lunchtime Bible study. Quite a few of the group had never been in a Bible study before. He was working on their hearts as well as mine! This story unfolded over the course of years - not days or even months. God is the master planner; we just have to sit in the quiet long enough to hear what part of the plan He has for us today.

What is God saying to you? Are you making time to listen? Every day is God's Superbowl – He's got a trophy full of love, grace and freedom waiting for us all. With a crowd of witnesses in heaven cheering us on. Come on friends, let's join God's team and share his much needed love, grace and joy with our thirsty, hungry world.

So one day we will **all** celebrate together in heaven!