



NOW & NEXT: STEPPING INTO GOD'S FUTURE TOGETHER | WEEK 03

To Center Their Lives on Jesus

Primary Text: Psalm 107 | Michael Stambaugh

Our Mission

We lead lost people to center their lives on Jesus.

Springs First, Then Harvest

Our church's name comes straight out of Psalm 107:35-37. Springs are the water God brings to dry ground. Harvest is what people grow once they live next to it. The order matters: springs come first. Nobody harvests in a desert.

On June 18, 1805, William Clark came across Giant Springs while scouting the portage around the Great Falls. He called it "the largest fountain or Spring I ever Saw." Its water starts as snow in the Little Belt Mountains more than forty miles away and travels underground through solid rock, by some estimates, for thousands of years. Then it rises at the edge of the Missouri at around 150 million gallons a day and about 54 degrees, summer and winter. Everything alive around it is alive because it stays close to the source.

Surrender

Psalm 107 describes four groups of people who were stuck. Wanderers were lost in the desert. Prisoners sat in darkness and chains. Fools suffered for their own rebellion. Sailors were caught in a storm they didn't cause. Some drifted, some were trapped, some chose it, and some got hit by weather.

Four different troubles, one prayer: "LORD, help!" (Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28). None of them fixes themselves first. The turning point comes every time they stop relying on their own ability and cry out to God. Centering doesn't begin with trying harder. It begins with surrender.

Salvation

In Psalm 107, salvation has an address. God doesn't only rescue people from somewhere. He brings them to somewhere: a city, out of darkness, into harbor, a place to call home. God moves people from where they were barely surviving to where they can build.

Many of us think of faith like the gate at Malmstrom. Show the right ID once, and you're in, and it doesn't matter which way you're facing afterward. Giant Springs works differently. No one

fenced it in, yet everything alive there is organized around the spot where the water comes up. The spring isn't holding anything in. It draws everything toward it.

In John 4:14, Jesus offers a spring, not a flash flood: deep, steady, and still running when everything else has dried up. The center is not a vague idea or a general spirituality. The center is a person, Jesus. So the question isn't how close you are. The question is which way you're facing.

Somebody far out and walking toward Jesus is in better shape than somebody close in and drifting. The prodigal son was "a great way off" but walking home. The older brother never left the house but stood outside the party, facing away. *Lost is a description of location. Centered is a description of direction.*

Sanctification

Settle, build, sow, plant, harvest, raise: these are work verbs, not rescue verbs. Sanctification is the long, steady work of building a life near the water: character, habits, family, and a way of handling money, time, and anger that looks more like Jesus this year than last.

It's a centering process, not a one-time trip through the gate. A GPS doesn't care how close you are to home. It cares which direction you're moving, and when you drift, it reroutes you. The Christian life is drift and reroute, every day.

The people in Psalm 107 build cities together and sow fields that feed more than themselves. A life centered on Jesus builds for the community and the kingdom.

Why "Center"?

Our mission doesn't say "attend." Attending is a gate question: are you here or not? You can attend every Sunday and still be drifting. "Center" asks a better question: which way are you facing, and what is your life organized around?

*Following Jesus is not a line you cross once. It is a center you keep moving toward. From surrender to salvation to sanctification, it's all a centering process. **What is the one area of your life not centered on Jesus?** Money, calendar, a relationship, a habit, a grudge: name the one area still orbiting something else.*

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