

15 Years! – Ps 89:1

Happy Anniversary Coram Deo. 15 years. 15 years of God's faithfulness.

The longer I live, the more I realize that most situations in life, most relationships in our day and age, last about 3-5 years.

People move, stages of life change, and *we* change.

So when something lasts beyond that, especially in a church, it's significant. And makes me value *our* years, and God's *faithfulness* over the years, all the more.

And just because you weren't here for all 15, doesn't mean you have anything less to celebrate. Just like all of us have much to celebrate on Independence Day . . .

Even though we weren't here for all 243 years of our *nation's* existence. It's still *our nation*, and *our history*.

So I trust that as we reflect on the last 15 years of God's faithfulness, your heart will sing and swell. Sing and swell with thankfulness and praise.

And that with your mouth, you'll make *known* his faithfulness. Just like the Psalmist said in **Ps 89:1**.

I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

That's as good a response to God's faithfulness there is.

In fact, that's what we're going to do in the next few minutes; from my mouth and other's mouths. We're going to recount and celebrate God's faithfulness . . .

And end with an extended time of worship. You ready?

It starts with saved souls.

Celebrate God's faithfulness to . . .

Save souls

I don't *know* how many people God has saved through the ministry of our church, but I'd be curious how many of *you* were.

So would you *stand* and remain standing if you were *saved* at our church? Or saved as a result of the *ministry* of our church? Something to celebrate for sure.

We don't know how many have been saved, but we do know how many have been baptized. 1059. The vast majority, adults. Not *all* of them saved here, but many. Because God's been faithful.

➤ But it hasn't been automatic. Like the very first invitation I gave at the high school. We were just a few months in as a church, and I felt compelled to ask people to come forward. So I finished the message, said amen, started singing, and nobody came. Not a single person.

Until Susan Henricksen stepped into the aisle about 2/3 of the way back, and started walking forward. Susan, who was on our Launch Team.

And I thought, "What is she doing? Is she not saved? I thought she was saved."

And when she got to me, she said, "I feel so badly that no one is coming forward, I just want to make it easier for them, and encourage them."

And I don't remember what *I* said, but I sure do remember being encouraged myself. And it sure did bolster me to *keep* preaching the Gospel, and keep giving people an opportunity to respond.

➤ Like the famous bleacher service in the summer of 2005.

I received a phone call Saturday night that we couldn't meet in the high school due to a water main break. And I was thinking, "Are you kidding me? It's 7 o'clock."

So we rallied the troops, prayed as we did, and figured out a way to meet on the *bleachers* of the football field.

And the gist of the message was that we won't get away with our sin forever; judgment is coming. And the only thing that will spare us, is repentance.

Faith in Jesus and repentance of sin.

You know. Just another feel-good message in the heat of the summer, to people sitting on hard bleachers, with a fence between you and them. Awesome.

Which is why I was blown away when 17 people raised their hands, indicating they had prayed with me to receive Christ. 17 saved souls.

And that was just the start of God's faithfulness. Take a look at this **video** (Saved Souls) *****

➤ Cause for celebration, for sure. (**Ps 89:1**) Especially when God has been faithful to save *hundreds* of people like that in our church.

So say it with me, will you? *I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.*

The second reason to celebrate, is changed lives. Celebrate God's faithfulness to . . .

Change lives

To conform us more and more into the image of Christ. Change us on the outside, just like we've been changed on the inside.

In fact, without the *external* change, bearing fruit in *keeping* with your repentance, you've got to wonder whether the *internal* change is real.

If your faith hasn't changed you, it hasn't saved you. Because God promises it.

He *promises*, that he who *began* a good work in you, will complete it. (Phil 1:6).

Promises, that by his Spirit, he will change us *from one degree of glory to another*. (2 Cor 3:18)

Promises, to *give life to* [our] *mortal bodies through his Spirit*. (Rom 8:11)

He *promises* to change us. And we've been blessed with 15 years of faithfulness.

How many baptism testimonies of students have we heard, where they say in so many words, "I went to camp, and God changed my life."

"I was at Lift, our winter retreat, and God did a work."

"I've been attending youth group, and I'm different." Changed lives.

Or how about marriages? Changed lives in changed marriages.

I could recount a *list* of marriages in our church that I thought were beyond repair. Just over. Done. Hopeless. And some of you are *on* that list. Such were some of you.

I even said on many occasions, "It would take a *miracle* to save their marriage; a literal act of God." And lo and behold, he did it. Over and over again.

➤ I remember getting a call one evening from one particular couple; infidelity had just been discovered, and it was ugly.

The culmination of *years* of dysfunction, offense, difficulty, and distance.

So Becky and I went to their home, and just tried to just get them to a place of civility. And after several hours, we drove away thinking it's hopeless.

But by God's grace, over the years, they got help, stuck it out, and God changed them. Miraculously. He changed their marriage, and he changed their lives. It's cause for celebration.

And so are the testimonies of so many others. Whether it's beauty out of ashes, or greater sanctification, or greater fruitfulness, God has been faithful to change lives in our church. Take a look. (**Video** – Changed Lives) *****

➤ *Such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:11) (Ps 89:1) Say it with me. I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.*

Third, celebrate God's faithfulness to . . .

Build his church

Not just our church, but the church universal. His worldwide kingdom. *I will build my church* [Jesus said], *and the gates of hell will not prevail against it* (Mt 16:18). The powers of darkness will not overcome it; will not stop it. And once again, we've seen him faithful.

We've had the opportunity to raise up, develop, and send out no less than **8 pastors** from our staff, to lead or plant other churches. From Washington DC to Albuquerque, NM. Substantially supporting them with finances and help until they get on their feet and become self-sufficient. God's been faithful.*****

In addition to that, we've raised up and sent out 4 *worship* pastors; to *partner* with some of those church planters. And we've hosted a half dozen *other* pastors who went on to plant churches. Not to mention *churches* themselves that we've supported over the years. Some in North America; others in Romania, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Nepal. As we've been faithful to *give*, and faithful to *send*, God's been faithful to *build*.

➤ We also partner with *missionaries*. To lay the *foundation* of the church among low-reached or unreached people groups. From post-Christian Europe and the Middle East, to Southeast Asia and the jungles of Papua New Guinea. God has been faithful.

One of *first* partnerships was with **Brooks and Nina Buser**; way back in 2006. They went to Papua New Guinea, and we prayed. In fact, about a year after they got there, they sent us pictures of 300 men and women in the Yembi-Yembi tribe, and we prayed for *them*. By name. Distributing cards that people took to pray for their salvation. Remember that?

People like **Lucas**. Who was one of the *first* to receive Christ in the tribe. Becky & I had the opportunity to *meet* Lucas when we visited Brooks & Nina in 2009. I'll never forget him. So gentle and humble, yet so rugged.

And though Lucas has gone home to be with the Lord, and Brooks and Nina are no longer in the tribe, the church remains. Because God is faithful. Take a look at one more **video**. (Church Planters/Partners) *****

➤ What a joy to see those guys grow, and mature, and advance the kingdom of God in their *own* churches (**Ps 89:1**). Truly he's faithful. Say it with me. *I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.*

Last, is God's faithfulness to . . .

Provide for our church

Our church. Right here. From a Launch Team of 20 adults that met in a living room, to 2500 people who call our church home, God has been faithful to provide. Faithful to provide people who were compelled, committed, and contagious. Compelled by God and all that we was doing; and going to do. Committed to roll up their sleeves and do whatever it takes. And contagious because they couldn't stop talking about it. God's been faithful in that respect.

➤ And faithful to provide *financially*. Never once have we failed to meet our payroll. Never once have we failed to underwrite our ministries. Or support our missionaries. Or make our payments. We've had to tighten our belts a few times. And on one occasion – in the summer of 2007, right after we moved in to this building . . . One of our elders wrote a \$15k check in the middle of the week to pay our bills. We've come close a few times, but God has always been faithful.

And most of the time, he's gone above and beyond. Like enabling me to hire an assistant before we even launched; October 2004. And a part-time worship leader the *day* we launched: November 14th. Followed by a part-time youth pastor named **Garth Glenn**. Who's now our Associate Pastor; and about to be an elder. God's been faithful.

And now, we have **46 staff members**; full *and* part-time, including 13 pastors and directors. That's about 30 of them, with one photo-shopped in.

And early on, many of our staff were hired on faith. We didn't have all the money, but we *desperately* needed the help. And God was faithful to provide, when we were faithful to step out.

➤ And then there's *this*. Our **building**. Made possible in the Spring of 2006, by the ridiculous generosity of 150 families, who gave \$1.6M in 6 weeks . . . To secure the financing and get our foot in the door. I look back on that now, and I can't even believe we asked for it; let alone thought it was possible. And yet God was faithful.

Fast-forward to 2012, and we added the **north end** of our building. Including a gym, some large meeting rooms, offices, and more seating in here. That time needing **\$4M**.

And once again, God was faithful.*****

All of which should give us faith to *finish* our build-out. God's been faithful in the past, he'll be faithful in the present.

- The goal all along, has been to eventually renovate the ***south end*** of our building.
To provide better space for our kids and students.
Better space for ministry and discipleship.
Space that's *equal* in quality with the rest of the building.
And after delaying that plan for several years, we believe the time has come.

We've been thinking and praying about it for upwards of a year now as elders, and we believe the time has come to do it.
To start a capital campaign, and build out the south end of our building.

The cost, once again, is about \$4M; and the space (**Overview**) will look like this.
Expanded check-in area. More and larger classrooms. More bathrooms. Play area.
Large group rooms. Multi-purpose room – for children, students, and adults; even weddings and funerals.
Also included is the kitchen, on the north end, that we've never finished.
That's the space.

The cost, is \$4M (**Capital Campaign graphic**). And the good news, is that we've already saved \$1.25M of it.
Which leaves \$2.75M needed. And this is our plan to raise it.
\$1M through large gifts; from those able to give \$100K or more. Legacy givers.
\$1.5M through 2 year pledges; from all of us. And \$250K in initial gifts. \$2.75M.

Will all the numbers work out *exactly* like that? I doubt it.
But I don't doubt that God will be faithful to provide, if we're faithful to give.

We're calling it **One to the Next** (Front of brochure). From one generation to the next.
Because it's from *us*, for the benefit of those who come *behind* us. The *next* generation.
So that they should set their hope in God. Ps 78:7.
There's a need – for better space.
There's a responsibility – to provide the best we can.
There's an opportunity – to impact the next generation.

We won't roll it out in full until after the new year, but we wanted you to know now, so that you can begin thinking and praying.
Sure of God's provision in the future, just like he's provided in the past. (**Summary**)

For now though, we have much to celebrate. 15 years of God's faithfulness.
His faithfulness to save souls, change lives, build his church, & provide for ours.
Say it with me. *I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.*

Prayer – Lord, what else can we say except, “Great is your faithfulness?”

We're humbled by it, and overjoyed to be a part. Who are we that you would so bless us?
May you receive all the praise and glory as our hearts swell and our mouths sing for all you've done. *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!* (Ps 115:1)

Let's stand and sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever.

Close – **Happy Anniversary Coram Deo!**