

All In Series Slide

Moby Dick is the story of Ahab. A ship's captain that had his leg eaten off by a white whale named...Moby Dick.

From that moment, Captain Ahab spends his entire life chasing after the whale...Because he believes if he can just catch up to the whale...if he can just kill the whale...he will finally have peace.

Not to spoil it for you, but you've had 170 years to read it.

Ahab catches up to Moby Dick.

...but it doesn't save him. It kills him.

In fact his obsession with this whale not only kills him, it kills his whole crew. His entire fleet of ships is crushed by the whale. And when Ahab jabs the harpoon into Moby Dick, the rope attached to it loops around his neck and the whale drags him out to sea. The object of Ahab's obsession...the promise of the revenge that he believes will bring him peace...ends up killing him and everyone else that he's brought along with him.

At the end of the book, just before Ahab plunges the harpoon into Moby Dick, he says something disturbing.

He says, **"From Hell's heart I stab at thee!"**

Do you know what he means?

In that moment, Ahab is realizing that all the passion that he has for chasing this whale is demonic. It's not coming from a heavenly source....but a hellish one.

Here's where we're headed today.

There is a kind of hellish pursuit that every single person in this room has.

There is something you are stabbing at. Something you are going for. Something that you know, "If only I could ..." "Then I'd..."

If only I could graduate....then I'd have more time.

If only I could marry...then I'd be happy.

If only I could divorce...then I'd be able to start over.

If only I could get a job with a decent salary... then I wouldn't have these money struggles.
If only I could slim down...then people would find me attractive.
If only I could make it to retirement...then I'd be able to rest.
If only my wife would have more sex with me...I wouldn't look at porn.
If only my children would listen to me...we wouldn't be in the bind we're in.
If only I could find someone who really cared about me....then I wouldn't be lonely.

Almost every single one of our "if only" statements are harpoons from Hell's Heart. Usually well intentioned...intended to address real hurt or a problem in our lives. But then monomania sets in. We get settled on this one thing being a solution...which becomes an obsession. An extreme focus on one thing- that shuts other important things out of our lives...and destroys us and those we love.

Title Slide- "From Hell's Heart: How Idols Over-Promise & Under-Deliver"- Acts 19:11-34

One year ago, we started a 2 year journey called All-In. All-in is an initiative that has an inside and outside goal. The inside goal- is for God to confront our greed- the act of replacing God with money. To help us orient ourselves to one of the sneakiest and easily passed over destructive idols in the western world- money & the things it can buy us.

So- that's why I've said multiple times to you "I want generosity FOR you, not generosity FROM you."

But I need to confess something. After thinking about it, I think that line is a little misleading. Not intentionally. Because that focuses only on the internal. It sees us just as a bunch of individuals that if we can get our junk together... in our inner spiritual lives- then mission accomplished.

I do want Generosity FOR you...But the fact is, I actually want generosity FROM us, too. Here's what I mean.

Where and to whom you give your money away matters. Spending Money, indeed has real world consequences. So if all of us in this room were VERY generous in such a way that money had no hold on our life- but NONE of what we gave away went to this church- it would have real world consequences for the way we do church. To the way we serve and minister in this community and in the lives of all of us here. So, our generosity needs to be aimed. Targeted. Thought through. And...if you are All-In on City

Church and our future...and you believe God is present and active through this church- then we want Generosity FROM you.

We have not only an internal Goal for your spiritual growth and repentance and faith...but we're literally building a building as a our new home base for ministry on Bridge avenue. So, for real-for real- as much as i wished it was this way- we can't just tell the bank "Our people are generous- so don't send us that mortgage bill"

But we'll get to all that.-

Listen- what I want you to see today...is that when you finally catch whatever "If only" whale you've been hunting ...it won't change a thing. And that is deeply true about money. Instead You'll only hurt the people you've dragged along with you...and eventually...you'll be dragged out to sea by the Whale.

Today, I want you to come face to face with idolatry. I want you to see it in your own life...and then, I want to show you the beautiful way Jesus doesn't simply forgive you...but replaces the passion that's killing you...with one that brings you back to life....and then overflows in a very tangible...even economic way...into the community around us.

Acts 19:11-34

11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by Paul's hands, 12 so that even facecloths or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, and the diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.

13 Now some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists also attempted to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I command you by the Jesus that Paul preaches! " 14 Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, were doing this. 15 The evil spirit answered them, "I know Jesus, and I recognize Paul — but who are you? " 16 Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them, overpowered them all, and prevailed against them, so that they ran out of that house naked and wounded. 17 When this became known to everyone who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, they became afraid, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high esteem.

18 And many who had become believers came confessing and disclosing their practices, 19 while many of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in front of everyone. So they calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 In this way the word of the Lord spread and prevailed.

21 After these events, Paul resolved by the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. "After I've been there," he said, "It is necessary for me to see Rome as well." 22 After sending to Macedonia two of those who assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 About that time there was a major disturbance about the Way. 24 For a person named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, provided a great deal of business for the craftsmen. 25 When he had assembled them, as well as the workers engaged in this type of business, he said, "Men, you know that our prosperity is derived from this business. 26 You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and misled a considerable number of people by saying that gods made by hand are not gods. 27 Not only do we run a risk that our business may be discredited, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be despised and her magnificence come to the verge of ruin — the very one all of Asia and the world worship."

28 When they had heard this, they were filled with rage and began to cry out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! " 29 So the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed all together into the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's traveling companions. 30 Although Paul wanted to go in before the people, the disciples did not let him. 31 Even some of the provincial officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent word to him, pleading with him not to venture into the amphitheater. 32 Some were shouting one thing and some another, because the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some Jews in the crowd gave instructions to Alexander after they pushed him to the front. Motioning with his hand, Alexander wanted to make his defense to the people. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! "

Transition: This passage goes straight to Hell's heart. It shows you that idols never deliver on the promises they make. and then it shows you how the gospel of Jesus does everything you have always hoped your idols would do.

1) Idols promise happiness but deliver disappointment.

- Most of us are going to read the story in this text and not relate at all. I mean there's a bunch of people burning Magic books & a riot because people stopped buying little statues of made up gods.
- You know why?
- Because we tend to think, "Look at all these first century bozos." They are so gullible.
- Who would believe that a little silver statue ACTUALLY has any power? That something you could hold in your hand could ACTUALLY be a god?
- But here's the thing. These people of Ephesus were simply more honest than we are.
- They were just being honest about what we cover up.
- See, everybody has god replacements.
- Everybody has something you believe is going to give you joy and pleasure. Something that's going to make you happy.
- Every one of us has our "if only".
- Everybody's chasing a whale.
- And we don't chase those things because we do the math and it just makes sense...we chase them because our heart wants a god....
- See, idols grab a hold of your heart...and then use your heart to convince your mind to keep going on the whale hunt. Even when it seems insane.
- You are looking for happiness, and idols always promise that. They just never deliver.
- **Now, Let me show you some of the idols in Ephesus where this story takes place.**
- Ephesus is one of the most important cities in Asia in the first century.

- It was the leading city in the richest region of the Roman Empire.
- Think, NY City...except warmer climate.
- Ephesus was also a VERY spiritual city.
- Over 50 different gods had temples there.
- But the biggest temple in Ephesus was the temple of the goddess Artemis.
- This temple was 4 times bigger than the Parthenon in Rome...or Nashville.
- It was one of the 7 wonders of the world.
- And in it was the huge statue of Artemis,
- Artemis was like the good luck charm for the city. She was believed to protect it, and prosper it, even to make the couples of the city more fertile.
- As the story goes, the statue of Artemis was carved out of a meteorite that fell to earth.
- There was all kinds of Harry Potter type stuff going on in Ephesus.
- Crystals, and spells, and tricks to keep away evil spirits.
- People were always taking orders for Essential Oils and whatnot.
- But it wasn't all right-brained touchy-feely. It was filled with book worms, too.
- Ephesus had one of the largest libraries in the ancient world.
- So Ephesus is a city full of people who have lots of different idols.
- Some of them Overt...like Artemis.
- Some of them Covert...like money...or magic...or intelligence...or power.
- Whether they were looking to a 50 foot statue...or to the bottom line of their bank statement, the people of Ephesus were looking for something to keep them safe, and make them happy.
- **V 14-16**
- First, you had these "Seven sons of Sceva" ...

And they think power will make them happy. They love the attention that Paul is getting by healing people in the name of Jesus..." So they think... "Hey, lets try that out."

- But their pursuit of power is an idol. It promises happiness. It looks good.
- But it doesn't deliver.
- The demon that possessed one of these guys says, "I know Jesus...and I've heard of Paul...but who are you?"
BURRRRRNNNNNN!!!!
- And then this demon leaps on them and sends them away wounded and naked.
- They tried to use Jesus' name to get power...but Jesus wasn't their God...power was, and they ended up weak and beaten down.

· **V 17-18**

- After everyone sees what happened to the Sons of Sceva, they all realize that the power they were chasing by messing around with demonic forces isn't going to pan out to happiness...but to being wounded and naked.

· **V 19**

- So they all got together and burn all these books that they had spent their life on.
- Why would somebody do that?
- Why would you just throw away everything you had staked your happiness on?
- There's only one reason. Because it utterly disappointed you...
- Here's the thing about idols.
- Most of time...they aren't bad things.
- There's nothing inherently wrong with power, or money, or marriage, or family. Nothing wrong with political or social causes...or romantic relationships.
- But once those good things become GOD things....they will never live up to your expectations.

- And they will always ask you to sacrifice for them. But the trade off never works out.

Back to 1)

- Let me show you.
- All of us...every single one of us who have chased an idol for happiness have what I call mirror moments.
- They are the moments in the middle of your Whale Chase, in the middle of your pursuit of happiness, where something makes you pause....in the quiet of the morning, before you step in the shower...and you look yourself in the mirror and say, "What I have I become?" "Who am I?" "Is this really worth it?" "What am I doing to myself and the people I love?"
- All these folks who burn their magic books in Ephesus have a mirror moment. And so did Captain Ahab.
- In Moby Dick, just before Captain Ahab and his crew start their 3 day battle with Moby Dick, he has this conversation with his first mate, Starbuck. First, they argue about how much he is charging for coffee...
- Then Ahab talks about his wife and child. He says he's been a fool for wasting 40 years on chasing Whales when he could have been with his family.
- So Starbuck tries to convince the captain to turn around...to go back to their families...but Ahab is too consumed with finding the whale. So he ignores his mirror moment and chases his whale. And 3 days later...he would be carried off to sea by it.
- What's your mirror moment?
- Have you had one?
- Its coming.
- This is the insanity of worshipping idols!
- You think, One more sacrifice and I'll be happy. One more promotion. One more night with a beautiful woman. One more... one more...one more...and then I'll turn around.
- Let me give you another example.
- **Chef Dan Barber** is a revolutionary and wildly successful Chef in NYC. He was featured on the Netflix series "Chef's Table".

- Listen to what this incredibly successful chef says.
- **"Because of the drudgery and hours of exhaustion it demands, cooking attracts people who are attracted to a certain kind of abuse.**
- **Is that the way to live a happy life? I don't have the answer to that...I wonder, sometimes.**
- **You have this crazy life as a chef. You're always on the brink of failure. That's just constant.**
- **I was attracted to cooking when it was so beautiful from afar, but what I didn't understand was how torturous it was. That's a lesson I learned late.**
- **Still Its so difficult. [I have a daughter now] and I still feel the sadness, extreme sadness, when I'm not with her on a Sunday. I'm not going to get that time back. I'm feeling a lot of pain.**
- **...But I'm gonna spend some time with her tomorrow."**

- Do you see it? Do you see his mirror moment?
- He's realizing after a lifetime of chasing this happiness that being a chef has promised...that's its actually been a life of abuse. Disappointment.
- His life isn't really about tasting the sweetness of success...its about avoiding the sourness of failure.
- And what he says about his daughter. Its exactly what all your idols will tempt you to say when you hit your mirror moment. Just one more sacrifice. Just one more day of torture...and then it will pay off.
- **And you respond "Ok. I'll stop tomorrow."**
- Let me give you one more example.
- Here's Andre Agassi, who through his life into a torturous, and very successful, tennis career. His autobiography- Titled "Open" remains one of the best books I've ever read.
- Listen to his disappointment when he finally caught up to his Whale.

· “I don’t feel that [winning] Wimbledon has changed me. I feel, in fact, as if I’ve been let in on a dirty little secret: winning changes nothing. Now that I’ve won a [Grand Slam Tournament], I know something that very few people on earth are permitted to know. A win doesn’t feel as good as a loss feels bad, and the good feeling doesn’t last as long as the bad. Not even close.” – Andre Agassi, *Open*

There’s a version of this related to money and possessions. Its called the Hedonic Treadmill. Hedonic meaning relating to pleasure. And you know what a Treadmill is right? A treadmill keeps you running- but you are never going anywhere. So you get the next pay raise. you buy the bigger house. you go on your 3rd vacation for the year, instead of the 2 you took last year. And you still can’t quell that feeling inside of you...the restlessness...the anxiety...the fatigue. And instead of stopping the treadmill...you just up the speed. You ever seen what happens when you can’t keep up with a treadmill? It FORCES you to get off.

Billionaires jumping off bridges. Overdoses in mansions and Ferraris.

Catching up to Moby Dick never pans out the way you always dreamed it would. So you have to keep sacrificing the people around you. Keep chasing. Until it kills you.

Back to 1)

- **I’ll spend time with my daughter tomorrow.**
- **Back to tennis practice.**
- **From Hell’s Heart, I stab at thee.**

Transition: and Those idols keep making promises...here’s another one.

2) Idols promise to make you captain, then drag you to chaos.

- Happiness isn’t the only thing we chase.
- Because we are created in God’s image...we all want our lives to be ordered.
- In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, we get this story of creation.
- And it starts with God making order from chaos.
- Take a look.

· **Gen 1:1-2**

- See, the chaos at the beginning of the world? The earth was "without form and void". No order
- ...and the rest of the first 2 chapters of Genesis is God ordering the world.
- We have that same desire for our lives to be ordered.
- Ask any child psychologist about how children flourish, and you'll find that its in a safe, secure, predictable environment.
- Whenever uncertainty and unpredictability enter into a child's life...it messes with their heads and hearts...and can even have severe effects on their adult relationships.
- Some of you who come from unstable homes have experienced this first hand.
- We are made to flourish in order...and we fall apart in chaos.
- When that desire for order gets twisted...we often decide not to rely on God to provide it, but instead to try to get control.
- We fear our lives spinning out of control, so we chase after idols that promise we can have it.
- That kind of idolatry is very evident in Ephesus in Acts 19.

· **V 24-26**

- This guy Demetrius and whole slew of other folks make their living off of selling these little statues of the god Artemis.
- Now, think about this.
- Demetrius is not the kind of guy who would be particularly interested in going to hear Paul speak...but as Paul preaches the gospel in Ephesus it has such an impact that Demetrius is able to quote this little slogan that Paul uses. "Gods made with hands are not gods."
- ...not to mention, so many people are believing the gospel that it effects the local economy.
- Its putting Demetrius out of business.

- Can you imagine that in Murfreesboro?
- If we spoke the gospel to our friends, neighbors, and co-workers...and we loved and served them in such a way that it effected our economy?
- What if all the Title Loan places shut down because the Xians in Murfreesboro were so generous?
- Imagine the sex traffickers in Atlanta getting together and trying to find a route to Nashville that didn't go through Murfreesboro because too many of their women and pimps were hearing about Jesus, being rescued and being changed.
- Listen, when you have seen the beauty of what Jesus has done for you, and you begin to share it both in word and in generosity...it's amazing what can happen...or...you can you just go to church 2 Sundays a month.
- Now, take a look how Demetrius responds.
- He gets a rally together...with all the folks that worship Artemis.
- ...and They. Go. Nuts.

· **V 28-29**

- They all rush into this 25,000 seat theater... Think MTSU's football stadium...except with people in it...and they're chanting, "GREAT IS ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS!"
- In fact, it gets so crazy and violent...

· **V 32**

- That people are just going into the stadium saying all kinds of different things because they don't even know why they are there.
- This just turns into a violent, angry mob of people demanding Paul's blood...

· **v 34**

- And for 2 hours...2 straight hours...they chant "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"
- Why does Demetrius rally these people?

- Why do all the people show up?
- Well, Demetrius gives you 2 reasons for it.

· **V 27**

- He says first, we are going to lose our money.
- And second, we are going to lose our god.
- Do you know what the god of money and Artemis have in common?
- They both promise security. Protection. Control.
- Think about it.
- **People worshipped Artemis, or really any god, because they got a sense of control.**
- With Artemis, if you prayed your prayers, made your sacrifices just right...then the story goes that Artemis would not let you come to harm.
- We believe the same thing about money.
- If we hold onto, stack up enough, we'll be able to buy our way out of danger. Any hospital bill, we can conquer. Any trouble that comes our way...just buy your way out of it.
- You ever know somebody that money is the solution to everything?
- But listen, money can't save you. Money can't protect you anymore than a little silver statue of Artemis can.

Back to 2)

- See, we want to control our lives. We want limit our risk and guarantee that we not only live happy lives...but long lives.
- ...and money is a way we try to gain control.
- It gives us the feeling that we are standing on the Captains deck driving the ship.
- But you aren't. And you never were.
- ...isn't it strange how much we have to protect the gods that promise to protect us?
- I mean Demetrius has to rally people to stand up for Artemis.
- ...and then the whole thing devolves into chaos.

- Utter Chaos.
- Tons of people who are motivated by hate and anger.
- This is exactly what happens when your idol is threatened.
- If you want to know what idol you worship, just see when you get angry.
- Do you get angry when someone disrespects you? Then your idol may be people's approval.
- Do you get angry when someone disrupts your schedule? Then you might be worshipping your ability to control your life.
- Do you get ticked off when someone talks to you about giving money? Maybe its because you don't want to lose your god.
- See, every time your idol is threatened...you'll try to protect it.
- But to riff off Paul's line...
- **"A god you have to protect cannot protect you"**
- See, the truth is that the real god doesn't need your protection.
- ...and you don't have as much control as you think you do.
- Look what Paul says a couple of chapters earlier to the philosophers at Mars Hil
- **Acts 17:24; 26**
- See Paul says, the Real God is the captain of the ship.
- He is the one who steers and directs everything.
- And look why he's doing it in **Acts 17:27**
- **"So that you should seek God, and find him. and He's not far from you.**
- See, God doesn't want you to control your own life. Because in the chaos, he wants you to look to him...not to your money, or schedule, or anything else you try to get control with.
- He wants you to find him in the chaos. And trust him.
- But when we take God's job from him...we end up losing control... and just like Ahab, though we think we are a Captain, we're dragged out to sea.

· **Gen 1:2**

- Did you know all through the Bible that the sea is metaphor for chaos?
- In Gen 1:2- the Spirit of God hovers over the deep dark waters of the sea.
- God separated the land from the sea.
- He preserved Noah in the flood.
- He directed Moses basket through the treacherous waters of the Nile, to safety.
- He led the Hebrews across dry land when he parted the Red Sea and then the Jordan river.

Back to 2)

- What God are you trusting to get you through the chaos of the sea?
- If it is a god made with hands...if its a number in your bank account...you have no hope.
- And those gods will never forgive you when you fail to protect them.
- That's why when the stock market crashed a few years ago, men and women jumped out of buildings on Wall St.
- They trusted money to protect them...they thought they had control...but they couldn't protect their god made with hands...and in their despair, they punished themselves with death.
- Idols you can protect never forgive. You fail them...they leave you with nothing.
- That's why any god you serve that is not the Real God will always leave you operating in fear...not love.

TRANSITION: But there's something better. There is a Real God. And he doesn't ask you to protect him...in fact...he sacrifices to save you before you can ever lift a finger.

3) Jesus sacrificed to bring you back to shore.

- If you add one more chapter to Moby Dick, how would it read?
- What if Moby Dick, instead of dragging Ahab out to sea...what if the Whale carried him back to Nantucket. What if the great whale beached himself...and there waiting on the shore, was the family Captain Ahab regretted leaving behind.

- What when Captain Ahab stabbed Moby Dick with that Harpoon from Hell's Heart, Moby Dick ended up not only saving his life, but bringing him back to everything he lost?

- Well, then it wouldn't be Moby Dick. It would be the Bible.

· **V 30-31**

- Did you see when this angry, chaotic crowd wanted Paul dead... did you see what he did?
- He wanted to go talk to them?
- His friends looked at him and said, "Dude, you can't go in there, they'll rip you to pieces."
- Why in the world would Paul want to go in?
- Because Paul worshipped the Real God. Jesus Christ.
- He knew he could not lose the love of God...so he was fearless. Unafraid of the wind and waves.
- See, Jesus though- he didn't deserve it, was arrested by an angry mob. And though his friends tried to talk him out of it, he set his face toward the cross...and he willingly died.
- He wasn't killed. He gave himself up. Sacrificed.
- The God of the universe. The son of God. The God that Paul preached in Acts 17 as sovereign over everything...chose to die.
- From Heaven's Heart, Jesus descended...and from Hell's heart... we stabbed him.
- The angry crowd chanted "Crucify him." Because he was a threat to their religious and political power.
- On the cross, Jesus was becoming the chaos that all our sin, all of our idolatry has brought on us.
- He was ripped apart, for you.
- When the spear went in to Jesus' side, it was a collective cry from everyone who has ever worshipped any god besides the true God... "We all cried, From Hell's Heart we stab at thee."
- But this is a better God. In fact, through his death, that we caused with our sin...he didn't condemn us...but he forgave us.
- We stabbed him...and instead of carrying us out to sea, he carried us back to shore.

- Then Jesus resurrected. Because he just wasn't making us safe... he was making us new.
- On the shores that Christ secured for us in his death, his resurrection is remaking the chaos of the world. And one day, he's going to come back, and he's going to fix everything our idol worship has broken.
- He's going to reign as king, sovereign over the people he died to heal.
- Jesus is the only god that doesn't punish you when you fail him... Because he died FOR your FAILURE. HE DIED to forgive you. You can't let Jesus down...because his whole reason for dying is because he already knew you would.
- He's the only god that doesn't eventually drag you off to chaos. Instead, he ushers you into Shalom. Perfect peace.
- And when he returns...we'll take a look what John saw when he was given a vision of the Return of the King.
- **Rev 21:1**
- **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.**
- When he returns. There is no more sea. No more chaos. No more pain. Only peace.

Thats exactly the peace that Paul is operating from when he is willing to go back into a angry mob to tell them about Jesus.

Like Jesus facing a storm- Paul is ready to face an angry Mob. He's not afraid of death- because he knows that he will resurrect with Jesus. He's not afraid of being unpopular, because he follows a God who was deserted by everyone...and yet opened up the way to create a new family.

Paul later would write that he considers his own life rubbish compared to knowing Christ. He rights in the letter to the Roman church that he would be cut off from God, if it meant his brothers and sisters could know God. Because he had such profound peace in his relationship with Jesus...he was willing to sacrifice. NOT like the other gods- like artemis. Who wanted you

to sacrifice to get their approval. Instead, Paul is sacrificing because Jesus' sacrifice proves that we already have God's love and approval.

Acts 19:18-20

And then notice the impact of the other Christians in Ephesus. In humility, they come confessing their idol worshipping practices... and they burn all the books devoted to their magical incantations that denied Jesus as the One True God. And I love that Luke includes this little detail. He writes that the value of these books added up to \$50k pieces of silver. Likely, the silver referenced here is the Drachma. That's about a day's wage. So 50,000 days of work sacrificed in the name of Jesus.

and look at the effect the sacrifice had. It was a part of what God used to spread the gospel and have it prevail over the idolatry of Ephesus.

Back to 3)

Jesus is not asking you today to sacrifice to get his attention...
...he's not asking you to sacrifice to make him happy...
...or to prove how necessary it is for him to save you.

He's asking you to look at him sacrificing for you. Dying on a cross. Harpoon jammed into his side. Taking the just punishment for your treason against the one true God.

And know through it- that he forgives you. He loves you. And that's not changing.

And from that- that's where we burn our magic books. That's where we leave our idols behind. From that peace and security...we can be fearless to speak the gospel to others...and fearless- to live lives of sacrificial generosity...never wondering if we'll run out of what we need.

I want to use these last few minutes to talk about some of the ways you guys have shown off the beauty of Jesus with your own sacrifices.

Right now, people pass out cards.

We are 1 year in to our 2 year Generosity Initiative- called ALL-In.

Take a look at graph-

Celebrate- Through one year you gave- 1.14 million dollars. That's a lot of magic books burned!!! That's a lot of sacrifice from love.

Bad news- \$130,223 is our deficit

Trust the Lord for it. Every dollar we need for the mission of this church is sitting right here. Maybe there is a way the Lord is calling you to sacrifice to get us back on track or ahead.

But already we have some really beautiful things happening among us.

CELEBRATE SPECIFIC SACRIFICE

A student who was uncertain of what their income would be as they finished their degree committed to give \$3,600. To date this student has faithfully given \$2,900 in just 1 year and will nearly double the original commitment.

A young professional took a step of faith and committed to give \$40,000 over 2 years--- well over 2 times what this person had given in years past. This person's job situation changed some and they are on pace to give over \$45,000 in two years. That's over 3 times their previous giving.

One couple decided their action step was to continue to give the same amount they had in the past. That's the commitment they made. But as their income increased over the last year, so did their giving. They are on pace to double their original commitment.

I don't give you these number of stories to feel bad. You may be in a different situation.

I share them so we can celebrate the steps that many in our church have taken to trust God. And HE has proven himself faithful.

Some of you may feel anything but celebratory. You might be rolling your eyes- or you might feel ashamed because you fell behind on your commitment. Maybe your job situation changed for the worse.

Don't let cynicism or shame or greed blind you from the beauty of Jesus- who loved you so much that he gave himself up for you. So let's take a next step together. That's what this next 4 weeks is about. Let's renew our vision together and take a step together as One Gospel Family headed towards One Gospel Future.

Commitment Card

I know some of you have already done this... but we're all going to do it again.

A- You might want to catch up your commitment.

B- You might want to get a head on your commitment.

C- Make your first commitment. (new or didn't make one last time)

Commitment Sunday- November 13th

Anniversary offering- Dec 4th.