

Tapestry Week 5

Only Jesus: Why Our Focus Matters

Sunday, February 8, 2026



[Video]

On a dangerous seacoast, where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat. But the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought of themselves, went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost.

Many lives were saved by this little station, and it became quite famous. Some of those who were saved, along with others in the surrounding area, wanted to be associated with the station and give their time, money, and effort to support the work. The little life-saving station began to grow.

Some of the members, however, were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge for those rescued from the sea. So the station was expanded and furnished more comfortably.

Over time, the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members. It was decorated beautifully and furnished exquisitely because it was increasingly being used more like a club than a rescue outpost. Fewer members were interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do the work instead.

The life-saving motif still remained in the club's décor, and there was even a memorial lifeboat in the room where club initiations were held.

About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick, and some of them looked very different from the members. The beautiful new club was suddenly in chaos.

Immediately, the property committee arranged for a shower house to be built outside the club so that shipwreck victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities because they felt they were unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. A small group insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station.

But the small group was voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old one. It too evolved into a club, and yet another life-saving station had to be founded. History continued to repeat itself.

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And if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters... but most of the people drown.

[End Video]

That video was done internally by our own Jordan Ramey. Didn't he do a great job?

[Applause]

Very talented staff.

Does anybody remember this? If you're a little younger, you might not, but I think most of you will. Does anybody remember Borders Bookstores? Remember them? Yeah... I mean, yeah, you do.

Borders Bookstores started in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as a used bookstore. Somebody's got Michigan. All right. That's all I know about Michigan — you do this thing here. I don't know what all that means, but I know you do that.

But it started as a used bookstore, and it grew. That little bookstore grew and it grew, and analysts felt that Borders was going to overtake Barnes & Noble and become the largest bookstore in America. About the time it had gotten so big that it was just about to overtake Barnes & Noble, something happened in the technology world where books could be sent in digital form. Many of you are probably familiar with that now, like with a Kindle.

But back in those days, as digital books started to happen, Barnes & Noble remembered that they were a bookstore, so they created what was called the **Nook**. The Nook kept people in the store, kept their lists in the store, and kept people coming back to the store. Borders did not do that. Borders exported digital books to Amazon, and in doing so they lost all kinds of customers. They lost customer lists, and people started just going to Amazon rather than Borders. It was a really, really bad business decision.

About the time they were making those decisions, they had also decided to sort of morph into some other things. For most of us, what we probably remember more than anything is this iteration of Borders where it was books, music, and café. There's nothing inherently wrong with music and café, but it had grown into something more than just a bookstore.

By the time Borders went bankrupt and completely out of business — as you could see by the signs — they were not only Borders Books and Music, but also video and Starbucks coffee. They were sort of throwing the whole kitchen sink at it, trying to make it work.

Borders is not the only business that started off one way and ended up being something completely different — and a failure. There are all kinds of businesses that have done that.

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It's not only businesses. There are organizations that have done that. Churches have done that. Relationships have done that.

Drift is easy.

It's easy to forget who you are.

It's easy to forget what you're called to do.

It's easy to slowly drift.

Everybody can drift. It's just part of life.

In fact, it's so easy for us to drift that at the beginning of every year I go back and talk about who we are as a church. I do that because I don't want us to drift. I want us to stay true to who we are. I realize that if we don't intentionally stay the course, it's so easy to drift. It's easy when you become larger. It's easy when things get bigger to sort of lose the plot.

So every year I go back and talk about who we are as a church, and I talk about our eight cultural pillars. I don't do all eight every series at the beginning of the year, but I usually try to pick a few of them and highlight them to keep us focused on who we are.

Over the years, one of those eight cultural pillars has sort of risen to the top as maybe the most important of the eight. Not that any of them aren't important — they're all important — but this one has really defined us as a church. And it's interesting because it's been the most freeing thing that we do. People's lives have genuinely been changed because of the way we do this. At the same time, it's also been the most polarizing and the thing that has received the most kickback. It's interesting how that works.

But it's the cultural pillar where we say: **We do Jesus.**

And when we say "we do Jesus," it doesn't mean that we don't do events, or outreaches, or work with ministry partners. What it means is that the focus of our church has been to keep the main thing the main thing — to keep lifting Jesus up. Let's learn to be more like Jesus, and let's make sure we present Jesus to people outside the four walls of the church.

The subtext of this is twofold.

First, we don't engage in **non-salvific theological debates**. A lot of Christians love to get into the weeds and argue all kinds of things that really don't have to do with salvation. That's not to say they're not important. And you have to understand something — I'm a theology nerd. That's what I went to school for. I love theology. I taught systematic theology. It's just part of who I am. I could sit in a room and talk about theological things that nobody else wants to talk about all day long.

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But I've realized as a pastor that usually doesn't move the ball forward. It may be fun, but it doesn't move the ball forward. There are certain things you just cannot give up, and you don't want to get focused on everything else.

So around here we've decided we're not going to focus on non-salvific things. We're going to focus on the things that matter — like the fact that Jesus is fully God and fully man. That's a non-negotiable around here. We're going to preach that and teach that. We're going to teach the fact that Jesus physically and literally rose from the grave on the third day. That's a salvific issue. That's part of what it means to be a Christian. We believe the Bible is the Word of God. Those are things we hold tightly to and teach and preach.

But we don't get involved in a lot of the other stuff that simply causes division. For instance, we're not going to sit around and try to figure out whether or not Adam had a belly button. Some people want to argue every little nuance. I get it — I'm not immune to that. I'm probably more likely to be that person than most. But I've realized it doesn't move the mission forward. Stay on the main things.

The other part of this pillar is that **we don't engage in partisan political alignment inside the church.** What we mean by that is we're not here to lift up a side or turn this into a political situation.

And I want you to hear me very clearly here. Lean in and make sure you hear this, because I don't want you to misunderstand me. I'm not saying you shouldn't vote. I'm not saying you shouldn't exercise your freedoms. I'm not saying you shouldn't vote your conscience or try to vote what you believe is best as a Christian. I'm all for that. It doesn't bother me at all if you want to be involved in civic matters.

What I am saying is that when we gather as the people of God, we want to keep that stuff out of here and make sure Jesus is the most important thing.

[Applause]

And just so I'm clear, the only political leader and the only kingdom we lift up at Grace Community Church is Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God — all the time.

[Applause]

Now, obviously, that can create some tension. What I want to do this weekend, as kindly and honestly as I can, is talk a little about how easy it is to drift. I want to try, once again, for those of you who disagree — and it's okay if you disagree — to explain why we take the position we do on partisan issues. And then I want to remind us what the most important thing is: that we must never lose the mission.

Jesus said He came to seek and save that which was lost. We cannot lose that focus.

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To do that, I want to take you back to an Old Testament book. Some of you may be familiar with it, some of you may not. So I want to give a little background. For those who know the book well, you'll think this is simple — and it is. For those who don't, it will help bring us all to the same place.

The book I want to talk about is **Nehemiah**.

Nehemiah is a book that was written after the children of Israel had been taken captive by the Babylonians. The temple had been destroyed and Jerusalem was destroyed. They were taken to Babylon, and for seventy years they were there, as the prophet said. After seventy years, Babylon was defeated and the children of Israel were able to go back to Jerusalem.

Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple. Ezra led spiritual reform. But it was a guy named Nehemiah that rebuilt the walls. An unlikely person. Nehemiah is a cupbearer for the king — that's what he does. He's the most unlikely person that you would think would go and assemble all kinds of people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. You wouldn't have thought it would be a guy like Nehemiah. But that's great, because when you're reading this book, it's a rich book. It reminds us that God doesn't always take the ones that you would think to do the incredible things that He does.

You wouldn't think that He would take a persecutor of the church and make him the person who wrote most of the New Testament books with the Apostle Paul. It's just rich. You wouldn't think that the first leader of the church would have been the one that denied Jesus three times. He's always using the weak things to confound the wise.

And so Nehemiah is a cupbearer, and he hears that the walls of Jerusalem are broken. It bothers him. Jerusalem is the city of peace — *Jeru-shalom*. It's the city of peace. It's where the temple is. It bothers him. He hears the taunters that say the walls are in such disrepair that a fox can't even run on top of them without them caving in. It bothers him.

So he prays and fasts and is given permission by the king to return and rebuild. A great story of how the power of prayer works and stepping out. He goes all by himself — he didn't have a team. He's just going to go do this. It's just such a great book.

He gets there, and there are some obstacles, but the people come together and they rebuild. And here's the crazy thing: they do it in **52 days**. Such a great book on leadership about getting people at the right spot at the right place on the wall to do the things they're doing. Incredible book.

And then revival breaks out because they start reading God's Word. It's just this incredible moment. And at the end of chapter 10 — verse 39 — the last sentence, the "B" part of the verse,

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they're all praying and they start to realize, "Man, we've blown it. We should have stayed true to God. We rebelled. We sinned. We ended up in captivity, and now we're back. We don't want to lose this. We don't want to mess this up."

They have this real moment at the end of chapter 10. If you're reading the book, it really sticks out. It's a moment where everybody collectively — all of them — they all make this commitment. They all make this vow. They say, "**We will not neglect the house of our God.**" I mean, it's a moment in the book of Nehemiah.

And so by the time we get to chapter 13, Nehemiah has gone away back to the king. And while he's away, they have neglected the house of the Lord. Chapter 13 catalogs some of the instances where the house of the Lord was neglected. We're going to look at one of them — just a few verses.

And I would tell you to lean in. I would tell you to pay attention. I would tell you to really think through what you're hearing, and I would tell you to really allow the Lord to read us, because it is a sobering passage. It's one that it would be impossible to really let it read us and it not make a difference in our lives.

So let's look at these few verses in chapter 13 — an instance where the house of the Lord was neglected, and what that looks like, and maybe what that would mean for you and me.

So we're told **Eliashib the priest**. Now the first thing we've got to do here — because maybe not everybody knows the situation — is ask, "Who is Eliashib?" Which is a great question, and we want to answer that question.

Well, Eliashib is the high priest at the time. That's who he is. He's a really important spiritual figure. He's one who worked with Nehemiah on rebuilding the wall. In fact, in chapter 3:1 it tells us that he rebuilt the **Sheep Gate**. What we know about Eliashib is that he was the high priest. He was descended from Aaron, so he was in the **Aaronic line**, and he helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

But what we're going to see here — and we need to pay attention — is that he eventually failed to guard God's house. He did it because he allowed political and family alliances to corrupt God's house. And Nehemiah has to deal with this. It's an incredible story, and we're going to look at it.

So now that we know who Eliashib is, we're told that he was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God. In other words, there were certain areas in the temple where certain things were supposed to be — certain things were supposed to be stored and kept so that the temple could function. Not a difficult thing to understand.

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Part of his role was overseeing the chambers to make sure everything was right, because he was the spiritual leader. He was the high priest.

And then we're told he was related to **Tobiah**. He was related to Tobiah because family members had married into Tobiah's family. That's how he's related — a family alliance with this Tobiah.

Well, who is Tobiah? It's a great question. Tobiah is an **Ammonite**. They should not have intermarried. I'm sure Eliashib may have thought, "I wish they wouldn't," but you can't always control what people do. But that was the situation — his family had married into this Ammonite family, and he's trying to make the best of it.

Well, Tobiah — who is he? Tobiah is a foreign political official. Not only that, but he is a political power broker in the area. He's not a sovereign, but he gets stuff done. He makes things happen. And Eliashib realizes, "Hey, this is a person who earlier was an opponent of God's work. But we've got a family relationship. Why not try to get along? Why not befriend this political leader? Because you could get stuff done."

I mean, you could get legislation done. You could get things accomplished that needed to be done. We already know what happens when people who don't like us take us over — we've seen that. So maybe, just maybe, being cozy and working together seems like the thing to do, like we're protecting the people. We want laws done the way we want them done because that's what we want. It might protect us. It might be good. It might even be just. It seems like a good relationship to have.

But Tobiah had used insider relationships to gain influence.

And so here's what we're told: Eliashib — the high priest, who oversaw the chambers, who was related to Tobiah — **prepared for Tobiah a large chamber.**

What does that mean? It means that one of the chambers he was over — that stored certain items with a specific purpose in the temple — he took those things out and provided an apartment, a place to live, a large chamber, probably trying to make sure the relationship stayed good.

Because after all, wouldn't you want to — if you could get politicians to do the things you need them to do so that laws are enacted that benefit you, wouldn't you do that?

So he brings him into the chamber — gives him an apartment, a condominium. I'm sure, completely thinking that what he's doing makes sense.

So this chamber that he puts him in — previously in that chamber there were certain things that had been put there.

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And what had been put there was the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, the tithes of grain, the wine, and the oil. What's that about? Well, that was by commandment of the Lord that those things would be there. Because what it did is it allowed the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the priests to do what they did. It funded them. It gave them stuff to eat. It was so that they could do the work. So they didn't have to go out and work and then come back in — they could tend to the Lord's house regularly.

Well, he's replaced that. Now all these people have to go out and do other stuff, but he's given Tobiah a place in the house of God.

Well, Nehemiah says, "While this was taking place — you know, when the cat's away — I was not in Jerusalem. I wasn't there. Actually, I had gone back. In the thirty-second year of **Artaxerxes**, king of Babylon, I went to the king, and after some time I asked leave of the king."

So some time passes, and now Nehemiah comes back to Jerusalem — where everybody had said, "We will not neglect the house of our God." He comes back, and this is one of the things he has to deal with. The text tells us this:

"I came to Jerusalem, and I then discovered the evil that **Eliashib** had done for **Tobiah**."

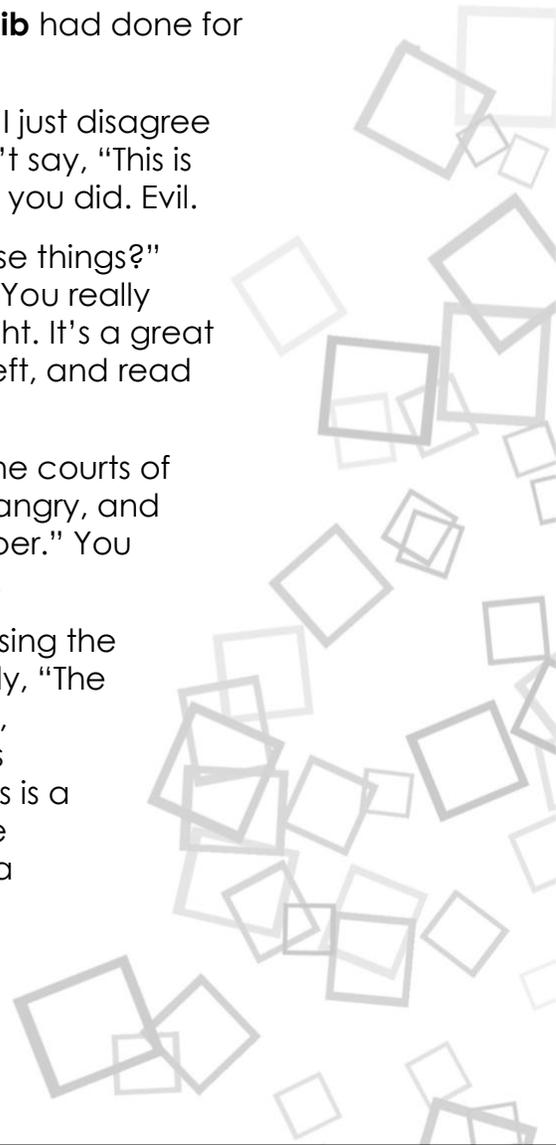
Interesting. He doesn't say, "This was a decision you made that I just disagree with." He doesn't say, "I think it was a poor decision." He doesn't say, "This is something we can agree to disagree on." He says it's **evil** what you did. Evil.

Some of you always go, "Man, where does Pastor Chip get these things?" From the Bible. From the Word of God. It's crazy what's in here. You really should go home and start at Genesis. Table of contents, turn right. It's a great book. If you really want to get confused, go to the maps, turn left, and read that book.

He says this is evil because he prepared for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. Then we're told Nehemiah says, "I was very angry, and I threw all of the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber." You can imagine what that looked like — him just throwing stuff out.

Scholars have noted, and rightly so, that this mirrors Jesus cleansing the temple. Jesus cleansed the temple because He said very clearly, "The temple is to be a place of prayer for all nations." And in His day, because of the way they were doing the money systems, it was keeping certain people out. It was for all nations. The reason this is a clearing out is because when you bring partisan politics into the house of God, you divide the house of God, and it's no longer a place for all nations.

[Applause]



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Evil.

"I gave orders," he says, "and they cleansed the chambers." Just throwing the furniture out wasn't enough. They cleansed it, "and I brought back there the vessels of the house of God with the grain offering and the frankincense."

What's the low-hanging fruit from this story? Just from this story — you can read the rest of Nehemiah 13; there are other things he had to deal with — but what's the low-hanging fruit here?

Well, just a couple things. **Political ties can override God's priorities.** It just can happen. You can drift. It's easy. And it seems like maybe the right thing to do at times. But Eliashib gave Tobiah temple space because of political alliance, showing us that personal or political loyalty can replace covenant loyalty.

Not only that, but **enemies can infiltrate through relationships.** Tobiah didn't storm the wall — he gained influence from within. These are things that are just low-hanging fruit in the story that should grab our attention. The fact that **leadership compromise corrupts the whole community** — that's just easy picking from the story.

So what can we learn?

We talk about "we do Jesus." We talk about we don't want to drift. We have a stance here that we don't engage in all the political rambling that I know many churches do — and many of you let me know. You send me the videos. "These churches do this. Why don't we do this?" This is why we don't do this. Because there are reasons for it. And I'm trying to just be honest. You don't have to agree with me. I'm just trying to share why we do what we do here.

And I want you to really listen, because the first thing I want to talk about is **spiritual drift.** Here's the reality: spiritual drift is almost always an issue within. I don't know where our fixation with fighting everything out there happened, but it's happened. The New Testament documents are to *us*. They're not to *them*. They're telling *us* that we need to step it up, because when we walk out there, we are examples to that world. It just assumes that world's nasty.

It's funny, because Christians go, "How is it nasty out there?" I'm like, gosh — have you not read Scripture? Anywhere in Scripture where it says it's going to get so much better? No. And I would also kindly remind you that Moses was never called to reform Egypt — he was called to get out of Egypt. Jesus didn't come and gather a bunch of people together to establish some sort of kingdom here on the earth. He came to rescue people.

Spiritual drift. Thank you, one person. Amen. It's like Noah — he's a preaching fool. Nobody even listened to him, but he

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was still faithful. You realize that, right? Just because a church grows or doesn't grow doesn't mean it's faithful. What matters is: is the preacher faithful to the things of God?

So it's an issue from within. This is evil that has happened because **Eliashib** drifted. He forgot his covenant loyalty — that he was not to neglect the house of God. It felt pragmatic. Maybe it would keep bad things away. See, in Nehemiah 13, priestly devotion and consecration had given way to political pragmatism. He's thinking, "Well, this makes sense. Why wouldn't we do this?" And it's called evil. Not even mincing words — just evil.

So the danger isn't pagan invasion; it's priestly accommodation. It's drifting inside. It's getting off mission. It's losing the way.

Spiritual drift often disguises rebellion as reasonable management.

Let me say that again: spiritual drift often disguises rebellion as reasonable management.

Not only that, spiritual drift happens when yesterday's vows — "We will not neglect the house of God" — lose today's urgency. Do you see what's going on? "We've got to do something!" Whoa, whoa, whoa. We're not called to lose yesterday's vows for today's urgency. We're called to stand on what's true in good times and bad times.

[Applause]

Spiritual drift happens when external threats become the focus rather than internal blindness. It doesn't announce itself as rebellion. It shows up as authorized access, reasonable adjustments, and quiet neglect. And it's often led by those closest to the holy things of God — pastors and leaders.

Spiritual drift is real. It's called backsliding in Scripture. It's easy to lose the plot. It's easy to think you're doing the right things and not even realize you're doing the wrong things. It's what Jesus said to the religious leaders: "You've lost the plot. You search land and sea to make one proselyte, and when you convert him, he's twice the child of hell as you are." Matthew 23:15.

Spiritual drift is also usually the result of Scripture somehow being sidelined. Other voices replace Scripture, or certain parts are picked and chosen. "We're quoting Scripture!" Yeah — but there's also the whole counsel of the Word of God. Other agendas rise. "We've got to tackle this today." Even when Scripture says turn the other cheek or go the extra mile, we want to get them first. So spiritual drift is real.

Second thing I would tell you — and I hope you hear my heart — I'm not trying to be snarky. If you pick up any emotion, it's probably grief more than anything else. I want to explain why **partisanship doesn't work inside the house of God.**

Partisan political alignment doesn't just divide the church from the culture — it does. As soon as you align with one side or the other, you push away a significant number of people. If

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something's going to divide, it should be the gospel, not political alignment. And then we convince ourselves we're preaching the gospel, but we're still being partisan because we're not talking about Jesus — we're talking about everything else.

It also divides Christianity from its own moral authority. People say it's not politics, it's morals. But when you take the political route, you undermine morals. Here's what happens when we become partisan:

Polarization, tribalism, and identity badges become the message. The message of "whosoever will" becomes "whosoever's on our team." And you see it in the church. "You couldn't be a Christian." Folks, you don't have the right to determine who is a Christian and who isn't.

[Applause]

People say, "No thieves will inherit the kingdom of God." There was a thief on the cross who inherited the kingdom of God.

[Applause]

Moral judgment becomes selective. The same behavior is condemned or excused depending on which side you're on. We all do this — like sports fans who can't see a foul because it's their team.

Truth becomes a political instrument. We negotiate ourselves into selective moral outrage, elevating certain issues while ignoring others. Forty years ago, most of the American church said the most important characteristic of a leader was character. Today it's near the bottom. Why? Because we've drifted. We forget the fruit of the Spirit — jealousy, greed, gluttony, lying, cheating — because we just want to get done what we want done.

Prophetic critique disappears, because an ally can't be called to repentance without risking the alliance. Seeking the lost gets replaced with seeking power to control.

And here's the line that lets you know we've lost the plot: **"If we don't act, we will lose our freedoms."** There is not one passage in Scripture that tells you your mission as a follower of Jesus is to fight for your freedoms. Not one. In fact, Scripture tells you to give them up for others. Turn the other cheek. Go the extra mile.

The greatest freedom we can fight for is that the lost would know freedom from their sins through Jesus Christ.

[Applause]

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation — in free governments and tyrannical ones alike. No one can take away your freedom to speak the name of Jesus when you choose to

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do it.

[Applause]

And then what we do is we end up at the very end of the slippery slope the ends justify the means. But if morality bends for success, it was never morality — it was convenience. That's why you lose moral authority when you become partisan. Christians should be able to stand above all of it and call evil evil and good good regardless of side. And when you become partisan, you no longer can.

So my third point is this: **if we lose our focus on reaching the unchurched, we end up replacing the mission.** We just replace it, rather than doing what we're clearly called to do.

Jesus came to seek and save that which is lost. Today is the day of salvation. Go into all the world. It's as clear as day what we're called to do. It's clear as day.

Even when people say, "Oh, but we're called to be salt." No. Salt in the Sermon on the Mount is not being a cultural warrior. Salt and light in the Sermon on the Mount is living the way Jesus says to live so that people can see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. That's just somebody going into the Bible, mining a word, and using it for their own purposes. That's not the context of the passage.

What happens is you end up like Nehemiah. He's angry. He throws all the stuff out because he realizes something — the importance of the mission. And he realizes in that moment there's really not a need for conversation; there's a need for confrontation. This is wrong, and we're not going to continue to do it this way.

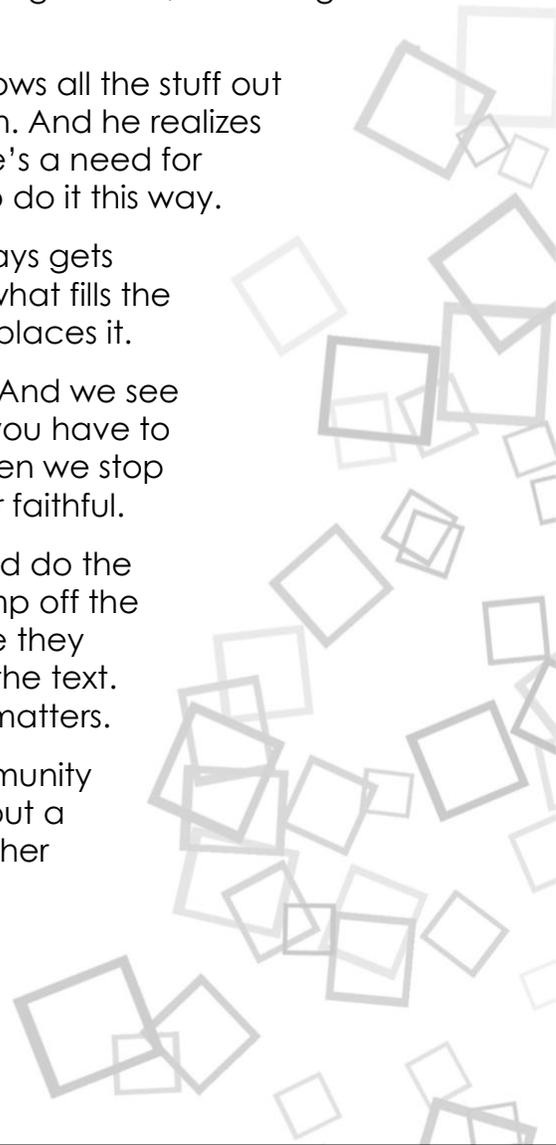
Because a mission abandoned doesn't remain empty — it always gets replaced. And the reality is, when the mission is lost, you know what fills the void? Our preferences. What we want. Comfort. That's what replaces it.

When we stop reaching the lost, the church starts serving itself. And we see it. The church doesn't drift into faithfulness — that's something you have to be intentional about — but it *does* drift from its mission. And when we stop pointing people to Christ, we may be busy, but we're no longer faithful.

Because the goal of the church is to be equipped to go out and do the ministry of letting the lost know that there is a Savior who will jump off the front porch and run to them because He loves them with a love they could never imagine. That's the story. That's the mission. That's the text. That's what we do. That's why we do Jesus here — because it matters.

And folks, I want to tell you right now: I don't want Grace Community Church to become Borders Bookstore. I don't want to hear about a church in Lakewood Ranch that got caught up in all kinds of other stuff.

That's why every single year I read this story:



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Over time, the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members. It was decorated beautifully and furnished exquisitely because it was increasingly being used more like a club than a rescue outpost. Fewer members were interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do the work instead.

The life-saving motif still remained in the club's décor, and there was even a memorial lifeboat in the room where club initiations were held.

About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick, and some of them looked very different from the members. The beautiful new club was suddenly in chaos.

Immediately, the property committee arranged for a shower house to be built outside the club so that shipwreck victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities because they felt they were unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. A small group insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station.

But the small group was voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. They did. As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old one. It too evolved into a club, and yet another life-saving station had to be founded. History continued to repeat itself.

And if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along the shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters... but most of the people drown.

Tapestry Week 5

Only Jesus: Why Our Focus Matters

Sunday, February 8, 2026



Thirty-five years ago, I was in a dorm room at Lee College and I read that story for the first time. I remember at my desk I said to the Lord, *"If I'm ever a pastor, please don't let me forget this story."*

I read that story every year for me, not for you. I read it to remind me what I'm called to do. And I hope that you hear it too, and I hope that you want to do that.

Folks, what matters is the lost people that don't know Jesus—and we're putting obstacles in their way. It's the gospel that's the power of God unto salvation, and it's the lives that we live that look like Jesus that make the difference.

My prayer is that this church never becomes something different than what it is—that I never walk in one day and see the words *"We exist to reach the unchurched by being intentional neighbors that reflect Christ,"* and yet nothing in this church resembles that at all. And I will do my best as the pastor to not let that happen.

Father, I humbly come to You. My words are meager—they're just my words. The best I can do, and that's all I can do. I can't change people's lives. I can't save a soul. All I can do is try to be faithful. You do all that other work. You do the conviction. You do the working. You do the changing. You do the transformation.

I'm humbly asking that those here, those online, that You would speak to us. Help us, Lord, to get a mission—a vision—for really wanting to reach the lost. I pray, Lord, that as we sing this last song, You would help us to be a church that realizes that it's in the center where things happen. They don't happen at the extremities; they always happen in the messy middle. Help us, Lord, to keep You at the center of everything that we do.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. And everybody said, "Amen." Amen.

