

# Expect the Unexpected

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You know, I have an old friend and a mentor who has this old fashioned statement, he says if that doesn't light your fire, your wood must be wet. Woo! That's all I've got to say is woo and amen. Man, good night. Here it comes. That's right, here it comes.

Let's pray.

*Lord, today we have celebrated the cross of Jesus Christ and, Lord, we've declared it with our lips, we've experienced it with our ears, but Lord, if not already, we're praying that we would be convicted in our hearts. Please, O God, as we open your word, may conviction settle in. May your Holy Spirit have reign and control over our lives. And Lord, if not already, may we simply be yielded to you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

As you're being seated this morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Acts 2. This is a privilege for me. This weekend, over 300 of our young people have gathered in this place for what we know as ?? I want to thank Dan Strickland for asking me to be the exclamation point on this weekend. You see, these students that are before you have been walking through various passages of Scripture all throughout the weekend trying to grasp, "What does it really mean to be centered in their faith? What does it mean not just to be centered and grounded in their faith, what does that look like to live out their faith?" And as they've had the privilege of worshiping together and studying together both here collectively and in their respective homes, all that they have been learning, all that they've been doing, we as a church body get the opportunity to be a part of the conclusion, a part of the exclamation point, and I don't think there's any better place to go to today than Acts 2 because this is where it all started. You see, we're a part of the church, we're a part of the body of Jesus Christ, and no matter what your style, your preference or whatever flavor you prefer, we must understand that we are an extension of what took place in Acts 2 and I want to challenge you today whether you're part of our student ministry, whether you're a parent, a grandparent, or maybe you're here for the very first time, you walked on our campus expecting a traditional service and said, "What happened at First Baptist Opelika?" It doesn't matter who you are, I want to challenge you today to expect the unexpected.

You see, when God decides to move in your life and you yield to him, he always does things differently than you would ever expect because his ways are not your ways, and

his thoughts are not your thoughts. And what we find out in Acts 2 at the birth of the church, at least as manifested and seen to the world at large, it did not go as anybody had ever expected it to go, and I want to challenge us to have the same attitude as they did. In Acts 2, the Pentecost event has taken place, that famous tongue event. Peter has preached a sermon and in verse 41, we have the response. It says,

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

I'm going to stop right there. Can we all just agree they didn't expect that? I mean, there was 120 people in the Upper Room. They were fearful for their lives. They were enemies of the state and Jesus Christ who had walked with them for three years said, "I'm going to leave you but don't worry, it's all going to be good. Just hang out until the Holy Spirit comes upon you and, trust me, this is going to be good." 120 of them are gathered up in the Upper Room, Pentecost takes place, do you think anybody could have imagined that the number of people who had been saved compared to those that were in the Upper Room was 30 to 1? It did not go as they expected because when we say, "God, this is what we want it to look like," we always sell it shorter than what he has planned for us.

That day, it was the unexpected. Then beginning in verse 42, it says,

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

What I want us to see from Acts 2 where we, the church of Jesus Christ, at least physically were manifested, I want us to see that they possessed distinctives and differences, and that because of their distinctives and differences, that should challenge us. Each and every one of us has a decision to make today. Will we be an extension of how we began and what we were started as, or will we become an obstacle or a hindrance based on our own personal preferences and/or selfish desires?

Let's begin with distinctives. Notice it says in verse 42, "they continued in the apostles' doctrine." By the way, doctrine is not a word to be scared of. It's used 52 times in the Bible. It basically means what do you believe? I want you to notice very clearly what it says and, students, this may not resonate with you as much as the adults in the room, but it does not say they continued in Baptist doctrines. It does not say that they continued in Presbyterian doctrines. I didn't get an amen on that one, but that's okay. And for those of you who are happy, it doesn't say they continued in pentecostal doctrines. In fact, one of the things that kind of ruffles Baptist feathers a little bit when I tell them this: did you

know there are a lot of things in the Bible that are not Baptist? And there are a lot of things that are Baptist that are not Bible. Now, I'm not here to grind an ax, so to speak, I just want to give you a very good example. You can go home today, you can read your New Testament from Matthew to Revelation front and back, you can read it in English, Greek, Latin and whatever language of your choice, and you're not going to find a committee anywhere. But that's Baptist. It may be but it's not "Bible."

So what we discover is they continued in the apostles' doctrine. Now, without elaborating a whole lot, I want to just kind of fast forward to the book of Romans, after all, that's one of the last books the Lord gave to the Apostle Paul to write. The apostle called out of due season. Many people have called Romans kind of the doctrinal thesis of Christianity. In Romans 3:23, a verse many of you are probably familiar with, it says, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Do you realize that the message that was preached in Acts 2 is very politically incorrect in the fact that it says that we are the problem, not somebody else. We are the problem. We have sinned. We have messed up. And because of that, according to Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death." What I'm about to share with you is not well-received in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is not culturally relevant, and it is not palatable for those who often would label spiritual snowflakes, but hell is real. Jesus talked about it twice as much as he did heaven. We understand that we are sinners destined to a place the Bible calls hell but the next part of that verse says, "but we have eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." What is the apostles' doctrine? That we are sinners that only Jesus can fix our sin problem.

You see, the world says, "Oh, well, if we just do this and do that." Hear me clearly: the apostles taught, the New Testament teaches, and the body of Christ should advocate that we are sinners that only Jesus can save and he said in Romans 10:13, "whoever calls on the name of the Lord should be saved." What we discover is their distinctiveness was not political correctness. Their distinctiveness was not being palatable to the world. It was a distinctiveness that said, "No, we are sinners in need of a Savior."

Then in verse 42 it continues. It says they not only continued in the apostles' doctrine but in fellowship. Now, for those of you who have any type of Baptist background, this is where Baptists get real excited. Fellowship. Is that like pot luck? Dinner on the grounds? Ice cream? What's that? No, no, no, don't think necessarily food, think fellowship is the idea or the concept that no matter what somebody's background, no matter what somebody's history is, you share the same table.

Now, I want you to think about what had taken place here in Acts 2. According to the first four or five verses, it says that people from every nation, every people group, would have been there. There would have been people there from Nazareth. You think, "What's the big deal about Nazareth?" You know, Christmas story. Mary, Joseph. Remember when they come on that day to offer Jesus and it says that they brought two turtledoves and maybe you've wondered, "Why did they bring two turtledoves? Weren't you supposed to bring a lamb?" Absolutely. Here is the problem: some people, particularly those from Nazareth, they were so poor financially that there was a provision for those who didn't have as much as others. There would have been those there that had an entire

herd of lambs in their back yard, there would have been those there that had what we call a terminal degree, a PhD, there would have been those that never made it out of elementary school. You see, when it says that they had fellowship with one another, they did something very different than our contemporary culture. They did not see the church as a country club but a hospital. Let that sink in for just a moment. At a country club, everybody looks the same, dresses the same, drives the same, and acts the same. Do you know what the commonality in a hospital is? It doesn't matter where you came from, what you're dealing with, when you step on that sensor and the doors open up, the only thing you've got to admit is that you're sick and you need to be fixed.

I mean, I go to hospitals all the time. You know, there are people in hospitals that are at the end of their physical life. We have machines and technology and medical professionals who are so gifted and intelligent that they're able to take those last few days, last few moments, and make them as comfortable as possible and to bring as much healing as feasible. But you can go one floor up or one floor down, depending on where you are, you can walk down a hallway and you can hear a brand new baby cry for the very first time. You see, a hospital has those that have been alive for three minutes and those who've got three minutes left. A hospital deals with those who are struggling with their thoughts and those who are struggling with their hearts. A hospital deals with those who are dealing with rehabilitation and that may be months and months and months before they're back to where they were, and it's dealing with those who all they need is a simple injection and all will be fine.

You see, we were designed to have fellowship. You know, I often get asked this question and you'll understand what I mean. I get a phone call, it usually comes from the husband. I don't know if you're familiar, but my wife grew up in Waco, Texas. I spent eight years in Waco, Texas and I don't know why, I think there's this young couple that likes to redo houses that has made Waco real famous nowadays or something, but these guys will call me up and say, "Jeff, my wife wants to go see the silos." I say, "I'm sorry, brother." "We're taking a road trip to Waco, can you help us with where to eat?" I mean, the ladies are interested in magnolia, the guys are interested in food. That's all it boils down to. And one of the things I always share with them is there is a barbecue restaurant in Waco, Texas and you would think it's typical of Texas barbecue, they serve the meat on butcher paper, the only thing on the tv is professional bull riding. I mean, that's Texas barbecue right there, right? But the thing that makes it unique is I warn them in advance what was given to me the first time I walked into the restaurant. They don't have tables that seat four, eight or even a party room. They have these long long tables and everybody sits together. In fact, what they do for bread is they take what we call just a loaf of sliced bread, they split it down the middle and you just pass it around the table. And somebody warned me, they said when you go to this restaurant, there are going to be people that are homeless sitting next to people who are medical doctors. It's everybody together. Isn't that a sad commentary? That there's a barbecue restaurant in Waco, Texas that may look more like the church than the church does today?

You see, they had fellowship. It didn't matter what their socioeconomic background was, it didn't matter what their income level was, it didn't matter what their past or even their

present was, it said they had fellowship. Everybody was together. Then it says that not only were they in fellowship but it says they prayed and I want you to see what happens in verse 43. "Fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles." Now when you read those two verses, do you ever think, "Man, I wish my prayers looked like that." I mean, I often wonder do they just hit the ceiling? I've never seen like in Acts 4, it says they prayed and the building shook. I've never seen a building shake. In Acts 16, it says that Paul and Barnabas were in prison and when they prayed and sang it says that the prison doors flew wide open. In Acts 20, there is a guy by the name of Eutychus. He's in church one day, he's sitting in kind of the upper balcony area and he falls to the floor dead. They pray over him and he comes back to life. And we read these stories in the book of Acts and we say, "I don't understand, why did the supernatural, why did the miraculous, why did that happen then and it doesn't happen now?" Because you see that they didn't pray as a last resort, but as a first priority.

I get people calling me all the time and I love when they do, by the way, they say, "Jeff, we've got some issues in our home, my kids, my family, my marriage. Can we just sit down and talk with you?" I have a little joke but yet it's serious, I say that when I get a phone call that someone wants to sit down and talk with me, I'm either the first person or the last person they've called and I'm usually the last. What that means is they've exhausted everything they know. It's much like Mark 5. There is a woman who has had an issue of blood for 12 years. It says that she spent all her money on doctors and then she went and she found Jesus. You see, what we see in Acts 2 is they did not exhaust their earthly resources, they did not go out to the highways and byways and get opinions and ideas and take polls, but they prayed first, not last.

You see, that's distinctive. They not only continued not in personal preference but the apostles' doctrine. They fellowshiped with whoever happened to be at the table. And communication with and requests of the Lord were not a last resort but a first primary course of action. That's what made them distinctive.

Now, what made them different? You pick up the story in verse 44 and it says, "all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Sure, they were distinctive about what they believed, sure they were distinctive about who gathered around the table, so to speak, sure they were distinctive about their prayer life, but here we see some differences as compared and what we see different in them, we should see different in us.

Here's the first thing: it said they were with one accord, they were unified. They possessed, they experienced unity. You know, I've got a dear deceased friend of mine who used to have this statement. He said, "You know, the Lord's army is the only army that pleasures themselves in shooting their own in the back." If there is anybody that should be unified, it should be the church of Jesus Christ. If there is anybody who should be able to get on the same page, we should be that group. But yet how many times do we

struggle with that? We struggle in our home. We struggle even in a local church, in a community of faith.

Some years ago, I got a phone call. A friend of mine called me up and he said, "Jeff, we need you to come out. We just want you to come. We're going to have a special service in our community just for local pastors. There are about 15 or 20 of us that are going to show up." He said, "We've got, it's just a toxic environment. We've got those within churches that are fighting. We've got churches that are fighting each other. And we just gather the pastors in and they know that we're going to come and talk about the need to be unified." So we gathered in that place. It was a small congregation, obviously, it was just pastors, and the time came for me to get up and to speak, to preach, and when I got up, I opened my Bible and I declared to them that I was going to be preaching from John 17:21. Now, that may not be significant to you but in John 17, Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane, he's prayed for his present disciples, he then begins to pray for you and I, the disciples who would come later, and in John 17:21 he makes this statement to the Father, he says, "Father, may they be one as we are one." In other words, Jesus is saying that his relationship with the Father, that we ought to emulate, we ought to imitate. That's what our lives ought to look like as well.

In this group of pastors, there were some young guys, there were some guys in their 20s and 30s, and there were some not so young guys. In fact, there was a guy sitting right down on the front row that if he wasn't 100 years old, he was about to be. He was one of those guys that when they ask us to stand and sing, he didn't get all the way up until the second verse. He was one of those guys that when they asked us to be seated, everybody else was seated and he was just halfway making his way down. His back was kind of in a permanent C. He was hunched over and just to be honest with you, there didn't look like a whole lot of vitality was left in that frail frame.

You know, when I had the opportunity to preach, there are some like earlier that would give an amen. Every now and then I'd hear a, "Come on! Preach it!" whatever it may be. But on that day, I heard something come out of somebody's mouth that I had never heard before and until today have never heard since. You see, when I opened up to John 17:21, that pastor who had been preaching for so many decades, he knew what that verse said. He knew what was going on in his community and when I said we're going to read verse 21, he didn't say amen, he didn't say preach it, he didn't say come on, he said, "Uh-oh, here it comes!" because he knew that what Jesus had commissioned us to be had not been realized in their lives.

I'm going to let you know why do you have disunity? It can be a disunity in your marriage. It can be disunity in your home. It can be disunity even within a church body, okay? I'm going to tell you why people do not have unity. It's real simple: people are not unified when somebody or some portion of the group declares that they must win at all cost. That's what brings it. Do you know why? Jesus said, "Father, I want them to be like we are." Do you know what Jesus prayed in Matthew 26? "Father, not my will but yours be done." You see, Jesus modeled it's not what we want, it's not what we desire, but it's what he has asked us to be and to do, and we do not have unity when we say, "Well, I

would never do it that way. That's not the way that I prefer. Or that's just not my style." Yet Jesus said, "Not my will but yours."

They were unified. It said they were there in one accord. Then it continues in this passage and says not only did they do that but in verse 45 it says they sold all their possessions and goods and they parted them unto everybody. Now I'm going to make a very clear asterisk of a disclaimer here. Even though it may be popular among some today, this passage of Scripture is not advocating what some people call biblical or Christian socialism. It's not advocating that it doesn't matter what your background, how hard you work, that everybody is on the same level, same aspect, whatever it may be. Here's what it is saying: that those who had an abundance were generous with how the Lord had bestowed those gifts upon them. You see, not only were they unified, they were generous.

Now, we happen to be in an environment, those of you that are guests or visitors with us, you may not know this, but here at least in this local congregation, this tends to be, at least statistically, a very generous church body. And thank you. But let me give you some nationwide statistics. Did you know that the average "evangelical Christian," by the way, evangelicals can be Baptists, Presbyterian, Methodist, Pentecostal, and fill in the blank of your favorite flavor. The average evangelical Christian when it comes to giving of their resources, not just their time but their resources, is roughly about 2.5%. Now, I know the Bible says 10 and that's one quarter of, but did you know that as a percentage, the evangelical community is less generous today than we were during the Great Depression? But yet what do we see in the early church? It said they were willing to part from that which was excess, that which was not necessary, and they gave to those that were in need thereof.

You see, one of the differences, one of the marks of the church of Jesus Christ, is not just that we're unified, not just that we're not out to get our way all the time, but we are generous with our resources, generous with our time, generous with our energy. We are generous people who say it is more important that you get what you need than I possess what I want. As our young people saw this weekend a great example, is that we're not to live life with our hand clenched upon that which we don't want to let go of, but open, willing to allow the Lord to do with as he sees fit.

The next thing we see, though, is they had gladness of heart. It says when they gathered together and they were unified and they were generous with all of their stuff, it said then that they had a gladness of heart. And this may seem strange and maybe a foreign concept to some of you, but do you realize it says that they actually possessed joy? They were actually excited about who they were as the family of faith. They were actually excited about the relationship with Jesus Christ. I've got news for you: it takes less muscles to smile than it does to frown. And can we all just confess that when it comes to this issue, I think we, the church of Jesus Christ, we've got a problem. There are way too many grumpy Christians out there. Can I get a come on, amen, praise the Lord? Yes. Too many grumpy ones. Too many gripey ones. Too many people complaining, whining, moaning.

Folks, it says – thank you. And that was from a teenager. Yes.

They had joy. They were actually excited. They weren't walking around all grumpy. I'm going to be honest with you, I'm going to be transparent with you: I have moments of grouchiness. I do. I get grumpy. I get moody. You don't believe me? Call Tracy up, she'll tell you it's true. I do. But I also want to tell you the other side of that truth coin: do you know when I'm gripey, do you know when I'm grumpy, do you know when I'm grouchy? It's when I'm out of fellowship with God. It's real simple. You see, it's real simple. When they were on the same page as the Lord, they were content. They were of gladness of heart and they weren't griping, whining, moaning and complaining.

You know, in Proverbs 26:20, it begins with this little obvious analogy, it says, "Where there is no wood, there can be no fire." Yeah, we get that. In other words, you've got to have both parts, right? Then it says, "and when there is no tale-bearer, there is no strife," meaning if there is conflict, if there are problems, if there are struggles, it's because somebody is saying something they shouldn't be saying or vice-versa. The same thing goes for our attitude. When there is no joy, it's because there's a lack of fellowship with the Lord.

Do you see the distinctiveness? Do you see the differences here? And we have a decision to make: do we go forward and say, "I'm going to be an extension of this, or I'm going to do it my way. I'm going to be the opposite." And the decision that we have to make is based on three simple concepts. 1. It's based on our past. In fact, if you look even at the very first book of the Bible, the Lord declares very clearly, very simply, that what we know as the church of Jesus Christ, the body of faith here, that we were projected, we were prophesied that we would come into existence. Genesis 3 says the Messiah is coming. Genesis 12, he said all nations will be gathered unto him. In Psalm 110, it says that we would sit at the foot of his throne. On and on and on. But the prophets didn't just foretell, they also forth-told, which means they told truth.

And you think about it, you've got guys like David, King David. We love to celebrate King David, right? Here's the problem with celebrating King David, is that he is not what they expected. In fact, the Lord came to Samuel the prophet and the priest and said, "Okay, Samuel, I want you to go down to Jesse's house and I want you to anoint one of his sons as the future king." Samuel goes down there. Jesse is out in the field and he says, "Hey, Jesse, got good news for you, one of your boys is going to be king of Israel." Can I just confess as the dad of three boys, I would have gotten two inches taller and my chest would have come out. I would have said, "Yeah, that's right, one of my boys is going to be king." He said, "Bring them out. Let's see which one." He went to the first one, the tallest, the oldest, and he said, "Not him." He went to the second one, "Not him." Went to the third, I mean, it was spiritual duck-duck-goose here, I mean, he's going all the way down the line. He gets to the last one and he says, "Jesse, we've got a problem. None of your boys are the right one. By chance, do you have any other sons?" Do you remember what he says? He goes, "Yeah, I've got this little runt out in the back field but he's not much and surely not him." He said, "Bring him to me." There was David, small of stature, ruddy of appearance.

The Bible says in 1 Samuel 16:7 that the Lord does not look on outward appearances but on the inward man and when we look at our past, what we must come to a clear admonition is that oftentimes God did the most with those that we never expected him to do the most with. How about Noah? He built a boat when he was 500 years old. David who was the smallest, the runt of his family. What we know as Bethlehem according to the prophet Micah, was the smallest of cities but would be the birthplace of the King.

But it's not just the past, it's also our present that's being realized. You know, people oftentimes ask me, "Jeff, why do you think Jesus picked the 12 disciples that he did? I mean, they were a bunch of misfits." I agree with you but I think one of the reasons he picked the guys he picked is because they look a whole lot like us. I mean, seriously think about this. Some of you are Peters, right? You never open your mouth at the right time. Never. I mean, it's open mouth, insert both feet. You talk when you shouldn't and you're quiet when you should talk. We've got some Peters in the room.

We've got some James and some Johns. They are the ones, they were sneaky sneaky. They were always looking for the side and they even got their mom in on it. They said, "Hey, mom, can you pull Jesus aside and see if we can get place 2 and 3?"

And some of us are Thomases. No, by the way, you know Thomas was the first Baptist, right? Y'all didn't know that? Because they had a night, a service at night and he didn't show. He was the first Baptist. Thomas wasn't there. That will sink in later today and 6 o'clock tonight. Thomas doubted.

How about Thaddeus? Do you ever wonder, "What about old Thaddeus?" Have you ever wondered why didn't he ever say or do anything? I mean, come on. I mean, get with it, dude. Come on.

And yet we see that's a picture of us. Oftentimes we speak when we shouldn't and are silent when we should speak. Oftentimes we doubt, we question, or maybe just sit on the sidelines a little too long and what we need to realize is that Jesus took a group of people a lot like us and by the time you get to Acts 17 it says they turned the world upside down. You see, Jesus expected the unexpected and he pulled a group of guys together that looked a whole lot like us.

You see, we need to make a decision today. Are we going to look at our past and realize our present and be willing to embrace the future? You see, in Acts 2, they've got 3,000 people there. That's impressive. Peter preaches. They get saved. I mean, the church as we know it has officially, formally, publicly begun. But from Acts 2 to Acts 8, there is an individual that is very prominently present in their life. His name is Saul of Tarsus. Saul of Tarsus was one who was commissioned by the rulers to eradicate, eliminate, get rid of, what we know as the body of Christ. He was a "proverbial thorn in their side." He was outside of their walls. He was outside of their faith. He was somebody they despised at all levels and yet in Acts 9, it is the same Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, he sees the light, he hears the voice, and he becomes not just a believer in Jesus, he becomes the

greatest, loudest voice in life in the history of Christianity. Can you imagine in Acts 2, can you imagine if the Lord had somehow descended and said, "Alright, guys, the greatest representative, the greatest public figure of the faith is Saul of Tarsus," do you know what they would have said? "Yeah, right. I don't think so."

You see, we are to expect the unexpected and one of the things that I want us to grasp, particularly this day in this weekend, and for those of us who are "adults, parents, grandparents," it should be our desire that God does more and greater things through those that are younger than us, than it end with us. Our spiritual lives should never be a period, they should be a dash to greater things. What if the apostles had said, "Oh no, my name is Peter and it's never going to be better than me. My name is Thaddeus and I haven't spoken yet but I'm now about to speak, we ain't taking that guy. He doesn't look like us. He doesn't act like us and I'm scared of him personally." But what did they see? They saw a man who three times was left for dead for testifying of his faith. A man who the Lord used to give us half of the New Testament. A man as we quoted earlier in Romans who gave us that doctrinal thesis of the book of Romans.

You know, every now and then I enter into a conversation with somebody and now at the stage and age I am in life, they'll say, "Jeff, what do you want your legacy to be? What do you hope that people say about you one day?" And you know, we kind of bat that around and typically and people mean well when they say this, so if you've said it, it's fine. People say, "Well, is your goal one day to kind of be like the Billy Graham of Opelika? Is that your goal? I mean, you want to kind of have, kind of that presence of that you share the Gospel with anybody and everybody?" And that sounds like a compliment, don't get me wrong, but I want to take you back to 1934. That predates even me, folks. It really does. 1934 was the day that Billy Graham as a young teenage baseball player and his buddy at the encouragement of his grandfather and his mom, went down a dusty road to a "tent revival," listened to them sing, listened to a guy preach, walked down a dusty aisle and that night in 1934, he gave his life to Jesus and can we all be honest, over the last 100 years he changed some things around this world, did he not? He shared the Gospel with millions and millions and millions of people.

You say, "Well, you hope one day kind of in your small sphere of the world that you're kind of a Billy Graham type?" Nope. That's not my hope. You say, "What do you mean? What's your desire?" I want to be Mordecai Ham. I know what you're thinking. Who? Who is Mordecai Ham. Mordecai Ham is the man that was preaching that night in 1934 when Billy Graham walked down an aisle as a 16 year old kid. I don't want the greatness of the Gospel to stop with me, nor should you with you, but on this week in particular, listen to me, adults: we don't know what's sitting out here in front of us. We don't know what God has done in some of these young people's lives. We don't know what he has spoken. We don't know the plans. But I want to encourage you: expect the unexpected. Expect the unexpected. Expect somebody who is younger than you, somebody who's a lot younger than you, that the Lord to get ahold of and to allow him to move and shape their lives so that they do more with the Gospel than you could ever dream of. They never dreamed that Saul of Tarsus would become Paul the apostle and some of you never

dream when you see some of these teenagers running around the campus, that that may be just the person God is going to use to speak louder than anybody has ever heard.

You see, today we've got a decision to make. We can either side with our own preferences, our own ideals and say, "Well, I kind of like it the way it is." Or we can be an extension of Acts 2, put it in the Lord's hands and say, "Okay, God, I'm not going to confine this by my own hopes, desires and personal preferences. I'm just going to turn it over to you and let you do with it what only you can." I want to encourage you, expect the unexpected.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that individual today whether you're here as a first time guest or visitor, or maybe you're one of the students who spent the greater portion of your weekend in this very room. Maybe you're that individual who would be willing to admit what Romans 3:23 says, you've messed up, you've sinned. Maybe you're that person who says, "You know, I thought I had it all figured out. I thought I had all the answers. I thought I had this thing called life going in the right direction but I realized it's actually headed in the wrong direction." And maybe today, maybe students this weekend, maybe you realize how desperately you need Jesus Christ as a part of your life. Man, I've got some great news for you. That's why we call it the Gospel, it means good news. You don't have to sign up for a class. You don't have to pass a course. You don't have to check off a box. According to Romans 10:13, you just need to have a serious sincere conversation with the Lord. This conversation doesn't have to be spoken out loud. In fact, you don't even have to say the same words that I might say. This is a prayer of your heart, not necessarily a prayer of your lips, but maybe you find yourself in that position today and let me encourage you to have this conversation with the Lord. You say, "God, today I just want to admit what you already know about myself. I've messed up. God, it's kind of like the song we sang earlier, I've done things I should have never done and I've said things I should have never said and I've thought things I should've never thought. And I understand that that's sin. That is completely against what you've designed for my life and I now realize the result, the consequences of that sin is death. But God, I believe today that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to pay the price for my sin on the cross and to raise from the dead so I could be forgiven and I could be saved. And God, today I don't have all the answers to all the world's problems, but I do know that Jesus is the answer to my sin problem. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, God, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that young person, maybe you're that adult, maybe you're that grandparent, maybe you're that visitor today that you had that conversation with the Lord. We want to celebrate it. In fact, in just a moment I'm going to pray over us, our team is going to lead us as we stand and sing and you have the opportunity just to step out and step forward and I want to pray with you and just celebrate whatever the Lord is doing in your life. So maybe your decision today

isn't a decision of salvation, maybe that took place years ago, maybe for some of you decades ago, but you've lost the joy of your salvation, you've lost the generosity of your salvation, maybe you've lost the unity of your salvation, and maybe today is the decision not to necessarily walk forward down an aisle but to walk out of this place being distinct and different for the sake of your Savior.

*Lord, as we come to this time of decision, God, I want to thank you for second chances. Thank you that you didn't give up on us. Thank you that you didn't push us or marginalize us to the side. But right now in this place, more than anything, you want to get ahold of our heart, our mind and our lives so that we will not be conformed to this world but we will be transformed by the renewing of our minds. God, we thank you for grace and for mercy, for forgiveness and salvation. And Lord, may we not walk out of this place having said, "I can do better somewhere else." It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

I'm going to ask you to stand with us as our team leads us. Any decision, I'll be here at the front.