

2021 It's Your Move

The first Sunday of the new year! 2021! We made it. I'm glad to see people in the sanctuary again after a couple of Sundays online only. Welcome back and welcome to all who are joining us online. I trust everyone had a good Christmas and you are ready for the adventure of a brand new year. You better buckle your seatbelt because we are likely in for a bumpy ride.

I want to share a couple of thoughts I felt the Lord drop into my heart for this first Sunday of 2021. It's been twenty years ago this week that after twenty months of being displaced by a tornado and meeting for services at VBI, we finally were able to move back into our sanctuary. January of 2001. Thank you Lord for the kindness of Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty and the folks at Victory, giving us a place to meet during that time.

I remember standing in my kitchen the morning after the tornado, looking out at the rubble of the second story wing of the church, wondering how are we going to get through this? What are we going to do? Paula said Billy Joe Daugherty was there. The insurance adjustor had just told me it might take two years to get us back into the building. I'm trying to comprehend that and figure our next move and Billy Joe said, "You can use the VBI building." But it might be two years. "We aren't going anywhere. You can start tomorrow night. Your people need to hear from their pastor." A dark time, uncertain, not sure where the money would come from, not sure if people would stay with us since we were having to meet elsewhere, in a borrowed facility, across the river no less. And guess what? God provided in the storm! We learned lessons of trust, lessons of dependence on the Lord and one another. We learned lessons of hope, that even in a storm Jesus is with us. The master of the storm is in control and he will see us through.

Look around you this morning. We rebuilt the facility debt free and moved back in with more people attending than when the tornado hit. 18-19 years after the storm, we remodeled and added on and provided the equipment necessary to livestream the services and be prepared to meet another kind of storm and all of that is paid for, debt free. Look around and be reminded of the faithfulness of God. Look around and remember 20 years ago when we moved back after the storm, we were expecting and believing God to bring us greater victories and to help us make a greater impact than ever before in our community and our world and I believe he did just that. We knew then that crisis and challenge meant greater opportunities. Why not believe for the same thing again in this season? We've got greater challenges and greater opportunities to be salt and light and to share the gospel in person and on line and to show the love of Jesus through

acts of kindness and ministry like we celebrated last Sunday. Look around and focus not on the severity of the storm or the level of darkness and decay, but look at the signs of his faithfulness and his goodness! We need to look at the right things and remember.

We've been in a storm and we aren't out of it yet. In fact, it may get darker, but look around and remember His faithfulness. Look around and remember God didn't fail us then and he won't fail us now. It's part of our history and heritage. Look around and remember the lessons of hope the Lord taught us 20 years ago and pay attention now because he is still teaching us, still showing us his faithfulness in this current storm. Look around and remember and keep this in mind: **It matters where you look!**

This is one of the things I felt the Lord speak to my heart. It matters where you look. Let me ask you, in 2021, where are you going to look? Who will you look to? Who and what will be your source? You see, if you are looking to the president or congress or the governor, or if you are looking to the doctor or the vaccine, or the stimulus check or a host of other things this year, thinking they will be your source, you'll be disappointed. There is only one to look to. The KJV of Hebrews 12 reads, "**Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...**"

Hebrews 12:2 This year, perhaps more than ever, you had better look to Jesus. "**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.**" is the way the NIV translates that same verse. Who is your source? Where will you look in 2021, in all the uncertainty and trouble and sickness and isolation and loneliness and feelings of discouragement? Where will you look? Look to Jesus. Fix your eyes on him. Trust him, obey him, serve him, grow in him, get closer to him, love him, depend on him, lean on him, listen to him. He is your source, he is your hope, he is your answer. It matters where you look and you had better look to Jesus.

What does that mean? Look to him means surrender your life to him. Pledge your life and devotion to him. Serve him. Look to him means pray and talk to him. Take your needs to him first. Look to Jesus means ask for his direction and guidance and you'll find it in the bible, his written word and through the direction and witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart and life. Look to Jesus and his word. Let me encourage you to read the bible daily in 2021. Know the word of God and apply it to your life.

Look to Jesus means put your hope in him and don't give in to despair. Trusting in Jesus will bring hope to your life. Regardless of the circumstances Jesus is with us. Remember Jesus spoke about dark days, about things being shaken and what did he say? "When you see these

things happening, throw up your hands in despair...lash out at others on social media.” No, he said, **“When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:28**

Where are you going to look? Don’t look down, look up! Don’t give in to despair. Look to Jesus! Redemption is coming. God’s deliverance and provision is near, his purposes will be accomplished. Look to Jesus in 2021! It matters where you look!

Mr. Rogers said his mother always told him “Fred, in times of trouble, look for the helpers.” If you’re afraid, if you don’t know what to do, if you can’t see Jesus in the midst of all the stuff happening, look to the helpers and when you do I think you’ll find the church, the body of Christ. Look to God’s people, to the church. Come home to the church. At least that’s the way it’s supposed to work. God help us as the church to be the helpers he’s called us to be, serving others, encouraging others, blessing others, not fueling their fears but showing them Jesus. Let’s devote ourselves to being helpers in 2021! If we keep looking to Jesus and we keep helping others to see him and to keep their eyes on Jesus, 2021 can be a year of significance! It can be a year filled with his grace!

The second thing I heard the Lord whisper in my heart was just this simple phrase, **It’s your move.** I don’t know if you make new year’s resolutions or not. I never keep them so I quit making them, but I still look at the new year as a fresh opportunity to try again. A fresh start to lose weight, exercise, read more, spend less time on social media, read the bible through, journal. All the basics. Like most I pray, “Lord help me do better, be better, help me truly live for you this year.” And what I felt the Lord saying in response is “It’s your move.”

You see, the Lord has already done what he is going to do. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16** God has already provided salvation and eternal life for us. It’s our move. What we need to do is to believe upon Jesus, believe in him, put our trust in him as Savior and Lord of our life. It’s your move.

Peter writes, **“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” 2 Peter 1:3-4**

Look at this. He has given us everything we need to live a life of godliness in 2021. He has made it possible for us to share in the very “divine nature” – in the very life of God. Listen to me, this is important. The Christian life is more than what you believe. It is more than doctrine. It is a life changing experience with God. We are made sons and daughters, children of God through his redeeming mercy and grace. Knowing him, through knowing his word, his great and precious promises, we experience him and his grace and power is provided for us to overcome the corruption and sin and temptation of this evil world.

Everything we need is found in him. He is our source. He has supplied what you need. It’s your move. Will you walk with him, abide in him, trust him, surrender to him and his will every moment of your life? It’s your decision. It’s your move!

“I don’t know if I can do it. Will he really help me?” Listen, the bible says **“I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”** **Philippians 4:13** He says you can. He has given you his strength, his great and precious promises to rely on. Yes, you can. It’s your move.

Jesus said he wouldn’t leave us alone. **“And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.”** **John 14:16** You aren’t having to do this on your own. The Holy Spirit is with you to help you, to empower you, to strengthen you. That’s why Jesus says later in that chapter, **“Don’t let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”** **John 14:27.** You can choose victory. You can choose to live as an overcomer through Christ, through the working of the Holy Spirit in your life, through your absolute and total dependence upon Him! He has given you what you need. Now it’s your move.

Remember, it matters where you look. Look to him and then, it’s your move. Take the next step. Take that next step of surrender and dependence on him. He’s done what needs to be done. He’s provided for you. Accept it. Claim it. Walk in it in this new year.

Someone listening today, you need to take this next step. You need to surrender your life to the Lord. You need to surrender your past to the Lord. You were wronged, it wasn’t fair, but God has redeemed you, he will settle the past by his justice, what you need to do is to surrender it all to Jesus. You aren’t being taken advantage of, you are being delivered by his mercy. It’s your move. Accept him. Surrender to him. Let it go. Paul said, **“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to**

win the prize of which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13-14

It's your move. Press on in. Make 2021 a year where you are pressing on deeper and deeper into life with Jesus. Look to him and then move toward him. It's your move! Choose. Decide. Decide what that will look like. For some of you, you need to make a plan and work that plan. Make yourself accountable to someone. Let me say it again, God has done his part and he is giving you opportunity to plunge into a new life in him. It's your move.

I want us to pray. If God is speaking to your heart about looking to him, about taking that next step and you realize you need to make the move, if you are here in the sanctuary, I want you to stand. If you are watching on Facebook, you can just comment "standing" in the comments section if you want to make a more public declaration of your heart's desire, but we are going to pray.

Thanks for making that move towards him. The bible says "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you." James 4:8 It's a good path forward for this new year. Let's make 2021 a year of making the next move and living closer to Jesus than ever before!

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.