



ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

Part 5 of God's Work, Our Witness

Pastor Mark Driscoll | January 08, 2012

Pastor Mark:

When Mars Hill was getting started, I used to drive between our three different locations preaching live. Of course, now that the church has fourteen locations spread across four states, I pastor churches I've never even seen or been to. We have so much going on at Mars Hill Church, I can't even keep up. So, today, I'm going to take you with me to see nine of the fourteen Mars Hill churches, and you're going to see God's work, and he's going to show you how he's been loving, saving, seeking, serving people. It's exactly what Jesus promised: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you will be my witnesses." Those were Jesus' final words. He told us the truth, and you'll see it for yourself.

MARS HILL BALLARD

We're really glad and honored to have Pastor Bill. He's a dear friend of mine, a very godly man, and everybody at Mars Hill Ballard—and almost everybody across all the Mars Hill churches—knows who he is.

Pastor Bill: Ballard itself, as a community, is about 60 percent single, and then out of that other 40 percent, 20 percent are young marrieds and newly parents, and our church represents Ballard pretty well. I mean, we have people that have kids. We have singles. We have—whatever Ballard is, we reflect that. So, we just have to be the church in Ballard, and that's a pretty exciting mission to be on.

How many weddings a year? How many couples are going through the premarital process here in a year?

Pastor Bill: We have about forty-five couples every quarter, yes.

So, maybe a few hundred weddings a year, dozens of babies a year, so a lot of young people coming in, getting saved, getting married, making babies. That's Ballard?

Pastor Bill: Yeah, yeah.

How many Community Groups are meeting within even just a few miles of here? I know it's a really densely populated Community Group area.

Pastor Bill: Yeah, if we were to just take the three primary places—and let's just say Ballard, Magnolia, and Queen Anne—we're talking about that there are over one hundred groups just in that dense area.

That's awesome.

Pastor Bill: Yeah.

Why Ballard? Why is Ballard on your heart, and why does Ballard matter for the city of Seattle and the heart of God?

Pastor Bill: We are a group of people that have been asked to incarnate the gospel, and so, I mean, if half the people at Ballard were used of God to lead someone to Christ, and then half of those people, you know, I mean, you just take it in descending order, but if we did that for ten years, we would double this church within seven years, you know? I mean, there's just no reason for us to think that what's going to make this church effective is a program. It really is going to be the people on mission.

So, Mars Hill, we talk a lot about getting on mission, staying on mission, being on mission. What's mission?

Pastor Bill: So, mission is when we use our lives to make a difference in the life of someone who's not here. Okay? Community is when we use our life to make a difference in the life of someone who is here. So, God's asked us to do both: care for the people in the boat and get out of the boat.

MARS HILL SHORELINE

One of the keys to mission is that mission cannot be limited by the capacity of a building. A church has to reach more people than can just fit in one room at one time. So, we decided to try an experiment up in Mars Hill Shoreline, where we're headed right now. It's a little bit north of downtown Seattle. It's a bedroom community, largely families, doesn't have a city center. It's the place where people live, who then commute into the city for work.

And what started out as a little experiment in a simple room was an absolute smashing success. And we were told, “If you do video, the consumers will show up. People will just want to show up and take, not give.” Absolutely not true, absolutely not true. Exactly the opposite happened. The people who love their neighborhood, the people who wanted to reach their neighbors, the people who wanted to be on mission in their community, they went to Shoreline. They started giving more money. They started serving more faithfully. They started participating in more Community Groups. They were on mission more wholeheartedly and devotedly than we had seen at any other point in the history of Mars Hill Church.

Pastor Steve: It seemed like an accident to me. I was the church-planting guy. I was working for Acts 29 at the time and I lived down the street. It was in my neighborhood.

Rock, paper, scissors, multisite. You lose, go.

Pastor Steve: Yeah, you get it. To tell you the truth, I wasn't even sure it was me until we had that information meeting. You called me up on the stage. “Okay, I guess it is going to be me.” “Steve's going to be the campus pastor.” It's like, “All right, what do we do with this?”

Yeah, because had that not succeeded, we would've been limited to one church in one location.

Where are you taking us now?

Pastor Steve: So, this is a renovated school. It used to be an elementary school in Shoreline. The Shoreline School District surplused the building and closed down the school, and we have renovated it and moved in as a church. It is a great location, and it represents, honestly, the mission on the north end—as we just drove past the mosque that's half a block away. This represents the mission.

It's right in the middle of the mission, yeah.

Pastor Steve: Yeah, on the north end.

All right, Pastor Steve, where are we?

Pastor Steve: This was the lunchroom and auditorium of an elementary school. This building is a huge gift. As you know, we looked and prayed for years and looked for all kinds of locations and buildings, and nothing seemed to come up, and then God just brought this.

And where do you baptize the new Christians?

Pastor Steve: Right where we're standing. We put the baptismal tank up right in the middle, right up front.

What goes on in here on Sunday?

Pastor Steve: Well, this is where all the kids gather, worship, pray, sing, and then go to their various classes.

Unlike some of the Mars Hill churches, where the percentage of children is real low, a big part of your mission is leading kids to Jesus.

Pastor Steve: When we do baptisms, I always speak to the kids in the room, too, and speak to parents about their kids. And so we see kids baptized. We see kids meeting Jesus. We see kids meeting Jesus here. We see them baptized in the auditorium. Because that's what we want. We want parents to be leading their kids to Jesus. We want parents to be actively involved in the spiritual growth of their kids and discipling them.

MARS HILL EVERETT

Well, we worship a blue-collar construction guy, and he would've fit in real well in Everett. This is a working-class community we're headed into. Pretty much, Everett's a bunch of guys who are like my dad, Joe—union drywall, construction worker. He'd get up every morning, put on his steel-toed work boots, grab his hard hat, fill up his thermos full of coffee. Mom would make him a sandwich. He'd jump in his truck and go get it done for the family. It's a great place. It's got a great need, and it has a very large military population, as well. So, this is sort of a dude place to be.

All right, Pastor Scott, we're here at Mars Hill Everett. Where are you guys meeting, right now, where are we outside of?

Pastor Scott: We meet at Everett Community College's Fitness Center. So, they built a brand-new building that opened this last—just about a year ago now. We're already the fourth largest church in Everett, which is kind of crazy.

How's mission going so far? I know you guys have already had some converts, some baptism nights.

Pastor Scott: Yeah, we've had two baptism nights, and we've had sixteen baptisms, which is totally awesome. We've had—I know a number of Community Group leaders have reported that guys that aren't Christians are coming and checking us out, and asking a lot of questions, and there are some people that are probably Christians—they don't even know it yet, so it's pretty awesome to see.

God's working on them.

Pastor Scott: Absolutely.

Why Everett for you? Why is your heart in Everett? Why do you feel like God put you here?

Pastor Scott: When I was eighteen or nineteen years old, I worked in a coffee plant in South Everett, and I asked Jesus to do something in Everett. Twelve years later, Pastor Steve said, "Well, what about Everett?" And I said, "No way, man. I'm not going up to Everett." And then my wife—God bless her—she said, "Pray about it." And so I did, and instantly the Holy Spirit just revealed, "This is where I want you to be a missionary." So, that's why we're here.

Boeing Machinist, alone, is, I think, a union of, I want to say twenty thousand people, so there's a huge mission field there. We also have the Navy base, which has six thousand people. By God's grace, the Navy base has just said, "Yeah, we want you here."

I live 0.7 miles away from here. So, I wake up about 6:00 on a Sunday. About 6:30, I start heading here. I walk here in the morning, and I just walk and pray and ask that God will do something. The crew gets here about 6:30. Right now, through those doors over there, we bring in two trailers' worth of material, and we come in. We set up the screen, the stage. Back here is our front house, so we have lighting, the whole nine, and guys set that up. It usually takes them about an hour and a half.

Are you seeing singles come, new marrieds without kids, families?

Pastor Scott: A number of young single dudes coming.

So, young men?

Pastor Scott: Young men. A number of them go here. A number of them work construction. I mean Everett's a blue-collar town, so you've got a lot of blue-collar workers up here just working with their hands.

So, those guys are showing up to church, though, 'cause those are the guys who never show up to church.

Pastor Scott: Yeah, they're showing up to the church. A lot of young, young thirty-year-old men. We have ninety-four thousand people in this area that's largely unreached. We have nineteen different neighborhoods here in Everett. I see not only Community Groups, but also huddles in those groups. I see us reaching, down the road, up to three thousand people. I see us having a strong military presence, where we get a lot of the people from the Navy, Lord willing. My hobbies are making disciples and planting churches.

MARS HILL WEST SEATTLE

We're heading into West Seattle, which is a particular neighborhood that stretches through south Seattle. The original settlers in Seattle actually landed nearby on Alki Beach, and the church here is an amazing story, historically. It was founded by Mark Matthews, one of the only Christian legends in the history of the city of Seattle. He was here back in the olden days, when Seattle was basically a Wild West town with brothels, and murderers, and lots of gangs and trouble. He preached the gospel boldly. Interestingly enough, he was Reformed, theologically. He also did multisite and started churches all around the Puget Sound area. And now you're going to see it for yourself, Mars Hill West Seattle, led by Pastor David Fairchild.

For those who aren't familiar with Mars Hill West Seattle, who lives here? What's the community like?

Pastor David: Yeah, it's really interesting. Where our building is located on 35th is right in the middle of the city, of this part of our city, yeah.

Yeah, you're right at the top of the hill between all the different people.

Pastor David: Yeah, you go just a little bit west and a little bit north, and it becomes more and more affluent. If you go a little bit east and a little bit south, it becomes more and more impoverished. I mean, it's a pretty diverse area, obviously, bleeding into White Center and Highland Park. We have a ton of nations that are here. Ethnic families really know how to open up their life, and open up their home, and welcome people in warmly. And so being able to learn that, understand that, being in this place is just, you know, it's just grace upon grace, really.

If somebody wants to get married, this is the place to do it.

Pastor David: This is the place to do it. Just the generosity of Mars Hill givers, to be able to raise 1.8 million dollars to make this space usable, is phenomenal. If you look up, just the wood and—

It's an old-school preach room.

Pastor David: It is. It really is. It is an old-school preach room, and that's for sure.

Yeah, sloped floors, good balcony.

Pastor David: Pews.

Kept the pews.

Pastor David: Yeah. The desire for us in West Seattle is to get the entire church believing the whole gospel and just releasing them on mission and to really own that, to see that Christ is not just a concept, but he's their defining reality, and now they make decisions for the Father's mission in the world.

And what do you think is the big gospel obstacle that you're facing for your future?

Pastor David: Yeah, I think comfort, I think, is, in West Seattle, people move to West Seattle for a reason. They like it. It feels landlocked.

The best beaches.

Pastor David: Yeah.

Good places to go for nightlife, coffee, hanging out.

Pastor David: That's right. And so much of their life is they go into the city to work. They come back here to cocoon themselves. And so we're helping our people to see that that's not their life anymore, you know, that they've been bought with a price. They're no longer their own. They're now their Father's, adopted in the family of God on his mission. They're dying for community, they really are. They need it, and they want it desperately, and we just are poised with just great opportunity to, you know, release our people and let them go at it.

MARS HILL DOWNTOWN SEATTLE

Well, Pastor Tim, we're in downtown Seattle, your home. I mean, you live right down here, condo dwelling. What's that like with kids and being dad?

Pastor Tim: It's amazing. It's incredible. Probably every three weeks do I get in a car. And for us, you know, our heart is here in the city. Our heart is here in center city Seattle. And so, you know, as we've seen over the last number of decades, Christians fleeing urban centers, fleeing center cities, and to be able to see a generation of people that care about urban centers, that care about the urban core. Christians, we've got an incredible gift. We've got an incredible gift, and that's the gospel. And so we have to be here to have that gospel be given to our city, and we want to call other people to be here, too, and be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ here in a very influential city.

Even the story here on this particular property is pretty compelling and interesting. Maybe give a couple-minute elevator summary of this building that we're taking people to see.

Pastor Tim: Sure. Four years ago, it was the most notorious nightclub in Seattle. It was called the Tabella Nightclub.

Yeah, I remember shootings, stabbings in or around the club.

Pastor Tim: Murder.

Murder, yeah.

Pastor Tim: The city was in an uproar. And God, by his grace, allowed us to come in and get this facility, and be able to turn it around.

Sunday night, Sunday night was—

Pastor Tim: Sin Sundays.

Sin Sundays. Okay, at the bar, Sunday night was Sin Sunday.

Pastor Tim: And we just kept the same theme, quite honestly. We just said, "We've just got a different answer for sin." At least two people that I know of have come in, that thought it was a club—they still thought it was Tabella—and they met Jesus that night, and come and they took Communion in the exact same spot where—

Where the Jagermeister was months ago.

Pastor Tim: Yeah. This was a hip-hop club, and so this is where the main dance floor was. They had a couple of go-go dancer cages here. So, I mean, we still had to keep it, because, of course, it's just an absolute testimony to what God's done in this place.

So, the bar, I think, was right in the middle, right? And then there was like the dance floor and VIP lounge behind that—terrifying place. And so what was the VIP lounge downstairs for the most notorious nightclub in Seattle's history is now what?

Pastor Tim: It is the children's ministry.

Dude, that's awesome. That's amazing.

Pastor Tim: It's the children's ministry. And it was a great day the day we took off the condom dispenser and put on a children's changing station right there for babies.

What's the church you see out of Mars Hill Downtown? It's been going a few years. It's going really well. We're very honored to have you. You're a great evangelist, great leader, great family. In your heart, what's the church you see, that you're working toward creating?

Pastor Tim: We've seen 130 baptisms this year. The average church size in America, you know, is seventy-five, and so we've baptized almost twice that in a year. Now, we believe God is just at the beginning of what he wants to do here in urban Seattle, and we see a church of five thousand people, and we're praying, right now, that God would give us a bigger building, because over the next three to five to ten years, we believe that this wave that God is creating is just going to continue to grow and manifest itself to change Seattle for the grace of Jesus Christ for generations.

But you think there's an opportunity to have a Mars Hill of five thousand in Seattle?

Pastor Tim: Absolutely, absolutely. I believe that that is exactly what Jesus is doing right now. I believe he's building his church here in urban Seattle, and I think we're just the beginning of what he wants to see happen.

MARS HILL RAINIER VALLEY

Pastor Tim: Yeah, Rainier Valley, it's in south Seattle. Historically, traditionally, it has always been a very diverse area of Seattle, and is, honestly, the most diverse zip code in the nation, the 98118.

First-generation immigrants, a lot of people who are new to the United States.

Pastor Tim: Over seventy nationalities, twenty languages that are spoken. Oftentimes, you know, we send missionaries off to—across the world to the nations. Well, the nations are here in Seattle.

Yeah, if you've got that many people groups, if they meet Jesus, then they're connected back to their country of origin with their families and friends, I mean, you could reach seventy nations by preaching the gospel and planting one church.

Pastor Tim: Willie, tell us a little bit about your heart for Rainier Valley, how that intersects with your story of coming to Jesus and understanding what the gospel is.

Deacon Willie: Yeah, man. Well, I was raised in church, but I didn't care about church. I didn't care about God or anything, man, and it didn't mean anything to me. I wanted to run these streets. And here in Rainier Valley is where I used to run, man. I used to run the streets out here, got a lot of homies out here, did a lot of sin out here. You know what I'm saying? And, man, God just got a hold of me, bro, and God called me into his family, and I couldn't resist it. And all of a sudden, I find myself seeking him, wanting to know, you know, what is this grace? You know, and once he really got a hold of me, I'm like, "You know what? I've got to share this grace, man. So, I've got to take it back to these streets, man." And, you know, I'm taking it to the homies, man, taking it all over the hood, letting them know who Jesus is and what he's done for us, bro.

Deacon Danny: In the Rainier Valley, there are a lot of people that talk, and there are dads that drop out, because they talk a lot, but they're not there. And so in the Rainier Valley, it's not about talk. It's about your walk. And so if you can show consistency of being in their lives on a consistent basis, and say, "You know what? I'm not here just to do a drive-by gospel run, but I'm here actually to live a life with you," as Paul says in Thessalonians, "Not only do I want to share the gospel of God with you, but also my life. I want to live life with you." After a certain amount of time of being on the street corner and going to the same restaurant, they're like, "You know what? This guy is legit." So, I moved down here. I want to live right next to Rainier Beach High School. I'm going to be where the people are. And you know what? My house has been robbed twice in three days, right, when I first moved here in August—but you know what? Because of the gospel, I'm here to stay. I'm not here just to do a drive-by gospel. I am here to stay.

THE FATHER HEART OF GOD

This mission of God is that he would have his people be his family. That's God's mission. Hundreds of times in the Bible, God says it this way to various people groups: "I will be your God. You will be my people." God says this hundreds of times, and he says this to people who are rebellious, who are sinful, some of whom are self-righteous and religious.

It's like a father getting down on one knee to a bunch of kids who don't have a dad, don't really want a dad, don't really want to obey their dad, and he looks at them, with a smile on his face and with love in his heart, and he says, "I will be your Dad, and you will be my kids." And that's the Father heart of God. That's the mission of God, that he would adopt into his family a bunch of rebellious kids, that he would love them and change their heart, and through his love, they would grow to love him and love what he loves.

Pastor Tim: You're getting baptized tonight.

Lisa: Yes, sir.

Pastor Tim: This is going to be an amazing night, and it'd be great just to hear a little bit of what Jesus has done in your life and what

he's brought you out of, what he's brought you to—great to hear that.

Lisa: I have been in my addiction for twenty-eight years of my almost forty years of life. And I've been at the bottom of the pit serving my drug, my alcohol, my money, men. I've been beaten, owned, sold, and traded. I was assaulted and had an ice pick put in my head, and I was left for dead. And that was a pretty hard time, and I never would've survived through that if it wouldn't have been by God's grace—kind of almost like he's my husband, you know? Like, we have a friendship, a bond, and I'm ready to walk with him, because he's got my back.

Pastor Tim: Absolutely.

Lisa: I'm stepping out of me, going into him.

And being on mission with God is really having your Father's heart and then going to work with your Dad. That's all that we mean by mission: to love who he loves, to serve who he serves, to pursue who he's pursuing, as he has pursued you and me.

ALL AUTHORITY

As we are on mission here in Rainier Valley, as you are on mission here in Rainier Valley, people are going to push back. "What authority do you have?" Say, "I don't have any authority, but there is one who has all authority, and he sent me. He sent me to tell you about him. My résumé, not impressive. His, unbelievable: maker of heaven and earth, King of kings, Lord of lords, dead, buried, and risen. His résumé is unbelievable. You're right. My résumé, not so great. Do I have any authority to say that other religions are wrong, and perspectives are wrong, and ideologies are wrong? I don't, because I don't have any authority, but he has all authority."

And the question will be, "Are you saying your religion is better than mine?" "No, I'm just saying yours is wrong. I'm just saying yours is wrong." And you need to be that bold, and you need to be that brave, and you need to be that courageous. You could say, "They will not like that." We worship a guy who got murdered. You're on his team. Just expect a little bit of opposition when you lovingly, humbly tell the truth. That's why he says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me."

And here's the good news. The good news is that most religions, historically, have only been for one group of people. So, these people worship this god. These people worship that god. Jesus is the God for all people. What happens when Jesus is the center is all of a sudden, people who otherwise would be adversaries become allies. People who don't like one another become friends. People who were not family become family. Because you will realize that we're all sinners, and he loves us, and we all need him.

And when God the Father says, "I will be your God, and you will be my people," he was talking to a lot of people, many of whom are not like me. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Isn't that good news? Isn't that amazing news? And, again, here in Rainier Valley, seventy nations. So, all you've got to do to obey Jesus is just hang out in Rainier Valley. Right? I mean, if I told you, "You've got to reach seventy nations," you'd be like, "That's a lot of air miles. I've gotta book a lot of flights to a lot of places." And what Jesus did in his love, he conveniently put everyone right here, all nations.

AN AMAZING DAY

All right, praise God. We've just wrapped up the day. I think it's ten-something o'clock. It was a fifteen-hour road trip. Day one is almost done, and we'll hit a few other Mars Hill churches tomorrow. It's been an amazing day. Where we just finished was Mars Hill Rainier Valley, and we had over five hundred people on a Thursday night for the core group meeting. The band knows six songs, and I think we sang them all four times. We had seventeen baptisms.

I got to meet with the president of the Union Gospel Mission, one of the most amazing not-for-profits, really helping and serving people on behalf of Jesus. They gave me the great honor of touring a place called Hope Place. It's where there are seventy-five to almost one hundred women and their children on any given night. They're escaping abuse, and assault, and domestic violence, and dangerous situations. And we saw a lot of those women worship with us tonight, and a number give their lives to Christ and get baptized. And so we rejoice in God's work in their life.

It's been a pretty amazing, exhausting, fantastic day, and we have not even seen half of what God is doing at the various Mars Hill churches, but we'll show you some more tomorrow after we get a little bit of sleep.

MARS HILL FEDERAL WAY

All right, we're up bright and early, out to see a few more Mars Hill churches this morning. We're on our way now to Mars Hill Federal Way. If you're not familiar with the area, it's just south of Seattle. This church was planted out of Mars Hill West Seattle a few years back. They're meeting, I'm told, at a school. I've actually never been to Mars Hill Federal Way. And to help us along the way, we're going to go pick up Lead Pastor Samuel Choi, who actually did plant this church for us and continues to lead it today, and hear what God's been doing in and around Federal Way.

Pastor Samuel: The church launched on September 20, 2009, with the first message, the first sermon of the Luke's Gospel series.

And where are you guys meeting presently?

Pastor Samuel: We're still meeting at the same school, Sequoyah Middle School.

And so you guys do a full setup and teardown every week?

Pastor Samuel: Yes, every week for more than two years.

How big is the population of Federal Way?

Pastor Samuel: Population, I think, the last 2010 census was close to ninety thousand, but it's getting close to one hundred thousand. The major cities that our members come from are from Kent, north of Federal Way; Auburn, right off the east of Federal Way; and then southeast, some near Puyallup; in the south of Federal Way, there's a big city called Tacoma, yeah.

Yeah, so you've got Federal Way, and then you're drawing from the entire region, starting Community Groups to reach neighborhoods all around.

Pastor Samuel: The gospel is central in people coming together, and I believe that it is—it begins with the understanding of the gospel. People are hearing the preaching of the gospel. I believe that this is a connection point where, as we get together in schools, and the next level, the next challenge is, "Hey, can we go into our homes and invite people into our homes and do life together?" So, that is, I believe, how we become missionaries here, and that is, I believe, how the gospel will reach through suburban communities.

MARS HILL OLYMPIA

So, Pastor Steven, we're in Olympia. Maybe take a moment for those who are unfamiliar with Olympia—quite a bit south of Seattle. What's the culture like here? Who lives here? What's the area known for?

Pastor Steven: Yeah, Olympia, first off, is known as the state capital. So, this is the place that's the center of political power for the whole state of Washington. So, it gives a unique feeling. You have an urban center, but it's definitely a suburban feel. And then you have a bunch of people from the rural south Sound area all pouring into Olympia. We actually had to break down Olympia into a couple of different regions, because we have a nice core of Community Groups in Olympia. Then we have groups meeting all the way out almost to Westport, and we have groups forty-five minutes, almost an hour south in Centralia-Chehalis. You have a lot of families. We have a lot of families from rural and suburban, and then we have military families, as well. So, Mars Hill Olympia, you're going to have three hundred adults and one hundred kids. So, families are huge. We do get some students from the university, but, really, it's been with the military, with the government workers—which is a very stable job—and then with the rural mindset, we get a lot of families, a lot of families that need a ton of help.

So, Pastor Steven, could you show us your lovely, glorious offices. Actually, you've got the worst offices in all of Mars Hill Church, and we'd love to see it.

Pastor Steven: Let's go. Yeah, we've been here for about a year. We got kicked out of the mall space that we were meeting in. And then we moved into this office space here over the course of a weekend, and so there wasn't much of an option, so we moved right into here and made ourselves at home.

You need a new office, buddy.

Pastor Steven: Yes.

You need a midweek space, a place to do classes, teaching, training. If people come up for a class, what do you do with the children?

Pastor Steven: We can't even offer childcare for midweeks.

Right. How long has the church been going?

Pastor Steven: The church has been going for three years.

So, four locations in three years.

Pastor Steven: Yep.

And now, I mean, you're having to do your midweek, offices, and classes up here. There's no accessibility. There's no opportunity for children's ministry, and it's obviously very temporary. Long term, as you're thinking about how to be on mission in Olympia and around Olympia, how important do you think a permanent location is and why?

Pastor Steven: So, in a culture of constant change in Olympia, we want to be the constant. Just like the gospel is unchanging in the midst of an ever-changing culture, we want to be that physically in Olympia, so that as the military people come in and out of the community, as the bureaucrats, as the people in the government come in and out, as students in the different universities come in and out, they hear the gospel, and they get changed by the gospel.

Yeah, so we need to be in prayer for you that the right space would come available, one spot where we could do services, midweek, student ministry, classes, training, development, conferences, that kind of thing. I could see how significant that is. So, I'll just go ahead and ask you Mars Hill. Be giving generously. Be praying faithfully. They're off to a good start, but, really, truly, I think to get to the next level, it's going to take a permanent home from

which they can start to act like the family that they are.

MARS HILL PORTLAND

All right, Pastor Mark here with my dear friend, longtime buddy, Tim Smith. Where are we, buddy?

Pastor Tim: We are in southeast Portland in the Sunnyside neighborhood. You know, it's an interesting cross-section of the whole city. There are retired schoolteachers, energy consultants, lawyers. There are just all kinds of folks all around the city who have intentionally set up their life to live close-in to Portland, and they're all living here because they love this small neighborhood. You can walk to all kinds of shops. It has a lot of character, and so they've intentionally set up their whole life to be able to live in a small village.

And in the middle of the village is?

Pastor Tim: Is a castle.

I mean, dude, it's Medieval Times.

Pastor Tim: It is.

I'm taking the black knight. This is one of the coolest buildings I've ever seen. It's absolutely amazing.

Pastor Tim: It's in incredible shape, too, for 102 years old. Folks have been meeting here to worship Jesus for the better part of the last century.

Kind of retaking and recycling an old building, how does that fit the vibe of Portland and the McMenamins pubs and all that?

Pastor Tim: Oh, yeah, it totally fits Portland, and people love—people come in all the time. Whenever Pastor Ryan and I are here during the week, people are constantly just knocking on the door, ringing the doorbell, want to welcome us to the neighborhood. The neighbors have been very friendly and just want to see the building, see what we're doing with it. That's how the neighborhood works.

So, what does mission look like in Portland?

Pastor Tim: Oh, man, it could look like anything. It really looks like a lot of relationships. And out of those relationships, there come all kinds of opportunities. But I would say, also, when we first moved in, and we got a lot of negative media coverage, what, at the time, seemed like a real issue, God—

Honestly, were you freaking out a little bit?

Pastor Tim: Oh, I was totally freaking out. I was freaking out. But through the coverage, even though a lot of it was negative, God opened up doors that I don't know if they would've been opened in any other way. He opened up relationships with Muslims who came to our defense to have our position.

It's a strange day.

Pastor Tim: It is. It is a strange day. It gave opportunity to build relationships with folks, key community leaders within the homosexual community here. And there are friendships developing there. There's ongoing dialog. There's a project that we're about to start with some small groups from this particular community center from the LGBT community, and a few folks from our church community are getting together just to try to build more relationships and try to move past the caricatures that homosexuals have of evangelicals and vice versa. So, I hope that everyone I meet comes to know Jesus, but it's taken a much more relational kind of community, building bridges kind of approach here in Portland that I don't think I ever would have come to, if I weren't disciplined by the negative media attention that we got at the beginning.

So, finish this sentence. Mission is—

Pastor Tim: I think mission is all about inviting people to know Jesus and to know us. So, we extend hands of friendship. We build bridges. We get to know folks. And that doesn't mean we drop a gospel bomb, you know, every other word on them, but we're developing friendships. We're hoping that that makes them curious about who Jesus is, so we can introduce them to God. That's why we're here. We want everyone to know Jesus and know us in and through and all around that.

THE BIBLE IS OUR HIGHEST AUTHORITY

So, I'll say a few things about what it means to be a missional church. Well, the first is that the Bible is our highest authority. And if you're new—and this is a bit of an informational meeting—the Bible is our highest authority. And we begin with the assumption that if we disagree with the Bible, it's because we're wrong. Okay? We begin with that assumption.

Because here's the bottom line. Everyone has something or someone that is the highest authority in their life. Some of you say, "Well, this is what I think." Well then, the three pounds of meat between your ears, that is your highest authority. If it's not an idea that originated with you, then you do not believe it has merit. Or you may find a teacher, or a spirituality, or a philosopher, or a world view, or an ideology, and you will say, "That's my highest

authority.”

What we are saying is, over the course of thousands of years, through forty-some authors, God has written a book, and that book is truthful. And I’m not saying that the book is always easy to understand. One of the authors of the Bible, a man named Peter, says himself, some things that Paul writes are hard to understand. So, if you ever read the Bible, you’re like, “That’s hard to understand,” one of the guys who wrote the Bible says, “I had that same experience.” So we’re not saying that the Bible is always easy to understand, but it’s truthful. And because it’s not easy to understand just should compel us to study it.

In the same way, how many of you are married? Have you found that the person you’re married to is sometimes hard to understand? Yes. So, what do you do? You don’t throw your hands in the air and say, “Impossible. I do not understand.” What you need to do is pursue, to study, to observe, to learn, to get to know them.

And that’s really how the Bible works, because the Bible is about Jesus. And to have a relationship with him is the centerpiece of the Bible. And to really understand the Bible means we get to know Jesus better. And the more we get to know Jesus better, the more the Bible starts to make sense. But just like any friendship or relationship, it takes time and investment to get to know that person that you’re in relationship with, learning about them, spending time with them.

This is what Jesus says in John 5 to some religious people—and they tend to be the ones who really misunderstand the Bible. He says, “You diligently study these Scriptures thinking that in them you’ll find eternal life, yet you fail to recognize the point of the Scriptures is to testify to me.” So, our highest authority is the Bible. And if you don’t agree with something, we would just simply say, “Open the book, and let’s talk about it. And if we’re wrong, then we’d like to know the truth. And we don’t want to make errors. So help us.”

CONTEND AND CONTEXTUALIZE

In addition, as a church that sees itself as a missionary, we believe in doing two things continually. I’ll call them contending and contextualizing. Contending comes from Jude 3, where the Bible commands us to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered unto the saints. We believe that there is a core of Christian belief that all Christians everywhere, regardless of culture, regardless of time, have always believed. There’s one God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that we are sinners by nature and choice, that God came on a rescue mission in the person and work of Jesus Christ, that he was born of a virgin, lived without sin, died on the cross in our place, for our sins, as our substitute. He was buried. Three days later, he rose from death. He’s conquered Satan, sin, death, hell, and the wrath of God. He has ascended into heaven, where he’s ruling and reigning as Lord, and he’s coming again to judge the living and the dead. Okay? We’ll contend for stuff like that.

So, you come along and say, “What about other religions?” “No, it’s about Jesus.” “Well, what about other ideologies and perspectives?” “Well, it’s about Jesus, and we will contend for those things.”

We will also contextualize, and this comes out of 1 Corinthians 9. What a missionary always does, when a missionary goes into a culture, they try and figure, “Okay, who’s here? How do they think? What do they wear? What do they eat? How do they act?”

So, for us, contextualization is asking, “What would a church look like if it came into Portland, and really loved Portland, and was part of Portland, wasn’t a parasite on Portland, wasn’t an assault on Portland, but was a loving part of Portland, not trying to impose Christianity to anyone, but to propose Christianity to everyone?”

In 1 Corinthians 9, the Apostle Paul says, “I’ve become all things to all men, so that by all means I might save as many as possible. I do so for the sake of the gospel, that I might share in its blessings.” Paul says, “I want to reach everybody, and I’ll do whatever I can, and I’ll be flexible in my methods.”

EXCLUSIVE AND INCLUSIVE

But one of the things that will happen in a culture like this is it will bristle, and it will say, “Well, that sounds very exclusive.” Everyone is exclusive, because to believe one thing is to not believe another thing. To be committed to one thing is to not be committed to another thing. So, if you’re a committed vegan, you’re not really into barbeques. Right? If you’re really into Jesus, you’re not really into Islam. If you’re into walking to work, you’re not really into SUVs. We all have our convictions. We all have our preferences. Some of us hold them very publicly and personally and passionately.

And the truth is we’re all exclusive about certain things. But here’s the distinction with Christianity. Christianity is exclusive and inclusive. In fact, Christianity is the most—I’ll just say it. It’s the most exclusive and the most inclusive religion. It’s exclusive, because the only way to have a relationship with God is through Jesus Christ. He says, “I am the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.” He’s real clear, and we killed him for it, and then he rose from death and said, “I told you.”

But Christianity is also very inclusive, because you know who’s welcome to come to Jesus? Vegans and meat eaters, Republicans and Democrats, men and women, rich and poor, young and old, black and white, American, non-American. Everybody’s welcome to come to Jesus.

And so Jesus is very inclusive. He welcomes everyone to turn from sin and trust in him, which means for us, as a missional church, a church of missionaries that wants to be on the mission of God, that he would be their God, and they and we would be his people, being in and near cities is very significant, very important.

ONE FATHER AND ONE FAMILY ON ONE MISSION

But it also means, when you go into cities, those are the least Christian areas, and there tends to be the most hostility to Jesus, which means being humble, and loving, and patient is really important, because sometimes in the cities, people have a caricature of Christians, and they don't really know any. And their fears would be well founded, if we were actually like that. But since many people who have concerns about Christianity don't know a Christian, the simplest thing is not to argue with them, but to love and serve them, and let them get to know us, and be good neighbors, and let them know that, "We love your city, and this is our city, too, and we want this to be a great city for everyone, not just the people who agree with us, because we're all made in the image and likeness of God. That doesn't mean we're all going to heaven, but it does mean we all matter."

And if people would get excited about Jesus, and humility, and repentance of sin, and loving their neighbor, so that he would be their God, and they would be his people, then the deepest desire of the heart of the average person in Portland would be fulfilled and ultimately satisfied, because they would be meeting the one who made them and doing what he made them to do, which will bring for us tremendous joy.

Father God, thank you for an opportunity to lecture and to teach tonight at Mars Hill Portland. God, we know that you love this city. We love it, too. Lord God, if some here don't know Jesus, I pray that they would consider him and come to know him. God, for those who do know Jesus, I pray they would leave here thinking, "What does it mean for me to be a missionary; not just a Christian, but a missionary here in this city where you have placed me at this time." God, I pray they'd get in a church where the Bible is opened and Jesus is taught, and I pray they'd be a blessing there. Because, God, ultimately, it's not just about our church, but the whole church, and we want to see all churches that love you strengthened and grow. And so we ask not only for this grace upon us, but upon our brothers and sisters in other places, as, ultimately, there really is only one Father and one family on one mission. And we ask for this grace, in Jesus' good name. Amen.

CARE

All right, Mars Hill, another good, long day done. It's about 9:30. We're just rolling out of Portland, Oregon, going to get home to Seattle, I don't know, maybe 1:00 a.m. or so. We've been really honored to show you nine of the fourteen Mars Hill churches, and it's amazing what God is doing.

Next week, we start Real Marriage, which we're hoping, trusting, praying will be the biggest series we've ever done. We're trying to open upwards of nine thousand additional seats across our fourteen churches in four states, so that more people can meet Jesus and have their life changed by him. And so this is the end of the God's Work, Our Witness series. Our hope has been that the Holy Spirit would open your heart to love the church. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. That's what the Bible says, and it's impossible to love Jesus and not love what Jesus loves. And as a church that loves Jesus, we also want you to love your church.

We want you to be in prayer for next week, as we undertake the biggest thing we've ever done. And next week, as well, we're officially opening four new Mars Hill churches, Lord willing: Mars Hill Rainier Valley, Mars Hill Sammamish, Mars Hill Portland, and also Mars Hill Orange County. Four churches across three states for two reasons—we love God and people—on one day.

Here's exactly what I want you to do: care. It all starts with caring. And as a result of caring, we want you to pray. Pray for our church and all of its locations and opportunities. And lastly, give. Give generously. Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is." My hope has been to open your heart, to love what God loves and to see what God is doing, so that you would generously give, so that more people could meet Jesus, that our church could grow and expand, and that we could continue on this amazing mission to make disciples and plant churches.

The truth is we're riding a wave of God's grace that is very unusual, and we don't know how long it will last, so we want to be as faithful as possible. And we're asking you to pray, and we're asking you to give, and we're asking you ultimately to care and to demonstrate your care through your praying, your giving, and your serving. So, that's a wrap. It's been great. We'll see you next Sunday, and please do give generously.

JESUS IS WORTH IT

Deacon Danny: It's not based off your works. It's not based off your race. It's not based off your culture. It's not based off how you grew up. It's not based off your neighborhood. It's based off Jesus. And so I'm excited, because all these different nations, all these different people—I was walking around just today, and this woman at Safeway was like, "I'm getting baptized, Danny! I'm getting baptized! You excited for me?" I'm like, "What? Are you joking me?" And I'm sitting there almost in tears, saying, "You know what? That's the gospel. Only the gospel can do that." I'm excited for thirty—I'm praying for thirty salvations, and I'm excited for five hundred people. I'm praying for five hundred people that will hear the gospel. I hope there's an overflow room, not just here and not just at Hope Place. I hope it goes into the youth room, where we're like—you know what? There's no video screen. We're going to hear it on audio. I pray for that, because Jesus is worth it. That's why I'm here, and that's why we're here.

[There were 230 seats; 507 people came; 17 were baptized.]

Note: This transcript has been edited for readability.