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Turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 18. Acts chapter 18, we're gonna read verses 9 and 10 in just a moment. But, before we do I wanna just pause for a second and, talk about what happened yesterday because if you were paying attention to the news you know that yesterday was a tragic day in the United States of America as there was in fact an assassination attempt on Donald Trump who's running for president of the United States. And right now, as you all know, we are in this cultural moment that there is anger in a way that most of us here in this room have never experienced before. And that anger y'all, I think is only gonna be amplified in the light of what happened yesterday. And so for us as followers of Jesus, as individuals and for us as Christians, the question we need to ask is how do we respond in a moment like this? And I wanna be real clear that you guys I think that what is going on in our cultural moment is a direct result of the decline of faith in the United States that as we see moral chaos, and I'm not talking about right or left progressive or conservative, but all encompassing, we are seeing what happens when we take Jesus out of the picture. And so right now I think the the the prayer of the church would be that God would move in our midst. That God would unleash a revival across our country and do what only he can do and lead people back to Jesus. But in the second thing I want us to talk about for just a second is, what is the response for us as Christians? Because I know that some of us were incredibly angry, upset about what we saw and rightfully so. Because there is never, categorically never room for political violence in the United States of America. And so how do we respond as a church? And here's what I wanna remind you of that Jesus, the guy that we worship is the crucified and resurrected savior. Here's what he says, that we are called to love our enemies. We are called to pray for those that persecute us. We are called to be the people that God calls us to be, a people who unite and bring grace into this world. And so my deepest prayer and I hope that you would share this prayer as well is that as we move into the future, what happened yesterday and thank God president Trump is okay. But what happened yesterday will be a moment for all Americans to take a step back, to look at what is dividing us in our culture, and to say we are better than what is

happening in this present moment. And so that that's what I wanna say on that topic in particular, and we're gonna jump into the sermon in just a second. But if it's alright with you, what I would love to do is to go to the one who holds everything in his hand. The one who we believe hears our prayers before we even ask them. And simply to ask His blessing on this land that we call home. So join me for just a second you guys and let's pray together. God, so many of us are here in this room today and what we watched yesterday, some of us live, some of us later in the news, God it is deeply disturbing and distressing. And so, Lord, first of all, we pray and we give you thanks that God, only, president Trump was okay And and God we pray for the family of those who were injured and God that one person who lost their life, God be near to their family in this time. And God for us as the church, as we move into these next few months and into the future, may we be an instrument of reconciliation. May we be people of grace and of hope. God may we always remember what Jesus teaches us which is to love. Love our friends, love our enemies. May we be agents of peace in this world. God, we lift up our country to you. Would you be near to us now? This is our prayer and we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Alright y'all turn to Acts chapter 18. Acts chapter 18, I'm gonna read. It's real quick just, 2 verses actually and this is, Paul. Paul has just been doing some preaching and some teaching first in the synagogue in the city of Corinth and then he goes into the town square. In the synagogue, he is rejected. He is kicked out. But in the town square, people hear him and some people come to faith in Jesus. And so, this is Paul now staying at a Gentile's house who's come to faith in Christ and here is what the passage says. Acts chapter 18 verses 9 and 10. The Lord spoke to Paul by night in a vision. Don't be afraid, he said. Speak on and don't be silent because I am with you and nobody will be able to lay a finger on you to harm you for there are many of my people in this city. So y'all, I think most of you know last week I ran the Peachtree Road Race. I ran the Peachtree Road Race in Atlanta and I ran it with my mom, you guys. My mom and I have been running the Peachtree Road Race now for almost 20 years together. It's kind of the annual thing that we do. We go to Atlanta. We get a hotel room. We stay in the Westin right there at Lenox Square Mall. We do it every single year. And we go out, we'll have a nice dinner. And then the next morning, we get up at about 6 AM, and we drink some

coffee. We start getting ready, and then we make our way down to the start line for the Peachtree Road Race. Have any of y'all run the Peachtree before? Anybody? Good. It's a it's a ton of fun, y'all. Peachtree Road Races. And this year, I think we have finally reached post COVID status in the Peachtree Road Racing. So my mom and I along with 45,000 of our closest friends embarked down Peachtree Street and finished at Piedmont Park. And it was an incredible time for us to run. And y'all, if you've never run it, I encourage you to do it even though it was approximately 10,000 degrees in Atlanta that day. Because we ran in every single mile on the Peachtree Road Race, there is a band that is playing every single mile. There's something happening, and there are people just lining the streets. And some of these folks are wild y'all. Like, you pass people who have kegs of beer who are inviting you to stop and drink along the way, which is a terrible idea might I add. There are people who are giving out Krispy Kreme donuts which is a terrible idea might I add. Yo, one of my favorite things there's a little stretch on Peachtree Street where you've got a couple of Baptist churches, a Presbyterian church, a Catholic church, and an Episcopal church. And the Episcopal priest while you are running has a fountain spraying water and it is holy water that they have blessed and you can run through and get blessed as you run the Peachtree. Right? And then that's fun. Everybody has a good time with it, but but I will tell you every single year for the almost 20 years that my mom and I have been running the Peachtree road race, you reach a point running down Peachtree Street where you will encounter what I have affectionately come to call the bullhorn guy. And the bullhorn guy in direct contrast to the Episcopal priest who is having fun and and giving out holy water to everybody however silly I actually think that might be. Bullhorn guy just a few miles down the road is the direct contrast of that sort of thing. Because while we are all running and listening to different bands and DJs, Bullhorn Guy has his mic turned up as loud as he can. And what he is doing while runners are going down Peachtree Street is telling them just how awful they are. Not awful because they're slow runners even though some of us are, He's telling us that we are awful because He says that we are sinners, And he says that God is angry with us. And this year there was an additional person standing behind beside bullhorn guy, there was sign girl. And sign girl had a sign y'all and I will never forget it because her sign said and I quote to you, God

hates you. God hates you. And they're proclaiming this in the name of Jesus because they believe that we are in our core at the deepest level, hateful, sinful people, and God's wrath falls on us deservedly. And if you have ever been to kind of a mass setting of people, right, the first time I encountered it was at the Ramsey Student Center when I was at the University of Georgia, you know exactly what I'm talking about because these are what we have affectionately in our culture come to call evangelists. And while these might be the minority voices in the Christian faith, so many people both inside the church and outside the church have come to associate evangelism with that sort of rhetoric. And here's the thing that I wanna suggest to us this morning that we've been conditioned to associate evangelism with anger. We've been conditioned to associate evangelism with hate, with somebody with a bullhorn, somebody with a sign, somebody who is telling you just how wicked and awful and broken you are. And what I want us to do this morning, and if you're here and you're a guest, maybe you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, we're gonna be talking a little bit of insider baseball today. Okay? We're gonna be talking about Christian activity in particular. What does it look like for us to be evangelist sort of people? Because what I want us to see this morning by looking at Acts chapter 18 is that evangelism actually has nothing to do with telling people how angry God is. It has nothing to do with telling people how vengeful God is. It actually has nothing to do with you persuading people about the glory of the gospel. Right? I wanna be clear on this. We get to Acts chapter 18 and what is happening in Acts chapter 18 is that Paul has left Athens, which we talked about last week, and he's arrived in the city of Corinth. And in the city of Corinth, what happens is that Paul stays there for almost 18 months. Right? He stays there for a year and a half. And while he's there, he develops these deep relationships and friendships, but it all begins with the same way that Paul always does things. He goes to the synagogue and the story, I didn't read it to you but it says, Paul goes to the synagogue and tries to present to the Jewish people that Jesus is the Messiah. And then after that doesn't pan out the way that he hoped and he's kicked out of the synagogue, what happens next is Paul goes into the town square and he does exactly the same thing. And in this story in Acts chapter 18, people come to faith in Jesus and we celebrate it and it's good and you guys, that for us is part of the template for how we are

called to be Christians. Right? At the core, if you're a follower of Jesus, you know that we are supposed to share our faith with other people. Isn't that true? We are called to share our faith with other people. It goes all the way, not just starting Paul, but going all the way back to Jesus himself. The last thing he says to his disciples before he ascends to the father in Matthew chapter 28. What is it? It's the great commission. Go out into all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. It's called evangelism. And we live in a world and we live in a culture where that word has become politically loaded. Right? For people outside of the church when you hear the word evangelism or evangelical, you tend to think politically oriented, politically aligned. But if we want to take our faith seriously and if we are going to be the church and you, the Christian Because if we take the Greek, evangelion, here's what it means literally. It is good news that Paul goes into the synagogue in Corinth, Paul goes into the town square and at the center of what he is doing, he is proclaiming good news. And y'all I want you I wanna I wanna sit on that word news for just a minute and we're gonna come back to it. But we have to understand, and this might seem like Christianity 101, but at the core of being a Jesus person is the call to share the Evangelion, to share the good news of what has happened through Jesus Christ with the world that is around us. And this might be, you guys why I wanna talk about it this morning. This might be one of those areas that is in direct contrast more than anything else with the way we talked about faith in Christendom, in a Christian culture, the way we talked about faith. Y'all, it came very easily. It came very naturally. And so I think about it. Right? When when you, when you buy a house, when you buy a house, what do you do? You go and you talk to a realtor. And when you meet with a realtor 10 years ago, 20 years ago, one of the first things they would tell you is what? Where they go to church. Because in a certain Christian culture, it carried credibility. It got you something if you were a Christian. And and I could go down a 1,000 different lists of how that is in fact true. But what I want us to understand is that as we move into a post Christian culture, the way that we talk about Jesus y'all, it's not going to gain you cultural credibility, but in fact it might actually cost you something. In a post Christian culture, we are so tempted to do this, to remove ourselves from the world

around us. Right? You see certain Christian circles and Christian groups that are doing this right now where they have decided that the world is so corrupt that the world is so broken, we're gonna wall ourselves off. We're not gonna have anything to do with them because they are sinful, they are bad, and we're gonna do our own thing. We're gonna start our own schools. We're gonna have our own sports leagues. We're gonna do things only with us because the world is broken, so we wall ourselves off. But what I want us to understand is that we are in fact called to be genuine Jesus people in a post Christian culture, even if even if it's going to cost us something. And please be clear, it will. Just just like 3 weeks ago, I had actually been called on you guys. I've been called on to go to this project that was getting off the ground. There's a groundbreaking for this big new project in Augusta. And so they say call me and they say, Will, would you come out and they is just gonna be they for the purpose of anonymity. Hey, Will, would you come out and bless this project? Would you come out and do an invocation prayer? And I go, yeah, sure. I'm happy to do that. And so I get in my car, drive out to said project, and there are a lot of people there. There are a lot of people there. And just before it begins, a guy comes up to me and he he was an investor in this project and he said, reverend because he's got, like, old south. Right? He goes, reverend, I know you're going to do a fantastic prayer at this meeting today And I know you're going to do that, but please I want you to understand that one of the primary investors I might be hamming it up a little bit with his voice. That one of the primary investors in this project, he's Jewish, and he might find it a bit offensive if you mention Jesus in your prayer. So please remember that when you step to the podium. Now, while my accent might have been exaggerated, what he said is a quote. And so y'all, in this moment in post Christian culture, even in Augusta, Georgia, I have a decision to make, what am I going to do? And if you know me at all you know exactly what I did because I looked at my man and I said, fine sir. I'm actually going to say the name of Jesus and I'm not gonna do it offensively and I'm not gonna do it angrily, but if that's what you wanted you should have never asked me to begin with. And so I stood behind the platform and I prayed a prayer of God's blessing and abundance which by the way transcends our tribes and our politics and everything else. And at the end of that prayer, I ask it in Jesus' name. And if looks could kill you guys, I

would have been dead. And let me tell you something, as we move into a post Christian culture take that one example and amplify it times a 100. And we will find ourselves in your school systems and in your jobs, in your relationships, in your neighborhood with Christianity being something that is excluded. And you're asked not to talk about it. And the temptation is to withdraw and to turn inward. But I never want you to forget, what does God say to Paul in Acts chapter 18? Don't stop speaking about me because I've got you and nobody will lay a hand on you and in what this verse that I just love in 18:10, he says, don't be afraid. Y'all, I don't know if you know this, 365 times in the bible, the most often repeated command in the whole of scripture. What is it? Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. And as we move into a post Christian culture and as we seek to represent Jesus authentically and as we seek to represent Jesus well, one of the things we need to do is never back off of the claim that he is in fact who he says he is and he's done exactly what he said he would do. Don't be afraid. And so we will go out into a post Christian world and we will represent Jesus with dignity and with honor and we will remember what he said to love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you, to be kind and generous and grace filled out into the world. And guys, we need not be afraid because you know what? God is with us. And so if it is essential, it's not optional. Right? We are all called to bear witness to our faith. Every single one of us who is here in this space, if you are a follower of Jesus, it is incumbent upon you to be ready and willing to talk to people about Jesus. And so using Paul as our example for the next just couple of minutes, what I wanna do is I wanna dive in to how Paul does it. I wanna dive into how Paul does it in Acts chapter 18. And here's what he says in Acts chapter 18. Right? I'm a back up just a little bit because he goes into the synagogue, and here's what Luke, the author of Acts says. That Paul was putting great energy into the task of bearing forthright witness to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. He put a lot of energy into bearing witness to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah. Now that one little sentence is gonna change the way that I hope all of us understand what it means to talk about our faith. Because if you're anything like me, you were taught that you need to evangelize, and in order to do that you need to read books like the master plan of evangelism. You need to read books like what is The Case for Christ. Has anybody read The Case for

Christ? Where you, learn how to argue with somebody and to get them to the point where they're gonna accept Jesus. This happens to me all the time you guys. So essentially according to these books, you know what you are? You're selling Jesus to people. You're a salesman. That's the way that evangelism is typically framed that you are called to go and tell people about Jesus and convince them or to use a crass word, sell Jesus to them. I wish I had a nickel for every time somebody came to me and they said, Will, you are just like me. And I go, how so? And they go, I'm in sales and you're in sales too. And I said, am I really? And they said, yes, and you're very good at it. And then I go, great. Yeah. I'm cool to be in sales. That's awesome y'all. And they think listen, seriously, in the United States of America because of the way we do church, right, there's a quote that I really love where it says Christianity started as a movement in Judea, and it became an institution in Rome, and now it's a business in America. And so many people think that what the church is doing and what we are doing when we evangelize is we are selling something. We're trying to convince you that our opinion is right to get you to believe in Jesus through my deductive powers of reasoning and persuasive salesmanship. And that's what you're called to do too. And what I want you to understand this morning is that if you think that's what sharing our faith is, if you think that's what evangelism consists of, then you have fundamentally missed the point. Because Paul said Paul goes into the to the synagogue and he presents them with facts. He presents them with objectively true statements. Right? And so if I could frame it with you another way, while we've been taught to think that the job of talking about Jesus consists in you becoming a salesperson, I actually want you to understand that if we're going to be faithful to the call of Jesus to bear witness in a post Christian culture, You don't have to sell anything because you're not a salesman. But are you ready? Here's what you are, you're Dan Rather. You're a newscaster. You are sitting and presenting a set of objectively true facts. And you're not having to sell anyone anything because the gospel is true even if you don't believe it. Here's what I want us to understand y'all as we move into a post Christian culture. You're not called to sell. You're not called to present your opinion. That's not what evangelism is all about. You are called to share the news. Some of y'all are here in this room today, and what you

need to know is that the news is true, even if you don't believe it. Jesus was crucified dead and buried, and on the 3rd day, he ascended to the father. And the story says that right now, he is sitting at the right hand of God ruling over all of creation. And the day will come according to Colossians when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father. And that my friends is true even if you don't believe it. Jesus defeated death and the revolution of the kingdom of God is underway right here and right now, and I don't need to convince you of it. My job is to simply tell you that it happened. And as followers of Jesus, it is incumbent upon every single one of us to do just the same thing. We're not called to share our opinion, but we are called to share the news. And if we can think through that lens, if we can consider evangelism through that framework, right, then it takes the onus of responsibility off of us. It takes the need to be persuasive and and profound in our eloquence because that's not what we are called to do. Right? Paul, the guy we're talking about. In the letter that he wrote to the church in Corinth, the one that he's talking to right here in this story. Do you know what? In in first Corinthians chapter 2, it says that I came to you and I wasn't eloquent and my speech wasn't profound, but I made it my commitment to proclaim to you Christ crucified and resurrected. See, the goal of Christian evangelism is not to convince people of anything. We we've bought into this notion that the goal of Christianity is to get you to accept Jesus into your heart. And while that might be part of it, the ultimate goal of the Christian faith and the reason we talk about it is because there is one who has defeated death and launched the revolution of the Kingdom of God. And it has happened right here, and it has happened right now. And all I have to do is tell you the facts. And what you do with that is ultimately up to you. And if we understand Christian evangelism in that way, then I think it better positions you to go out and talk to others about Jesus. See, when I was a boy when I was a boy, I did not grow up in church, and I've told y'all my Sunday morning routine, my dad would go play golf, and my mom I don't know what my mom did, but I would sit at my house and my church was WWF wrestling. Alright? And I had my baloney and cheese sandwich, and my crunchers chips, and my Fanta soda, and I would watch it. And then after WWF wrestling was over, do you know what show came on next? The Way of the Master. Y'all

familiar with The Way of the Master? Oh, gosh, y'all. It had Kirk Cameron in it. Anybody y'all remember Kirk Cameron from Family Ties? Was it Family Ties? Was that it? What was it? Growing Pains. Thank you. And Kirk Cameron, y'all, this show, he would go to people and he would say, hey, can I talk to you about Jesus? And and it would normally be like gang members in San Francisco or something. It was really highly produced and suit and it was powerful. Right? And and Kirk Cameron would start to talk to folks and he would say, hey, if you were to die tonight do you know where you would go? And they would say, well, I don't know. And then Kirk Cameron would say, well, the Bible says and then he would lead them through this movement in this conversation where eventually through the powers of Kirk Cameron's beautiful face and deductive reasoning, they would come to faith in Jesus. And that was a model that worked in Christendom. It was a model that worked in a culture where everybody took biblical stories for granted, but y'all we do not live in that world anymore. And the onus is not on you being Kirk Cameron and persuasive and strong, but the model is on you simply saying, Jesus Christ defeated death. It's a fact. Think about it. When Jesus begins his ministry, he he comes out into the public view for the first time and what does he say? Repent. Turn and go in a different direction. Do you know why? Because the kingdom of God is here. Jesus does not say repent if you want to. Repent if you think that it might be the way. No. The kingdom of God is here. That's the proclamation. That's the story. And so as we think about how we will bear witness in a post Christian world, here's what I want us to know. That the resurrection of Jesus, it's a fact. And more than that, it defines all of history. And so events like what happened yesterday can occur, and our ethos and our minds can be shaken. But if Jesus Christ defeated death, then we know everything will be okay. If Jesus Christ emerged from the tomb on Easter Sunday morning, then that's the only thing we need to share with the world. 1 One of the great missiologists, a guy named Leslie Newbigin, I love his quote. Somebody asked him once, we were in a cultural moment that wasn't really pretty, and they said, how do you feel? Are you optimistic about the future? And Leslie Newbigin had this beautiful quote. He says, I'm neither a pessimist nor an optimist because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. That's evangelism. That's what it means to bear witness. And y'all, if you only hear me say one thing, that if we are going

to be the church that God calls us to be, we will go out into the world and we won't be slick, and we might not even be relevant. We won't be relevant, actually. But you know what we will do? We'll be faithful. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. It's a fact, and you are called to live your life in the light of that story. That's who we are as a people. And ultimately you guys as I begin to wrap up this sermon, I want to ask us a question. Will we be that sort of church? Will we be the sort of church that takes seriously the one goal that is given to us? Right? I know so many churches and so many people that think the object of Christianity is to get you to vote a certain way or or to get you to buy into a certain moral framework. And you guys, while those things are important, they're not the gospel. And I am committed, and I hope that you are too, that our church will be the sort of place that takes the one thing very, very seriously. Because the gospel, it is all about the crucified and resurrected Christ. Nothing more and nothing less. And so the question that I have for us as a church, will we proclaim that? Will we live into that? The gospel is about the crucified and resurrected Jesus. We don't have to persuade anyone of anything. We're simply stating the facts. Jesus is alive, and the world is a fundamentally different place. I wonder. I wonder. Because ultimately, you guys, this isn't as I say every single week, this isn't just a story about something that happened 2000 years ago, but it's about a calling on each of our lives right now. And some of you, right, I'm talking about evangelism. I can see some of your eyes by the way. Y'all are like, man, I am totally not into this right now. And that's fine. Some of you are here, and when I talk about sharing your faith, your gut impulse is like, I am not going to do that. And if that's where you are right now, you know what? That's okay. Because Jesus is still resurrected from the dead. Right? But here's the thing. Some of us some of us, as we talk about sharing our faith, our mind begins to work and our spirit begins to turn. And I wonder, when is the last time? When is the last time you shared the good news of Jesus with someone else? And the challenge for you this week right? I'm not gonna I'm not gonna, make you go out and do it or ask you to come back with a written report, but the challenge for you this week, who are you gonna share the news with? Who are you gonna share the news with that Jesus Christ is resurrected from the dead? It's who we are, and it's what we do. So may we go out and proclaim the greatest news that the world has ever

heard. Let's take a few moments now y'all before we go back into worship, and let's pray. God, we are grateful. We're grateful for this morning and for the opportunity to come into this space and celebrate you because, God, you always have enough. And we don't need to be afraid as we go out into the world and we share the news. And Lord, be here in this space today and help us to know that sharing our faith is not something to be afraid of. The sharing our faith doesn't rely on our own persuasive skill, but God is simply stating the fact. Jesus Christ is resurrected from the dead. Lord, put a passion in our bones. Put a person in our mind that we can go out and share the news. All we want is to be faithful to you, God. So may we do that this week. Continue to be with us as we worship and celebrate you.