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PASTOR MARK'S MESSAGE

Ministry Banquet Sept 26, 2024

Greetings! Thank you for coming tonight! We love and appreciate you. And from the bottom of my heart, thank you for all your support. We can't do this ministry without you. YOU make this soul-saving ministry possible!

Do you know Cindi and I have been on this mission to save the poor and homeless for 25 years now? Can you believe it? Wow! God has been so good to us and we have seen Him do so many miracles through this ministry! Thank you Lord!

Tonight I want encourage you by sharing a little bit about how Cindi and I got started doing this ministry. You see thirty years ago, in the mid-nineties, Cindi and I were just ordinary believers, making a life for ourselves out in the suburbs in Centerville. And Jesus started speaking to us about all the lost and hurting people in the inner city... He said, "*Open your eyes... AND LOOK!*" (John 4:35)

He began to awaken us to the sights & sounds of the dark & stormy ocean of drowning souls in the inner city... where poor and homeless human beings were crying out in desperation & struggling in vain, in the surging waves of poverty, sin, addiction & every kind of demonic oppression.

At the same time, we saw that most of the church, and most of the followers of Christ, INCLUDING US, had moved away from the sights and sounds of their desperate struggles... and had left them to drown.

And of course, we heard Jesus calling us... to come help Him... save them!

To be honest with you, we didn't want to answer His call at first. We tried to look away & close our ears. The dark surging sea of perishing poor & homeless human beings looked dangerous and foreboding. And we asked ourselves, what could WE possibly do to save them?

But at the same time, we said, how could we not answer His call to help Him save them? How could we linger on the shore in safety... and watch them drown? How could we live with ourselves if we didn't do something...?

So after some hesitation & delay, we finally yielded to His call! We put our lives on the altar for Him to use to save them... and we said Yes Lord! Yes!

Like a man on the shore, who, upon seeing a person drowning in the water, strips off his outer garments and leaps into the water to go to the drowning person's res-

cue... we abandoned our worldly plans, comforts and safety and we jumped into the sea of drowning poor & homeless people to help Jesus save them.

That was 25 years ago! Pushing past our uncertainty and fears, we moved into the inner city. We rented a house across the street from abandoned houses and just 2 blocks from a HUD housing complex with drive-by shootings and drug runners.

By faith, we began to live in the inner city, serve the poor and homeless and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. As we did, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon us" (Luke 4:18) and we "received power to be His witnesses" (Acts 1:8)! We started doing things we didn't know how to do. And even though we were in over our heads, we managed to rescue a few drowning souls from the perilous sea.

I preached my first evangelistic sermon in a small Saturday service and meal for the poor and homeless at a Nazarene church down the street. And a few more drowning souls got saved (four people accepted Christ). We started a Friday night Bible study at our house for poor and homeless people and helped a few more climb to safety.

Two years later we were doing six services a week serving thousands of poor and homeless people every month and many drowning souls were being rescued from the surging waves. How amazing is that?

A few more years later, we moved into this 38,000 square foot building, where we can minister to more people in one night than we used to in a whole week!

Today, twenty-five years later, Target Dayton is like a mighty rock rising out of the stormy waters, where many poor and homeless human beings are climbing out of the sea to safety every day. It is truly a beautiful sight to see...

Six days a week we launch our boats, throw out our flotation devices and ropes, and shine the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ into the stormy darkness.

We have an amazing staff of people who have joined with us on our soul-saving mission and we are all working hard to save as many as we can!

Every day we reach out our hands to drowning poor and homeless people with the good news of a Savior who can save their souls from perishing in the depths of eternal darkness. And every day people take our hands & are saved! I love that!

And while I hope you are encouraged, as I am, by the choir and testimonies you've heard tonight... I hope you will "open your eyes and look" PAST THEM and see the vast numbers of people still drowning out there.

We might be tempted to relax & feel good about all the souls we have rescued over the years. But we can't... we must not... because tonight... as far as the eye can see, all around us in this city, multitudes are still perishing in the surging waves of poverty, sin, addict & every kind demonic oppression!

Everywhere we look, men, women, boys and girls are choking & drowning & sinking into the depths right before our eyes!

The tragic truth is: as we sit here in safety, tens of thousands of real human beings, are really drowning tonight all over this city! They cannot save themselves. They need our help to be saved!

So, I am here tonight to ask YOU, to open your eyes and look... or look again...

And take to heart the reality of this dark & stormy ocean of drowning souls here in our city... AND DO MORE to help Jesus... and help us... save them if you possibly can.

So I am asking you to...

1) Give twice as much (or more) as you did last year if you can. The need is very great! Over next few months we will clothe more than a thousand homeless people with warm winter coats. We will feed Thanksgiving dinner to hundreds of poor and homeless people on Thanksgiving day with two services and share the gospel with every person who comes. On Christmas Day we will preach the gospel and give gift boxes to more than three-thousand people at the Dayton Convention Center (and that day alone will cost \$200,000!) And that's in addition to all our regular services six days a week— which are being attended by more people than ever! And you all know what has happened to all of our food and overhead costs due to inflation...

2) Become a "Target Dayton Ministries Ambassador". Please try to enlist your friends, your church, your business associates and whoever else you can to get involve in this soul-saving mission with you. I am asking you to use your sphere of influence to call attention to this amazing ministry and recruit new volunteers and supporters for our mission. (And that includes finding 10 people to sponsor a Christmas gift box.)

3) Do more personally to serve hands-on. We need you to personally come to help drive a bus, cook, serve, do ministry, share the gospel with people, disciple someone... do hands-on ministry. We just do not have anywhere near enough hands on deck to save all the people who need to be rescued!

Soon, we will be on the shores of heaven... and there will be a vast crowd of poor and homeless people with us on those shores, who we helped Jesus to save! Until then, we must do everything we can to save as many more as we can!

We love you. Thank you for listening tonight. I hope I wasn't too intense. If I was please forgive me. Let's pray and tell the Lord the WE SEE. "Lord Jesus, thank you for opening our eyes to see all the people drowning & sinking into the depths right before our eyes! And we will do all we can to help you, save them!"