

2026.08.02 Bedford audio

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Thank you, Susan, for putting that together. Thank you, Sean. Sean will be here a little later. I think he's going to be joining us for some lunch. He had some other responsibilities at Sherwood Bloomington.

But I tell you, we owe a debt of gratitude to Sean and his lovely family. They stepped into this campus and really did the hard work of turning it into a Sunday morning experience. How many of you guys remember Saturday nights? Were you part of that Saturday night? Oh yeah.

Those of us who lived through Saturday night miss it dearly because it gave us a whole Saturday—a whole Sunday free. But it was necessary to turn this into a church that could really impact families and kids. And Sean did that work, and I appreciate him so much. Susan, thank you very much. A big shout out to all those men and women who made this thing happen.

We, we appreciate them so much. Yes, absolutely.

Now I know that some of you are in the room this morning going, "What in the world did I show up for at Sherwood Oaks this morning? All I wanted was to sing some songs and hear a sermon." Well, you're gonna get both of them. But today we have tables set up. We have some balloons outside. Get your picture taken with the balloon and the 10-year anniversary.

We've got food coming in. We're gonna have fried chicken. We got some flowers on the table. And we have tables. We normally don't set up tables, but I don't mind it too much.

Anyone here enjoying the tables just a little bit? Yeah, I think we kinda like the tables. But we're doing this all because today is a celebration. We are marking 10 years of life together. 10 years.

And so a party feels absolutely fitting. And it also feels fitting because in our sermon series that we're going through, parties have already shown up a couple of times. So today, in our Scripture, we're going to come to another one. And it's a party where Jesus shows up and notices how people are engaging with each other. Now we've got little kids in the room.

And here's the only thing I want to say about kids in the room. Are you ready for it? Welcome to the big room, boys and girls. We're glad you're here. Now listen, old people, kids make noise.

Kids cry. Kids spill stuff. Kids get antsy. Are we all right with all of that? Absolutely.

Absolutely. So if you got little kids beside you, just love on 'em, smile at 'em, share a little joke with 'em. Ignore me and play with the kid if you have to. That's all right. Jesus shows up at this party.

He sees all the people and He notices some stuff. And He's gonna teach us something about

humility, about status, And he's gonna teach us some important stuff about God's kingdom. So I'm gonna pray, and then we're gonna dive right into the Scripture. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the beautiful stories already that have been told in this morning, the stories that have walked through the front door in the form of these beautiful little families and men and women who are pursuing you and coming after you. We thank you for the story that Susan shared and the lives of the men and women who brought the story into our lives even before we knew it was going to be part of our story.

We're thankful for the way you work through all of this to accomplish your good and perfect plan. Now, as we open your word, challenge us to continue that in a way that honors you. In Jesus' name, amen. So this passage is from Luke chapter 14. We're going to start in verse 1 to sort of set the, set the context, and then we're going to jump a few verses down to verse 7.

So here's how Luke starts chapter 14. One Sabbath When Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee— jump to 7— when he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable. A parable is simply a story with a message. When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor. Doug, I noticed you've sat right here at the front.

He— oh yeah, he's decided he needs a splash guard. Okay, here, you're good, you're good. People, when you come to a party, when you're invited to a wedding feast, don't take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have also been invited. And if so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, give this person your seat. And then humbled—and not just humbled, humiliated.

You'll have to take the least important place. But when you're invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he'll say, 'Friend, friend, move on up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. And then Jesus says this right here: For all those who exalt themselves those who humble themselves will be exalted. That table scene is the perfect lens through which to view our anniversary because 10 years ago when we gathered in this space with 50 to 60 people, we were not simply launching a service or opening a building. We were learning what it means to be God's people in God's place.

And for us, that meant to serve even if we weren't noticed. We were going to learn to take the lower place together and to trust that God would honor us in a way that matters, inviting us to come and sit closer and be closer to him. So 10 years ago, we threw a party in this place. Now, you can see from the photographs, it wasn't a polished, perfect everything already figured out kind of party. We don't throw those kind of parties at Sherwood Oaks, but this was the kind where people pulled up chairs, they learned each other's names, and they began to wonder what God might do next in their midst.

And I was in the room that night, and I was so excited because this was my hometown, and what was coming in was my home church, and I loved Sherwood Oaks. I've been part of that

congregation for many, many years at that point in time, and I love the idea of what we were learning together as a community in Bloomington— to dedicate ourselves to the mission of God so that everything that he entrusted to us became his to use, living like God owns everything. I love that. In other words, we were dreaming of a church that was not trying to build its own name But we were invested in becoming— and you've heard me say this— the best church for the community. We weren't angling to get the best seat at the best table, the best church in the best county, although I feel like it's a great county.

We were simply committed to following Jesus wherever and to whomever he He would lead us and to invite people to move up to a better place. And over these 10 years, that commitment has taken shape in very ordinary but very holy ways. We've got folks who show up once a month and sometimes twice a month to, to, to, to give food boxes to people who are experiencing scarcity. We've developed a community that steps in and, and comes alongside men who need healthy relationships, healthy families, healthy connections, healthy brotherhood. I tell you the many times that we have helped people financially through Dollar Club and other ways.

Recently there was a grandmother who was taking care of her young grandchildren and she was going to be evicted from her home unless someone stepped in to help. She'd experienced some health issues and we stepped in and helped and she stayed in her home with her grandbabies. I remember years ago when I got a call from someone, "I just need a battery for my truck. I'm living in it and it's also my transportation to the first job I've had in years." And you know what we were able to do through your generosity? Get that guy a battery for his truck.

Simple little things that make an enormous impact in someone's life. We've clothed some high schoolers who needed clothes that fit. Anyone remember that story?

Man, we've given school supplies to teachers, first-time teachers who, who are new to the job and still wet behind the ears. We've given coffee makers. Some of you in this room have gotten a coffee maker from us to help you get established in your first home. We've invited people to play softball with us who might never and probably never will show up into our front doors, but will play with us in the ball field and we get a chance to love on them and share Jesus with them. Our care team, our prayer team, our meal teams, all the ways that we have offered practical help for people who just need, need to know Jesus.

Again and again, the invitation has been simple. Friend, wherever you are, whatever you're up to, help us move you up to a better place. And Jesus says God honors that sort of humility. If you want to be great, he says, learn to be a servant. And that's what these past 10 years for me have been about, and for you as well.

So today we celebrate the past. Susan alluded to this. The past can be bittersweet. Anniversaries can be moments of sadness where we remember what is no longer. And I always think about the people that are no longer with us.

I mentioned Bill Poling and some of those— Brian Bailey, great men of God. But I tell you, I know there are many who have started with us who have moved on to other ministries. I'm still mad at Andy Fish about it. But, but you know what? When people move on to other ministries, we celebrate them, we pray for them, we bless them, and we keep them in our community even though they're not here on Sunday morning.

That's who we're going to be. We're going to all move together to better places. I also think of those folks who, who have moved on to the best place of all. Susan mentioned Roger Gales, here from the very beginning and so pivotal, not just in the ministry of this church. But in my life, when we lost Roger, we lost a good friend of this church, but I lost a dear, dear friend to me.

I'm so thankful for Roger Gales. I think of Beverly Kern. Beverly Kern, the first Saturday night we were here, and there were kids running around the room, and it was still new to us, and I nervously said, "Kids, kids, kids, don't be running in the sanctuary," not even really knowing what to call this place yet. And Beverly Kern said— and she sort of sat up and she had the face that you never knew what she was going to say— and I thought, oh no. She said, listen, it has been so long since we've had little kids' feet running around this building.

They can run wherever they want to run. I thought, ah! Beverly Kern became my hero in that moment right there. I think about Dave Fish, just a sweet, sweet, sweet gentleman. Who showed up and served and just loved wherever he could.

Margie and Jerome Owens, many of you may remember Margie and Jerome, they both passed on, but dear people, and they always dressed in color-coordinated outfits. Did anyone besides me remember that? I love Margie and Jerome and I miss them dearly. And I think about sweet Judy Philpott. Judy would come in here, just, just a tender, tender lady.

I miss her. But these are all people who made Sherwood Oaks what it has been for the past 10 years. And you can probably think of people as well that I have not even mentioned. They're not with us here. They're not with us in body, but I have absolute confidence that they are celebrating with us nonetheless.

We celebrate the past, but we also celebrate the present. Look around the room. I celebrate all of you who are here this morning because you have said, "I wanna be part of the story." of Sherwood Oaks and what God's doing and God's intention for his community with this congregation. I want to say thank you. You understand that being the best church for Bedford, for our community, for our county, for Mitchell means being devoted to Jesus and helping meet the needs all around us each and every day, just like Jesus would.

Thank you. But also, anniversaries are a great time to look to the future. I have hopes. I have dreams for the future. I pray that you do too.

One of the things I pray for, one, first, is that we continue to be a church that serves through our

people, through you guys out in the community. I also pray for this facility. I have dreams for this facility. Tell you what, I, I would— I, I want this to always be a beautiful and functional space for the community to find to be a perfect place to meet others and meet Jesus. But outside, I imagine a playground.

I don't know what kind of playground, but a place where kids can make friends, where they can meet Jesus as well, where they can grow and stretch and take some risk in a safe place. I love the idea of a playground out there, not just for us, but for the community around us. Man, I would love a shelter house out there. That can become our own front porch right outside our walls. I dream of retiring the mortgage on this place because we spend way more money on interest than we need to.

I would rather spend that on ministry. Amen.

I want to bring some of our part-time staff into full-time ministry because we have amazing, incredible men and women doing full-time ministry on part-time pay, and I want I want to change that. And I want our mission to broaden and deepen so that we can respond generously, not just to the needs in our own community, which we do so well, but we have a larger, broader vision for needs and neighbors all over the world. I want us to continue to serve the least of these, whether it's kids in foster care or families in crisis. Moms who are experiencing scary, scary times. Lost boys, lost men who may only know that Jesus loves them because they've seen that we love them.

And more than anything, I want this church to keep becoming the best church for our community, both near and far, devoted to Jesus and meeting the needs around us, inviting others to move up to the better place. There was a lot of dreaming in that room 10 years ago, and there's a lot of dreaming in the room here today, I suspect. But I have every confidence that, that those dreams are not by accident. I believe those dreams are planted by God in his people for a purpose. And he says that nothing then is impossible when we place our trust in God, and that includes Putting those dreams in the hands of Jesus.

That brings us to a time of communion. I think we have some people who are going to help serve that, and we're going to serve it table by table. I see, I see movement, therefore I know something is going to happen. Um, these young men— Nate's going to help serve as well. I see some movement there.

We're going to share in a time of communion, and as we come to this time of communion, I'm going to remind myself, and I'm gonna remind you and anyone within earshot of me about Paul's blessing over the church in Ephesus. And here's what he says in Ephesus chapter 2— Ephesus chapter 3, verses 20 and 21. He says, now to him who is able to do immeasurably more— say that with me, immeasurably more. One more time, immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations. I see a lot of generations here.

God wants to demonstrate his glory in all of us.

Immeasurably more. It's a good phrase. It gives us a way to hold our past and our present and our future all in one moment here. As we prepare for a time of communion, I'm going to ask you to look back 10 years ago. We could not have dreamed of all the ways God was going to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine.

But there's no surprise to that. It should never surprise us what God can do in us and through us, because he saved us through something he did 3,000 years ago on a cross. He loved us immeasurably more and gave his life up for us. And the bread that we will take together is representative of that, of his body broken for us. So as you take the bread, thank him for 10 years of doing what only he could have done.

And then look around at the present. Reflect on the power presently at work within us, as Paul said. Sherwood Oaks is not held together by human effort, although we have some amazing humans who put in a lot of effort, but that's not how it's held together. It's held together by his power working within us. And that cup that you're going to receive, that cup represents a covenant, a promise that washes us clean and binds us now together with each other across generations, across eons of history, into one body.

So as we drink, we witness that God is showing and demonstrating his glory among us and among the history of this church from the past and far into the future. Many, many, many different lives made as one to the glory of God. And then finally, we look ahead. 10 years is a very important milestone, but God's promise spans so far back and so far forward that we cannot even imagine it. So this moment is not just a monument to past achievements, but it's fuel for the future that God has for us as we trust him with not only the past and the present, but with the future as well.

So we eat and drink today looking forward to the endless, immeasurably more that God has awaiting for us.

Psalm 126 says this, and I'm going to combine it with Philippians 1:6. The Lord has done great things for us. Can I hear God's people say amen? Amen. The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

And we are confident of this. And let's say this together. That he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Amen. Heavenly Father, as we share in communion together, Remind us of your, your tremendous grace demonstrated on the cross so far ago, so far and so long ago, but now is made manifest in the present as you are uniting us together in one body.

And then we look forward to your future, the immeasurably more that you have planned for us, far beyond our generation into the future that we may never see ourselves, but we will witness from the throne of heaven. We thank you for this moment. In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you for listening to

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