

**Text: Galatians 6:9-10; Matthew 5:19**

**Title: “Your Place”**

## **INTRODUCTION**

We're here this morning to celebrate the mission and the vision God has given us as His people. Let's review:

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

**Our mission is to love God by:**

- **Sharing Jesus Christ with all people**
- **Maturing others in the faith.**
- **Glorifying God in worship**
- **Serving others sacrificially**

### **VISION STATEMENT:**

"For God's glory, we will become a people who are determined to experience the transforming love of God and are equipped to use the best possible means to bring about *deep spiritual change* through the power of Jesus Christ in the Fort Worth area and the world beyond."

Our Vision Leadership Team a few years back spent months praying and preparing these two powerful statements. And every time I read them I feel a surge of passion for what God has called us to do.

This morning I want to focus on those words in the heart of our Vision Statement ... “equipped to use the best possible means to bring about *deep spiritual change* through the power of Jesus Christ in the Fort Worth area and the world beyond."

With the time that I have this morning I want to spotlight two powerful factors:

- **Our place of ministry** ... that is the physical location of most of our ministries
- **Your place in ministry** ... that is the spiritual vocation of serving God with your gifts and talents

To guide our thoughts today will you turn with me Galatians 6:9-10? Follow along as I read. Now turn with me to Matthew 5:16. Again, follow along as I read.

Just think for a moment about ...

## **I. OUR PLACE OF MINISTRY ... THE PHYSICAL LOCATION OF MOST OF OUR MINISTRIES**

A few years ago we embarked on the completion of a master plan that would result in transforming our campus into a spiritual and physical oasis in the heart of the city. And slowly that is becoming a reality.

- Last fall we opened the Life Center here on the north parking lot, which is becoming a portal for ministries to our community. Throughout the week there are citizenship classes, Bible studies, and all kinds of helpful ministries going on there for people who live in this part of Fort Worth. The stage has been set for that “place” to become an even greater outreach to our community.
- Tonight we will dedicate the new intercessory prayer center located just outside the doors of the sanctuary. We are poised to launch extensive prayer ministries that will provide the spiritual support for the vast ministries of our church.

Tonight at 6:00 we will have a great prayer rally featuring internationally-known prayer teacher Don Miller. If you want to be part of one of the emerging prayer ministries of the church, please join us. At the end we will have a special dedication for that room.

- Of course, the project we’re most excited about today is the completion and dedication of the new Welcome Center building. This building will enable us to accomplish some very important ministries.

First, there’s the ministry of fellowship. As you walk into the first floor you find a beautiful gathering space where you can linger in conversation with one another on your way to and from events here at our church. The courtyard will be a refreshing place to pause and pray with each other as you have the opportunity.

And when it ever rains again ... we’ll be able to drop our loved ones off under a covered drive and move between the buildings without getting out in the elements. With the new elevator accessing all three floors of Building C, and the wheel chair lifts in the Welcome Center, handicapped persons will have be able to move about our facilities with great ease and safety.

The Welcome Center will also serve as the hub for an extensive welcome process called “First Impressions” that begins when persons first get out of their cars and as they move to various places on the campus. We want folks to be greeted several times before they get to their destination. This is still in the organizational stages and some of you may feel called to help out with that ministry.

The second floor of the Welcome Center will provide excellent new meeting facilities for as many as 150 persons in Bible Study groups on Sundays, as well as a variety of other meetings throughout the week.

The beautiful thing about this is that we are moving into this building with it complete paid for. The money’s been in the bank for months now. Isn’t that exciting?

And speaking of your generous giving, let me take a moment to praise God with you about the way we finished 2006.

We had the greatest December, financially, ever in the history of our church. Here are some financial highlights from December:

Budget receipts	\$777,000+	(goal was \$410,000)
Open Doors	53,000+	(\$3,121,000 given to date)
Missions	50,000+	(\$144,047 given this year)

In addition to these, stock gifts totaling over \$400,000 were given at year end. That's a total of about \$1.25 million in given in just one month!

Now we turn our focus on the year ahead in terms of OUR PLACE OF MINISTRY ... OPEN DOORS 2.

The first phase of OPEN DOORS 2 is a building that most of us will never set foot in. And yet, it is a building that all of us will feel the benefits of every time we come into church buildings. This building is called the Central Plant. It will house all the heating and air conditioning equipment that services all of our buildings on the north side of Berry, including the new buildings on our master plan. This work needed to be done a decade or more ago, but we've kept everything running with duct tape and some new equipment.

The engineers tell us that the cost of the new Central Plant will be about \$1.2 million. We'll know exactly when the plans and bidding are completed and presented to the church for approval. But if that estimate is anywhere near accurate, due to God's abundant provision through your generous giving, the money is already in the bank ... before we've even signed a contract. Praise the Lord.

Now look with me a little farther down the road in 2006. The Master Plan Team is in the early stages of planning for the next, and most challenging phase we've attempted. I believe it is the most important building in terms of our future ministry and impact in OUR PLACE OF MINISTRY here in the heart of Fort Worth.

I look forward to the day when our senior adults and median-age adults will be delivered from the narrow halls and sub-standard space in the bowels of Buildings A & B. Amen? I look forward to our Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra, as well as our other music/worship ministries, will be able to prepare in facilities that our suited for worship preparation. Amen?

**But I'm here today to call our church to address the greatest need we have in terms of facilities. Our church must provide new facilities for our preschoolers, children and youth ... and we must do so in the shortest possible time.**

Most of us pay property taxes because we understand the importance of providing an academic education for our children and students. All over our city, new schools are being built and the old ones are being renovated to provide the best place for children and students to learn. Well, our children and students' spiritual education is just as important!

So to meet the needs of future ministries to children and students, let's pray, ask God to provide, and then open our bank accounts to give generously for the next part of Open Doors ... new facilities for our preschoolers, children and students. The planning is already underway, and we should be able to launch it officially in the fall.

In fact, you can start giving now toward that great opportunity.

I'd like for us to call it "FOR THE CHILDREN ... FOR THE FUTURE." Our children and students, along with the families to which they belong are a big part of the future of our church. Let's do it ... FOR THE CHILDREN ... FOR THE FUTURE ... AND FOR THE GLORY OF THE ONE WHO SAID "LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME."

Now I've been talking about our physical place of ministry here in the heart of the city. Now I want to talk about the next component of our vision for 2006.

## **II. YOUR PLACE IN MINISTRY ... THE SPIRITUAL VOCATION TO WHICH GOD HAS CALLED US ALL**

I've said before that we can no longer just view our church as a building that is a destination point for ministry each week; the church is a body that is an origination point for multitudes of ministries.

We want each one of you to find your place in ministry. And to do that we are launching one of the most aggressive efforts to equip believers for ministry that I can ever recall. Interestingly it is called P.L.A.C.E.

The guy who has been at the heart of our planning and preparing is our Minister of Service, Bernie Hargis. Bernie. Bernie, come join me on the platform. Let's talk for a minute about this exciting new thing called P.L.A.C.E.

**So what is P.L.A.C.E.? And why is it important?**

**The five letters of that word stand for something important in the process. What do they stand for?**

**Now how will this unfold in our church? What do we need to do to get involved?**

Now you received a card with your worship folder. At the end of the service today I'm going to ask you to take what may be the very first step toward being in YOUR PLACE IN MINISTRY.

Now I, and the paid staff that I work with, realize that we have a very clear job description from the Bible. It's stated in ...

**Ephesians 4:12 - to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.**

Now let's turn our attention back to the Scriptures.

**Galatians 6:9-10 - Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

Why be in your place to serve? What's the motivation behind this? Here are some reasons:

## **1. WHY SERVE? IT HELPS OTHERS (Gal.6:9-10).**

**Galatians 6:9-10 – “Let us not become weary in doing good ... let us do good to all people...”**

When we “do good” to others, they are helped in some way.

I think of the hundreds of families in our community who were helped to provide a special Christmas for their children through the Christmas Store

I think of couples like Al and Abarra Wade who came to my office a few months ago to talk about joining our church. They talked so appreciatively of how they were “helped” to feel at home in their Sunday School class taught by Don Nilson.

I think of those evacuee families who came to our city from New Orleans who were helped by the people of our church. You gave \$65,000 last November to help a church rebuild. It looks like that we have found just the right church who is to be the recipient for this gift to help them rebuild their parsonage. We'll be presenting that gift as soon as their planning is complete.

I think about those precious boys and girls who come to our campus twice a week from George Clark Elementary School for our Fort Travis. I think about how they are helped with their studies, with their skills, and with their spiritual needs.

Why serve? Why be in your place in ministry? People are helped.

## **2. WHY SERVE? IT BENEFITS US (Gal. 6:9b).**

**Galatians 6:9b – “For at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”**

The harvest comes in the words of our Lord when we see Him one day: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” But the rewards come in the form of an immediate blessing.

**Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”**

There's no two ways about it ... serving makes you feel good. It does something to you. I remember running a chainsaw last fall down in S.E. Texas with some of the men of our church with tears flowing down my cheeks for the joy of serving.

Someone has called it “the helper's high.”

I see this on the face of a busy executive who sits across the table from me. I watch his face light up as he talks about his efforts to mentor a younger believer through Operation Multiplication.

I see this on the face of my wife Nan when she comes home absolutely exhausted on Wednesday nights. I ask her how the evening went with the Autumn Chase Apartment ministry, and her face

lights up as she talks about those precious under-resourced children she gets to love on every Wednesday night.

I see this on the face of one of our Friendship House volunteers who stops by my office to tell of the most recent of one of neighbors being helped through this caring ministry ... and her face just glows.

Friends, I want you all to experience the joy, the thrill of God using you. There's nothing like it in all the world.

### **3. WHY SERVE? IT CONNECTS US WITH OTHERS (Gal. 6:10b).**

**Galatians 6:10 - Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

A few weeks ago I slipped into the Christmas party for our student ministry workers held at the home of R.J. and Karen Holt. I walked into that house that was filled with an electricity that exists among people who serve side by side to minister to our students. There's a powerful connection that exists among people who serve together.

You'll experience this when you go on a short-term mission trip sometime this coming year. When you get off the airplane or off the bus, you hug the people you spent the last week or two with ... and you know there's a powerful connection that has occurred as you have served God together.

Now these first three reasons I've given you are great reasons ... but they are not the highest reasons or the greatest motivations to serve. The next two are!

### **4. WHY SERVE? IT PLEASES GOD (Matt.5:16a).**

Earlier we read the words of our Lord. The command of our Lord is...

**Matthew 5:16 – “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds...”**

We serve out of obedience to Christ.

Remember when Jesus surprised the disciples that evening when he took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist and knelt to wash their feet. When Jesus finished he said this:

**John 13:14-15 - Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.**

You are living in something less than total obedience to Christ if you are not actively engaged in service to others.

Why serve? Because Jesus commands us to do it.

## **5. WHY SERVE? IT BRINGS PRAISE TO GOD (Matt.5:16b).**

**Matthew 5:16 - Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**

God is exalted in the eyes of a watching world when they see His people living lives of sacrificial service.

**SONG – Scott Engle singing “The Mission”**

### **INVITATION**

As a churchgoer you have a choice to make. You can park your car in your usual spot in the church parking lot, make your way to a comfortable seat in your favorite row, watch a good service, talk with your friends, and then go home. And that choice makes for a nice, safe Sunday morning experience. Or you can throw yourself into an adventure by rolling up your sleeves, joining a team of like-minded servants, and help to build the local church God has called you to be part of .

**ILLUSTRATION** – I remember the day when as a college student some of my buddies and I were playing in a pickup basketball in the arena of our university. We were bumped from the court when the men’s basketball team came out to practice. I hung around just to watch them. The team practiced and at the end they scrimmaged. As I was standing there watching I’ll never forget when the coach came over to me and said, “We’re short a guy to make the teams even. Want to play?” And I stepped across the line from being a spectator to getting in the game. I’ll never forget it.

I’m asking you to step across the line today and into the exciting world of service.