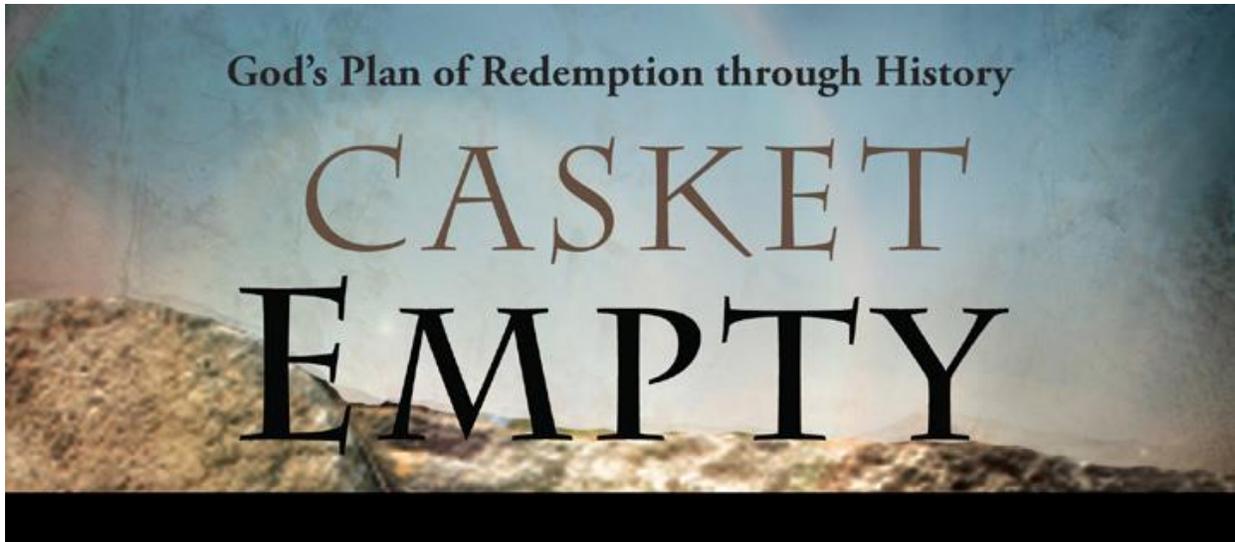


*P is for Pentecost*  
CASKET EMPTY Sermon Series  
Kenwood Baptist Church  
Pastor David Palmer  
April 15, 2018

**TEXT: Acts 13:1-3**



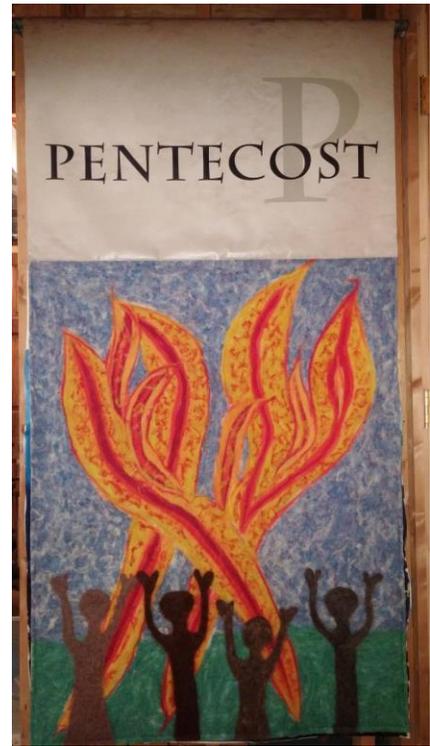
It is a privilege to open God's Word together this morning. We are in the middle of a year-long series. Who does a year-long series these days? We do, and by some reckoning, that's a short series. I have a dear friend who preached a 154-sermon series on Romans, so you might think we are moving at a breathtaking pace. But what we are trying to do this year is to see God's whole story, because when you see the big picture of Scripture, it helps us live out of that story in guiding our daily decisions; it helps us see who really has power in the universe, that Jesus Christ is the One who has been slain before the foundation of the world. We know that God's saving purpose in Christ is in view before God said, "Let there be light," and we know the ending of that story when we see glimpses of the future in Revelation 7, when there is an innumerable number of people gathered from every nation. There will not be any nation not represented. So, we know the very beginning; we know the ending, and that makes sense of our lives in between. We are using the acronym CASKET EMPTY, and we praise God for how He has used this study, this material. If you are just joining us, let me get you up to speed very quickly. CASKET EMPTY reminds us that the death and resurrection of Jesus are the center of the Scripture. CASKET takes us through the Old Testament: C is for Creation; A is for Abraham; S is for Sinai; K is for Kings; E is for Exile; T is for Temple, walking us through the Old Testament narrative. Now this spring we are looking at the New Testament, using EMPTY: E is for

Expectations, as God prepares to bring His beloved Son into the world; M is for Messiah; P is for Pentecost; T is for teaching; and Y it's for Yet-to-Come.

Last Sunday, Pastor Scott took us into the period of Pentecost. Pentecost is important because it marks the beginning of the global expansion of the kingdom of God as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the church. God brought His people out from Egypt with a mighty, outstretched arm and then met with them at the mountain in the pillar of cloud and fire fifty days later. So too, Jesus, after the second exodus out of the slavery of sin, brings His people to a place where He pours out His presence—a pillar of cloud and fire in our midst and commissions us as His people in the midst of the earth as His witnesses. The God of the Bible is on a mission. It is not the church's mission; it is God's mission, and He uses us to accomplish it. It's a staggering privilege.

As Jesus pours out the Spirit and the church grows as the gospel is shared, believers gather in local church communities, and this morning, I want us to pay close attention to this idea of the church. I want you to love the church. I want you to leave this morning loving Christ's idea of this sacred community, of this holy assembly. I want you to love it more than you do right now, so take a quick check inside your heart. Does the word *church* fill your heart with affection? Does the word *church* fill your heart with expectation and anticipation? Does the word *church* suggest to you the most important organizational entity in any given city? Does the word *church* suggest to you the primary means through which God will accomplish His mission in the world? That's where I want to move this morning.

For many of us, the word *church* has a negative associations. Sometimes we read of moral failure connected with the church. Sometimes we have suspicion of the church as though the church is some organization, but real following of Jesus takes place without organized religion. The church, as a sacred assembly of the redeemed, is the primary means through which God will reach the world, and it's God's intention, God's design, that we would gather together in holy community. Following Jesus is not designed to be accomplished alone, but it's meant to be lived out in connection and relationship with other redeemed people. The gospel, as it goes out, creates these new communities. This is a community of people that would not exist at Kenwood without the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we are here not just for our own joy, our own pleasure, our own entertainment. We are here as an instrument set apart for God's use in the



world, and we will see that this morning.

We have a short passage that hides the large impact that it has. Keep your Bible open to Acts 13. We want to focus on how the church is the instrument through which God will make His Name known in all the earth. Look at Acts 13 with me. Luke tells us that in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. In Acts 13:1, he draws our attention to the church. Some of us might get particularly interested in the city of Antioch. It is an interesting city, an important city. I don't know what your associations are with the word *Antioch*—maybe Antioch College, maybe other modern associations. The city of Antioch was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire. It had an urban core of 500,000 people. Antioch was founded about 300 BC by Alexander the Great's general Seleucus, and he named it after his father. Seleucus built many cities, 16 of them, and he named them all *Antioch*. It's a great way to honor your dad, just as Alexander built 32 cities and named them all *Alexandria*. Can you imagine? He built another city and asked, "What shall we call this one? Oh, let's just call it *Alexandria*." So, Seleucus builds 16 cities, names them all after his father Antiochus. Some of the other Antiochs have nicknames, like the city that Paul and Barnabas reach in their first missionary journey that's called *Pisidian Antioch*. It's the Antioch in Pisidia.

This Antioch, though, the main one, the largest one, had a great nickname. It was called *Antioch the Beautiful*, a nice name for a city. Antioch the Beautiful boasted all the civic institutions of Roman life: temples, theaters, a hippodrome—first century NASCAR—and an impressive street. One of the most beautiful streets of the ancient world was in Antioch. I mean, this is a street! Let me tell you about this street. It is probably the reason the city was called Antioch the Beautiful. This was a marble-paved street. You know how when you go downtown Cincinnati there is a little section that's still cobblestone still, in front of Music Hall or a few other places, and you think: "This is so cool"? This street was paved with marble, two miles long. That's pretty impressive. It gets better. On the sides of the street were sidewalks that were covered—3,200 marble columns down the side of the street. Then, every time you crossed an intersection of the street, there were vaulted stone roofs at every intersection. Can you imagine a street like that? In spite of this beautiful street, this impressive city, an important city, Luke doesn't tell us anything about the architectural details. What he does tell us is about the church there. You see, as impressive as a given city might be, as impressive as our own city might be, the most important feature of any city is the church in that city. The origin of the Church of Antioch is from Acts 11. In Acts 11:19, we read:

*"Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the Word to no one except Jews."*

This is our first mention of the city of Antioch where scattered believers traveled during the persecution, where Stephen lost his life—the first Christian martyr. Oh, how important it is for us to remember this truth that God uses suffering and hardship to expand His kingdom. We face difficulties, we face persecution, we face suffering in this world. In Acts 11, one of the outcomes of the suffering that happened, that caused Stephen his life, that caused believers to scatter and disperse, was that they reached Antioch and they started sharing the Word. The Hand of the Lord was upon them and a great number of people turned to the Lord, Luke tells us. The report of this came to the church in Jerusalem, and so they sent Barnabas down to the city of Antioch. When he got there, he was impressed, and he exhorted, or encouraged, the people. Take note of that word—Barnabas is always encouraging people, and Luke tells us a great many more people were added to the Lord. So the church of Antioch is growing. Barnabas saw the church growing there so much that he said, “I am going to need some help.”

If you try to do ministry by yourself, you're not reading the New Testament very well. Barnabas said, “We’re going to need some help. People are coming to Jesus,” and so he went to Tarsus and found Saul. He told Saul, “You had better come over here,” and so Saul came to Antioch, and in Acts 11:26 we read:

*“For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people.”*

This church is growing at Antioch and something remarkable happens here. We read in the end of Acts 11:26:

*“And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.”*

The disciples get a new name, and they are first called *Christians* in Antioch. The followers of Jesus had picked a name. There were probably some long meetings, first century Executive Council or elder board meetings, probably various proposals, probably a number of ideas on the whiteboard, maybe voting. Who knows what happened exactly? There was probably branding, a really cool logo, and we decided on “The Way.” It's going to be “The Way.” It's got visual built into it. It's got first century social media. This will work, and that is what we called ourselves. But you know, something happened in Antioch for the first time: the surrounding community looked at this gathering of believers, and they called us something. They came up with a name for us, and they said, “You know, there are all kinds of people meeting together over there. They all have different ethnic backgrounds, they have different socio-economic positions, they are different ages, they are different genders. But, you know what? All that they talk about is some Person named Christ, and so we are to call them *Christ-ians*.” That little ending, *-ian*, is the Greek noun formation pattern used to describe an ethnic group, the citizens of a particular country, or the followers of a certain person. There many of these in the New Testament: *Galatians*, the people from Galatia; *Thessalonians*, people who live there. One of my favors is the *Pamphylans*, and there are the *Judeans*, *Romans*, or *Herodians*. Adding that little ending

defines a group of people as following a particular person or demarcating an ethnic group, and their surrounding society sees the unity of the church in this shared name.

As we look at this text, there are going to be five ways that the church is united to accomplish the mission, and this is the first way: We have a shared name, and there is **unity in a shared name**. We don't have the minutes from that meeting. When the church gathered and said, "You know, "The Way" is really working, we are getting a lot of hits online, tons of first century 'likes.' It was working, and then the surrounding community said, "Let's call these people *Christians*." In some kind of meeting of church leadership, they said, "You know, if we could pick one thing for people to know us by, that's pretty good!" What do you think people say about Kenwood? I hear that it's a friendly church; I hear about the ministry; I hear a number of positive things by people who visit our church. But, wouldn't it be wonderful if what people talked about was this: "Those people are just always talking about Jesus Christ. That's the way that you can recognize them." Jesus intends to use the church as His primary means for reaching the world. There are five ways that the church is united in this small, precious text. The first one is that we are united by a shared name: *Christ-ian*. Christian, it's a wonderful word.

The second way that we see the unity of the church is right before our passage, we read that the church is **united in responding to needs in the society**. In Acts 11:27-28, we read:

*"Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius)."*

The famine during the early reign of Claudius is attested to us by Josephus and Roman historians. The first few years of Claudius' reign as Emperor were characterized by poor harvests, and in antiquity, a couple of years of poor harvests quickly take you to famine. There was great famine, so what did the church at Antioch do when there was a famine? They sacrificially determined, each one according to his ability, to send relief to their brothers living in Judea. They did so by sending it to the elders by the hand Barnabas and Saul. The church was united, not just with the name Christian, but they put their faith in Christ into action. They did not create a false division between sharing the gospel and meeting real needs of people. They said: "Because we are believers in Christ and a portion of the body is suffering over there, I am going do without in order to help my brother or sister in need," and they combined their resources and sent them generously. They were united in name, number one; they were united in a shared response to needs, number two.

The third way is that they were **united by a shared leadership of the church**. This is really important. Luke tells us that at the church there were prophets and teachers. Notice that those are not singular terms, but plural terms: prophets and teachers, which can also be a term that is

used for a pastor or even elder, but there is a group. The exciting thing about this group is that we find out who they were, and these names are electrifying. Look with me at the names, the leadership team that's guiding the church in Antioch. We read of five individuals: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul. These names show us something very powerful about the unity of the church. Barnabas is a Levite from Cyprus, and Barnabas is Aramaic. "Bar" means "son," and "abas" means "one who encourages or gives comfort." It was a nickname, and this man was always encouraging or exhorting people and building them up. His name, the nickname, was "call this one a *son of encouragement*." Have you ever been around someone who has that gift? I love people like that. You get around them and you feel encouraged and motivated and lifted up in Christ. Wherever we see Barnabas in the New Testament, he is encouraging people, speaking a word of life, not a word of discouragement. The gift of discouragement doesn't make any lists in the New Testament. That doesn't come from the Holy Spirit. When someone speaks a word that discourages you, they are not speaking from the Spirit because the Holy Spirit is an encourager, an empowerer. So notice, the first one is Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus with an Aramaic nickname.

The second leadership team member is named Simeon, and he also has a nickname. His nickname is *Niger*, which is just transliterated into Greek from Latin. Niger, In Latin, means *black*. That's why the countries of Niger or Nigeria were named that way because of the dark skin of the people who live there. The country of Sudan is named Sudan because the Arabic noun *sudan* means dark skinned or black. So Simeon, who has a Hebrew name, recalls the patriarch Simon. He's nicknamed *dark skin*, probably from Africa. Lucius, the third person, is a Latin name that means *light*, and we're told that he is from Cyrene, which is in North Africa. Are you getting the picture? You've got son of Mr. Encouragement from Cyprus; you've got a brother from Africa who is dark skinned; you've got another brother from North Africa.

My favorite is this fourth one. We sort of have to have Saul as our favorite, but this for me, number four, is my favorite. This man is named Manaen, and Manaen reflects the Hebrew name Menahem, which means *comforter*. We are told something extraordinary about him. The ESV renders this as that he was a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch. Other translations say he was a close friend. What Luke literally says is that Manaen grew up with Herod the tetrarch. In Greek, it says he was raised together with him. Herod the Tetrarch is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. Herod Antipas was raised or brought up and educated in Rome. Herod the Great took provision for his sons to be educated in Rome among the cultural elites. He was sent to Rome and prepared for future leadership of the society. Herod Antipas was born about 21 BC, and then after his father Herod the Great died, he was named tetrarch of Galilee, and he served in that capacity for over 40 years. He started as tetrarch of Galilee when he was 17. I don't know what you were doing when you were 17. That's not what I was

doing. But this Herod Antipas, as he grows, founds a city and names it after Tiberias. He begins to lead as pagan kings and leaders do, benefiting himself. He does whatever he wants to do. John the Baptist censures him for an unlawful marriage, and he executes John the Baptist. This is the Herod that Jesus calls “that fox.” This is the Herod who wants to see Jesus during His trial because he had heard that Jesus worked miracles and he was hoping to see one. When Jesus refused to perform a trick for Herod, Herod clothed Him in a purple garment and mocked Him and sent Him back to Pilate. The most remarkable thing is that one of his best friends has become a Christian. Do you believe that? One of Herod Antipas' best friends, Manaen, who grew up with him, went to school with him, was one of his closest friends has become a Christian! Not only has he become a Christian, he is a leader in the church of Antioch. Do you want to set any limits on what Jesus Christ can do? I don't. He can do anything, and that's why Manaen is my favorite in this list. Jesus reaches out and saves this man and turns him into a leader in the church.

Lastly, we hear of Saul. His Hebrew name recalls Israel's first king; his Roman name Paul, which means *small*, conceals the large role that Jesus had assigned for him. The church is united in this shared leadership that is of very different types of people from different places, and the unity of the church is on display in this shared leadership team.

The fourth way that we see the unity of the church is in Acts 13:2. We read:

*“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”*

They were united **by a regular practice of gathering for worship** that also involves fasting, self-denial, a spiritual discipline. The gathering together regularly for worship unites the church. This time together binds us together. We hear the Lord. As great as Sunday School is, it's not the same as gathering together in the sanctuary. If you have to make a choice, this is the gathering that you have to be in because this is where the church is united. We all hear the Lord speak to us. It doesn't matter who's preaching. We should never think, “Well, I don't know if I want to go.” This is the gathering where we worship God, where we hear from His Word together, where we are equipped and empowered, and as the church is united together in worship, it is in that setting that the Holy Spirit speaks. As the people are gathered together in worship, the Holy Spirit speaks. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in worship when we are gathered together, and as the church is gathered, the Spirit of God speaks and says: *“Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”* We are not told everyone heard that at the same time or if one of the prophets in the community just spoke that out, hearing from the Lord. However it was articulated and heard, the community heard that in the context of the gathering for worship, and the Spirit spoke and said, “Set apart for Me. . .” This is the language

of holiness. Holiness means *to be set apart*. It doesn't mean to be set apart in the sense of withdrawing, it means to be set apart as reserved for God's use. To be holy doesn't mean to be distant from people; it means to be moved from this sphere of everyday, ordinary use to be moved over to God's use. All of God's people are called this in Leviticus 20:26:

*"You are to be holy to Me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own."*

We become holy to God by being in proximity to God, and it means to be reserved for His use in the world. The Lord says this of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5:

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."*

Here, the Holy Spirit speaks and says of Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:

*"Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

He is saying: "I am taking these two and I want you to reserve them or consecrate them for My special use, for My purpose in the world." This is something to which all of us are called to: to belong to God; to be for His use. The particulars may differ, but all of us share in this holiness. Paul never forgot this moment. After his first missionary journey, after he had come back to Antioch, he wrote a letter to the Galatians, the region where he had gone. In Galatians 1:15-16, when he talks about his own story, he describes the moment in this way:

*"But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the [nations]."*

He never forgot this moment, to be moved over for God's use. At the end of the second missionary journey, he wrote Romans. Twenty-five years into serving Jesus, he still remembers this moment and uses this language. He introduces himself in Romans 1:1 as:

*"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,"*

"Set apart" means holy, consecrated, and again, don't think of holiness as something that keeps you back from others. Holiness is devoting yourself to God's purpose, God's cause, God's mission.

We recognize a *fifth way* of unity of the church and how they responded to that: **When the Holy Spirit speaks, God's people listen.** The Holy Spirit said to set these men apart, and so the gathered church did that. In Acts 13:3, we read:

*"So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."*

This was an act of consecration that recalls the ordination of the priesthood in Leviticus 8. It's an act of setting apart these men that we are declaring holy, reserved, appointed for God's use

in the world in this specific way, and the great thing is they didn't just say "God bless you, we will see you on that Great Day." They prayed for them, and they sent them off. The commissioned them, they supported them. In every missionary journey Paul continued to come back to this city, to this church, and share the great things that God had done. We have a team from Kenwood that is in Ecuador this morning. We have a team that is preparing to go to Beirut, Lebanon next month, but we have an entire community that is being called and consecrated, set apart, reserved for God's use in the world. This is true for all of us.

Let me apply this to us in three ways.

Number one. The period of Pentecost means that ***Jesus extends His kingdom throughout the earth and will use the church to accomplish it.*** That means that we need to be part of the church. It means that the church is the means. There is no other plan. God wants to use us, not as individuals, but as a community. I want to give a plug for joining the church. You know there are no bleacher seats in the kingdom. There are no \$10 tickets in the kingdom of God, and if you have been here for a while, and this is where you are growing, this is where you are being fed, then you should join the church. Some churches are down on membership: "Oh, who cares about that?" The early church knew how many people were there. They knew the names of the people who were there. It's hard to pastor people who say, "Well, I'll just come or go, but if I find something else I like better, I'll just go there." There are a lot of choices in Cincinnati, don't get me wrong. There are 2500 churches in Cincinnati. You would think with that number of churches, there wouldn't be any non-Christians, and yet there is tons to do, both locally and globally. So, if you've never joined the church, talk to Pastor Scott and he will help you to do that. This is the means, and if you're here, praise God. He has work for us to do.

Number two. I want to challenge all of us to ***zealously promote the unity of the church,*** because we can't do the job God has given if the church isn't united. The ways that we see the unity of the church in our passage are that we need to guard and protect and encourage. I'm not excited about adding adjectives to the name *Christian*. I like the word *Christian*. I like that it was given to us by our community, but it is trendy to come up with all kinds of new names, new brands. We don't really have a brand. We are following Jesus Christ, and so we are *Christians*. We have a shared name. We have needs that we see around us that we are to respond together in meeting. We have shared leadership in the church, and we are seeking to grow even stronger in this way. We guard the unity of the church by being here for worship. There are all kinds of sociological shifts going on in our world: people are busy; people are distracted. I talked with a friend recently who works at an auto body shop, and I said, "What kind of changes have you seen in the world in the last couple of years?" He said, "You wouldn't believe how many rear end collisions there are now. I think people aren't paying attention when they're driving." That's an interesting change. What's an interesting change for church is people who

say, "I'm really active in church now. I go to church twice a month. Church is really important to me. I'm there twice a month!" So, be here. It matters. Is there anywhere else that the Holy Spirit will speak? He is going to speak here, and we need to prepare our hearts for that. We need to be those that recognize and support the callings and giftedness of others, and that binds us together.

This past week, Pastor Scott, Pastor Fred, and I had the chance to get a glimpse at the church a little bit larger than just Kenwood. It's always encouraging to see. The three of us went to the Together for the Gospel Conference. There were 12,000 pastors and church leaders in a stadium in Louisville, Kentucky. One of my favorite parts was just hearing them sing. The worship team was one man with a piano. There were lots of hymns and then 12,000 pastors and church leaders singing. I mean it was powerful, great teaching, and we saw the Body of Christ. The first night we were in the stadium, and this photo I took gives you a sense of the number of people.



Then, I get this text message from someone: "Hey, are you here?" "I'm here." "Where are you?" "I'm here in this section." I turn around and it's John Scheller. Some of you know John. He was acting in the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company and started visiting Kenwood. He came to faith in Jesus Christ at Kenwood, was baptized here. He met his wife, who was in medical school. She was baptized here and they moved to Kansas City. They've gone through many joys and sorrows. They had a son whom they lost. They walked through that with their eyes fixed on the Lord. John is not acting anymore. He enrolled in seminary, finished seminary, and he's serving in his church. This community, Kenwood, gave him the first opportunity to recognize those gifts as he helped with the student ministry. While we were standing there worshipping, John got an email, and he had just gotten accepted into a PhD program in Bible to keep learning and serving. I think that's really cool.



We got into the elevator leaving the session, and as we got into the elevator, there's a man who is operating elevator. That's when you're in a crowded event—when somebody has to operate the elevator. There were three floors total! We were ready to leave, and he pushed the wrong

button. There were three buttons and he pushed the wrong button! I had a moment where maybe somebody with the gift of discouragement was by me or something, and I thought, "Oh, man, we're going to the wrong floor." Well, right before I left the big assembly, I had emailed



another person from our young adult ministry at Kenwood. He had worked at GE, quit his job as an executive at GE, and is going into ministry. I had emailed him and asked if he was there. So, we go to the wrong floor, and there were 12,000 people streaming out of the stadium. The elevator doors open, and he was standing right there! How you do that? What do you do when that happens? You take a picture, so here are

Scott, Mark Kiefer, and I. God is at work in the world. Guard to protect the unity of the church.

Number three, and we will close with this. ***We are all called to be set apart for God special use.*** All of us. That means that we belong to God. That means that we are available for His purpose. It means that the church that gathers for worship on Sunday is united, filled with the Spirit, hears from God, and then goes out from here and lives as the church in the city all week. This past week also had some really difficult and intense things that happened in our life together. We said goodbye to Harvey Whitney as heaven said hello to him. We lost a young man in our city through a tragic accident, and members of our church family were real close by for that. We've been praying for them for how God might use them. We saw evidence of how God was even using that to stir hearts of people to Himself, because whenever we have great loss, whatever the circumstances, we trust God even when we are not sure how it all works out. We do know the ending, and we know that God sometimes can use even things as hard is that to remind all of us of our mortality.

We also have the opportunity this week to reach out to our city, to our families, to our city on campus with the Veritas Forum event, with the Vitales at Kenwood. It's a chance for us to be the church. I want to challenge each of you to use your digital networks and your personal networks, whatever your preferred method is, to invite five people to one or both of these. These should be powerful times of God's presence, and they are an expression of the church active in the world, because the church is God's primary means through which the world will be evangelized. Let's pray and consecrate ourselves for His use.

Lord God Almighty, we worship You and we praise You. We thank You this morning for a short text that gives us a large view of Your church in the world. Lord, we pray that You would help us to be set apart for Your use in the world. Lord, we pray that You would bind us together with a

shared name, with a shared response to needs under shared leadership, a shared gathering, a shared recognition of gifts. Lord, use us this week as Your body, Your real body. It is as though You are here through us. Lord, there is a hurting world, a questioning world. There are great needs among our neighbors and friends, and there are some that don't even have the right questions that they are asking. Lord God Almighty, we pray that we might be consecrated, set apart that we would be Your man, Your woman, Your child in our spheres. Use us this week, Lord, to point others to You. Lord, You have shown us the beginning. You have shown us clearly the end. Oh, Lord, You know the end from the beginning and how to get us there. Use us for Your glory, we pray.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.