

Abundance: Everyone, Everyday, Everything

Acts 2:22-47

Intro:

[Daniel] Peace be with you (and also with you)! Welcome to Sojourn. My name is Pastor Daniel Montgomery. *[Jamaal - And my name is Pastor Jamaal Williams]*. In some regards this is a typical service, and in some regards it's not so typical. We're going to be preaching through Acts 2, but we're going to team teach. This is round 3. We're amped and excited. We don't have any time constraints so we may go straight into football and crush all of your idols. No we won't go forever. We'll be working through Acts 2 and we want to tease out some vision that the Lord has laid upon our hearts. It's a vision, if we could encapsulate it in one word, it would be a vision of abundance. And we believe God is calling us to operate differently.

All of our phones function within an operating system. Any iPhone people out there? *[Jamaal - Any Android people out there?]* So the division begins. *[Jamaal - I would get an iPhone but I have twins on the way]* Alright, let's focus on what we have in common and that is that we all need operating systems. We need a way to function in this world. We all operate out of unspoken and unconscious principles by which we view the world. Some call this your worldview or the lenses, the optics, by which you view reality. They're your thoughts and intentions, how you see yourself, God, and others.

Christians should be the most eager to examine their assumptions about this world.

We should ask ourselves, "Are my assumptions about this world in line with the Scriptures?"

We should be the first to consider how we react in situations and circumstances and ask, "Is this in line with the Gospel?" We should look at our thinking, feeling and being and ask, "Is this flowing in the movement of God's mission."

And we see in Acts 2 that God puts before us an abundant Savior and abundant mission. And it calls us to ask and answer, "Am I living out of abundance or out of scarcity and deficit?" And the reality is abundance is not a matter of what you have or don't have. That's prosperity. It's a matter of who we are and what we share in Christ Jesus. So here are a few images to capture your imagination. This is where we are going over the next several weeks and several months. We're seeking to reframe our vision.

The first image is the image of the harvest. And Jesus says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, pray that the Lord would send workers into the harvest." And that's our prayer. Our prayer is that we would move to be a people who make declarations of the impossibility. That we would live by faith in our home, with our children, and as a church.

The second image is inspired by many of you who were a part of the woodcuts that have taken place. If you turn around and look at the Stations of the Cross we have a new expression here and in the stations we are getting in that theme and looking at Jesus' journey to the cross. And we decided to use that imagery and that aesthetic to lay forth the design. The final image of abundance is you. You are the vision of Sojourn Community Church. Ordinary people like you and me being transformed by the power of the Gospel. So we need to ask ourselves questions in relation to where we are in terms of abundance.

[Jamaal] And some of the questions we want to ask are:

- 1) What is your operating system?
- 2) Are you living out of the abundance you have in Christ?
- 3) Are you full of hope or fear?
- 4) Is your operating system user friendly?

And the truth is as we're talking about this operating system we want to acknowledge the reality. We are born with this operating system. It takes the Holy Spirit to break through our old habits, thoughts, the way we are wired, to get us into a new perspective where we can say, "I'm not living with scarcity or fear but with hope. I'm living out of faith and the life of abundance."

[Daniel] This is the shift from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The Old Testament sets before us an old covenant where Jeremiah 31 and 33 say that God has given us his law on tablets of stone, but Jeremiah prophesied of a day when God's law and purposes would be written on our hearts. And that's the New Covenant reality that in Christ we are given the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit changes us from the inside out.

What we are setting before you today with the Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, and Burning with Movement is not something we do, it's something we've been given and it's who we are in Christ.

[Jamaal] Stand to your feet for Acts 2:22-24. And we're going to unpack this entire chapter but we'll start off with these three verses and let the drama unfold. ²² *"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was IMPOSSIBLE for death to keep its hold on him. (Acts 2:22-24)*

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

[Prayer]

BREAKING BARRIERS

So here in Acts 2 we pick up in verse 22 and we have Peter proclaiming, preaching the good news to those before him. And we see and know the Holy Spirit has already come and baptized those who were gathered together on Pentecost in a marvelous way and now Peter's heart is on fire and he has a message to proclaim about an abundant Jesus. We see in verse 22 that Peter says we have an abundant life in Christ.

²² *"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know (v. 22).*

Then Peter declares the great exchange in Christ:

²³ *This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross (v. 23).*

Peter says we not only have an abundant Jesus and an abundant Savior, but that there has been a great exchange. That Jesus has taken our death and given us his resurrected life:

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. [And the Good News ...]

What wonderful language and good news!

²⁵ *David said about him: "I saw the Lord always before me. [Again Peter goes to the Psalms where we are promised an Abundant Savior]*

*Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.*

²⁶ *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,*

²⁷ *because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.*

²⁸ *You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'*

²⁹ *"Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.*

Peter's passionate proclamation is all about the death and resurrection of Jesus. And it is rooted in historicity – the prophets and the Psalms. I can just imagine Peter preaching this message to thousands with his heart aflame by the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then he gets to a point where he turns and gives them a dose of reality that they needed and we need as well.

⁴⁰ *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*

And then he tells them, "Hey, you're the cause of Christ's death." The truth is we are too.

²³ *"This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; [but here's our part] and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (v. 23)*

It is important that we realize what's going on here. Peter says "you put Christ to death." Not only our personal sin, that we nailed Jesus to the cross. Our sin, our greed, our lust, our lying, our cheating – it nailed Jesus to the cross, but also our lack of love for others. The way we treat each other puts Jesus on the cross. It nailed him to that cross.

So often when we talk about breaking barriers or reconciliation. We only focus on the vertical relationship with God and we fail to see the horizontal importance as well. The Lord calls us to love him with all of our hearts, soul, and mind, but he also calls to love our neighbor as ourselves. And the Lord is calling his church to step into the otherness, to step into the reconciliation with each other.

Paul writes in a letter what Peter declared in a sermon. In Ephesians 2, we read...

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. (Ephesians 2:14, 15-16).

God has broken down the wall of hostility. Rodney King asked the question 20 years ago: "Can't we all just get along." And the church is the one group on the earth that says we can because of Christ. The wall has been torn down, and what God has torn down we dare not build back up.

And then one chapter later Paul writes:

² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

[Daniel] The language of Gentile and Jew is a bit foreign to us. The essence of what Paul is saying is there was a barrier of conflict and hostility that no longer exists. There's no longer insider and outsider regarding the promise of God. We have the same offer, the same promise, the same confession and we stand on equal ground. And this isn't just about equality. This is the reality that the two who were divided by hostility are now one in Christ Jesus. This oneness permeates our relationships. It brings oneness between male and female, young and old, rich and poor, black and white, abled and disabled, urban and suburban.

The message here is that the differences in our world that bring deep division and hostility no longer exist in Christ Jesus. And we don't make this happen. Here's the wonderful word regarding this vision: We don't do anything. God does it all. We simply respond and claim His promises. We don't break barriers, God breaks barriers.

If this was a matter of our cultural sensitivity or finesse in relationships, we would be hopeless. But we have a hope because of what Christ has done for us. He has broken the barrier of hostility.

[Jamaal] I was about two weeks in to preaching at Sojourn and we were doing a series on the book of Proverbs and I preached a sermon on justice. And we have a great example of the Lord breaking barriers. He gets in people's hearts and makes changes that we can't change and does things we can't do. After the service a gentleman came up to me, and he said, "Pastor Jamaal here's a testimony for you. My Grandmother came today and she really struggles with racism. And I opened the bulletin and saw that you were preaching and I said, 'uhoh'. And I saw not only that you were preaching, but that you were preaching on Biblical justice and it was a double 'uhoh'. But the Lord did something special to my Grandmother on that day. He actually sent me an email and these are his words to show the barrier the Lord broke in her heart:

"To this day, every time I call and talk to my Grandma, she always asks: "How is your new pastor doing?" as she reiterates the impact that one sermon had on her. In fact, when she went back home she called all of her friends to tell them about Pastor Jamaal's sermon. The transformation is not over yet, there are still subtle racist sentiments that creep up occasionally in our conversations, but by God's grace, and His grace alone, my Grandma's heart is softening! No tradition has steeped too long, no sight has dimmed too dark, no hole has gaped too wide, that cannot be overturned by the power of the Gospel."

[Daniel] Pauls says in 2 Corinthians, "All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us this ministry of reconciliation." So this call to break barriers comes from God. And this ministry of reconciliation comes from God. So, what we need to see is that this isn't something we can achieve. It's something we receive by faith, it's by grace. This is the only way we can pull this off. We do it by grace, every day, moment by moment. Because if you haven't noticed, there are some differences between Pastor Jamaal and myself.

Jamaal: Just a few. I was born in inner city Chicago.

Daniel: I was born in Orange County, California.

Jamaal: I grew up listening to Tupac, Biggy, and Jay Z.

Daniel: I grew up listening to Def Leppard, Guns N Roses, and Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Jamaal: Two out of three of those people, I have no idea who they are. My favorite restaurant Is Bravos Italiano.

Daniel: My favorite is Kashmir right around the corner, an Indian restaurant.

Jamaal: I am a deep internal processor.

Daniel: I am not. Im a verbal processor.

Jamaal: I'm a second generation preacher.

Daniel: I grew up fatherless.

Jamaal: I'm a young emergent leader.

Daniel: I am a wise, wise old leader.

Jamaal: Here is the big one. I'm black.

Daniel: And I'm not.

[Daniel] So, often these divisions or these differences, they bring deep division. And in the church we can say no, we have oneness in Christ. Oneness permeates our relationship. So we can celebrate the differences in Him. Paul says, "all this is from God who reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." So, this ministry of reconciliation can be captured in this language of building bridges. That's the best way to understand. God has built a bridge for us in Christ Jesus and he's build bridges of faith to one another and to those outside the church. And we are called to walk across them by faith. Picking up in verse 40, Luke writes in Acts chapter 2, "With many other words, he warned them, and he pleaded with them, save yourselves from the corrupt generation. Those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3000 were added to their number that day."

So here is a picture of the church, new born church in the first century. The church is born by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the proclamation of God's word. Pastor Jamaal and I have put together and acronym. And it's an acronym through which hopefully we can wrap our minds and our hearts around this idea of reconciliation. Because when we speak of reconciliation, so often we are listening to the cues of this world and the grammar of this world. We want to challenge you to consider, "what does biblical reconciliation look like and what does it mean to walk in biblical reconciliation. So the acronym is BRIDGES. So, B stands for Building in to one another. Again, look at Acts chapter 42,

⁴² *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship (v. 42).*

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts (v. 46)

Notice a few words here, notice devoted, there was a deep commitment, that they were glad, they were happy fellowship. Often times Christians gather and you think that God would have put Clorox in their coffee. They just have that sour look on their face and it's just like, they think the sadder you are, the holier you are. The fact is that God is calling us to experience happiness and joy in him. How about Sincere, the people were marked by a deep authenticity and sincerity, and this resulted in fellowship. The term fellowship in Greek is Koinonia. The best way to understand Koinonia is, "A common contribution", it was a common contribution. So the idea here is: Everyone was offering what they had in Christ Jesus. Everyone realized they had something to offer in Christ. And that is the reality for us here. That God is calling us to offer up what we have. He is calling us to contribute.

Many of you gather, and you're like "I don't know if I belong, I don't know if I fit here." I want to tell you that the best way to gain clarity regarding your fit and your belonging in this church is to contribute. And you're like "Well, I don't have anything to offer" Yes you do! Because we're not talking about prosperity. We're not talking about anything you have or don't have. We're talking about who we are and how we share who we are in Christ Jesus. We are to give of ourselves to share our lives with one another. That's fellowship, it's a deep fellowship marked by joy. The R is for Reconciliation for all. What I want you to notice in verses 42-47 is that every verse speaks to this deep reconciliation. They, verse 42, devoted themselves. Verse 43, "Everyone was filled". Verse 44, "All the believers were together and had everything in common." Verse 45, "They sold property and possession to give to anyone who had need. Verse 46, "Every day they continued to meet together." Verse 47, "Praising God and enjoying the favor of all people."

[Jamaal] When we talk about reconciliation, what we're saying is "We want to be people that are hospitable" And hospitality says that welcome you. We also want to be a people that sets and atmosphere that screams solidarity. And that means that we stand with you. As well as mutuality. Thus an attitude that says "we need you". We want when people come to Sojourn Community Church, whether it's our community group or our large gathering, or our classroom, there to be sense that, "I belong here, you belong here. Not for anything that we have done but because of what Christ has done for us"

[Daniel] In no way is there a greater expression than in gatherings like this. So we want gatherings like this to be marked by inclusive worship. We want God to bring together and cultivate by his grace, in midst of us, a multicultural community, marked by multicultural worship. Again, look at this passage, we see inclusive worship. “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts, they broke bread in their homes and they ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” So here is the deal, building bridges requires courage. Because it is a call to live in tension. And many of us don’t like tension. We choose comfort over living courageously in the tension that God’s put before us. But there is tension, we see the tension that they gathered formally in the temple courts and informally in their homes. We see tension in the expression of emotion. There was reverence and they were filled with awe and there was a sense of joy. And so in the same way, our services should be marked by tension. One of the tensions we commonly wrestle with is that tension between confession and celebration.

Should our services be a place where we are like “Oh, no, I’m a ruined sinner and there are injustices in this world.” Or should it be a place where we’re saying, “Praise the Lord, I have a reason to give joy to one another and to the Lord.” Which one is it? It’s both and we need to move beyond our binary either/or thinking and become both and Christians. So this is an example of a tension. Weekly we are saying, let’s pump up praise, let’s go for the joy. Why? Because many of us week in and week out were suffering. You’re having a hard time paying your bills. You’re having a hard time with your children. And if there should be one place where there’s joy, hopefully it’s in this place. And yet at the same times as a church, we’re saying “We want to be people that weeps with those who weep. We want to be people that are quick to acknowledge the injustices in this room and the injustices on the streets that we inhabit. So, that is a tension that that we live in. It is something we bring together as the church. So the I for inclusive worship and the D is for devoted to the word because we want all of this to be governed by the word. Verse 42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.”

So the apostles teaching is what we have in the scriptures, is what we have in our bibles. Here this, it’s the word of God, and we want to be a people. The backbone of a healthy body in Christ is a bible-believing people. And we want to be known by being a bible believing church but in some ways, that’s just the beginning, because a bible-believing church should result in a bible-living church. Not just with a bunch of people with a bunch of bible knowledge in their heads asking to feed me more but a people who are eager to do all that Jesus commanded. A people eager to apply the word of God to their lives. And we want this to be something that stirs a deep hunger in them. Peter says this, Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:2-3). Like little babes feeding from their mothers. We have a lot of nursing mothers around here. We should be like little babes in Christ, eager for our mothers milk. Eager for the Father’s work. And this is governed or guided by the Spirit. That’s what the G is for. The G is for guided by the Spirit. Again we read,

³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear (vv. 32-33).

We need to be a people that are governed by the Word and empowered by God’s spirit.

[Jamaal] And we’ve, pretty much all in some way or another, experienced that either specializes either in bible where you go and this is bible, bible, bible but you leave and it’s not a lot of Spirit and there’s no inspiration. Or the other way where it’s inspiration, inspiration and spirit but you leave and you’re saying, “Man there wasn’t a lot of Word.” As a church, we’re seeking to live in that tension between the Word of God and the Spirit of God. That means, in the Word of God we are focusing on truth, but we’re also focusing on making room for the spirit to listen and to respond. We want to be informed minds but also inflamed hearts. We want to be Word driven as well as spirit driven.

[Daniel] We want to be a people that are about biblical revelation and an unapologetic spirit filled inspiration. That’s what we want to be as a church. That’s the kind of church we long to be. And the sign of life that you experience in the spirit of God, that should be a concern. The sign of life that you’re experiencing in the Word of God is, “Do you hunger for the Word of God?” It’s so clear in regeneration and new life in the life of a Christian because when you open up the scriptures, they’re responsive, and they’re reacting. And it’s a sign of death when you open up the Scriptures and it’s like a heart of stone, and they fail to respond. A sign of life is that you’re hungry for the Word of God. I thank the Lord for your eagerness. And it’s something we take great joy and pride in, that you are so eager to come under conviction. That you want us to preach until it hurts. That you don’t want to just be inspired, you don’t want to hear sentimental thoughts but you want to come under conviction. And that’s our desire, to be men who preach to people who want to come under conviction. Do you hunger for the Word of God?

Second would be: Do you hunger for God’s people? You know, the dude that’s like “Well I don’t need to go to church because I can worship God in my underwear.” Well, I question his salvation. Because John tells us in first John that “he who says he loves God but hates his brother, is a liar and the truth of God does not reside in him. So a sign of life is that we love God’s people and we long to be with God’s people.

The third sign of life would be: Do you hunger for God's mission? There should be no need to market or manipulate the people of God to do the mission of God. It's calling people to get in line with the desires of your heart. God has set before us an adventure that's far greater than any adventure in this world because it includes everything. They call for the transformation of all things. This results in empowered witness. That's the E, Empowered witness.

⁴⁷ Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (v. 47)

Now once again, when we speak of witnessing, or witness, this is a tension we live in. Because should we be a community that's about community or about cause? Is church all about discipleship or is it all about evangelism? Which one is it? Yes, right! I love it when I meet with the pastors here at Sojourn and I'll say, "Which one are we emphasizing more?" And the best is when the room is split. And that's what I'm going for, that's what I'm praying for. Half the elders are like, we're putting way too much emphasis on community and the other group is saying, "Dude we're just too much outside the walls of this church." And I'm like "amen." Because that's not division, that's tension. That's how tension manifests itself.

In people bringing different desires and different contributions and it's a tension that typically resolves in divisions when churches are started. You have the church that is the deep church, and then you have the church that's the go church, where everyone is getting saved. I want to be a church that lives in the tension. For many years, we were known as the deep church. People were like, "I got saved at this church and then I came to Sojourn but it was too much, I had to go back to that church for a while and grow up a little. Then I came to Sojourn and said, "This is what I needed." I took that as an endowment. I want us to be a church that reaches insiders and outsiders, babes in Christ and the mature in Christ and lives in the tension.

The S is for "Sacrificial Stewardship and Service". And this bleeds through this passage:

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need (vv. 44-45).

Stewardship is rooted in the fact that God owns it all. Like, your stuff, your clothes, your car, your home, your comic books, your 401K, that's all God's. You were bought with a price. And we're just trustees, we're managers, and one day we're going to have to give an account for how we've used all our stuff. And the Christian wants to use his stuff for the glory of God. We want to honor God with the way we spend, the way we save, and the way we give. And the mark of a movement in the church is this sacrificial stewardship and service. The emperor Julian writing in the 4th century, he was really frustrated with the 4th century church. And he actually didn't have a category for them because he knew they didn't worship the Roman God's and so his only category for that was, "They must be atheist." Here is what he says,

"Atheism [i.e. Christian faith] has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them." -4th Century, Emperor Julian.

God, make us that kind of church! That doesn't settle for just where we're at but is eager and full of people that are like "Hey, we're willing to go to the forgotten places and the forgotten people. We want to go to the least of these because we know that God is there and He's meeting us there among the least of these." When we first purchased our facility, the 930, it was our previous facility. One of our prayers and desires is that we would be a church that if we ever left, people would weep. And it just took a few years, and there was a lot of hate because we would do music shows and we'd still preach God's word and people were confused. They were like "You're cool, but you're not." And there was even this article in Leo Magazine and it outed. It came right in the spring and said, "Sojourn, a progressive church that thinks being gay is a sin." And it was like, "ugh, we hate you."

What was interesting was, in the article, they quoted someone saying: I hate what they believe, but I'm so thankful they're here." And we just took that as a compliment because we're like, "Hey, we're not God's PR. We've just experienced something and we're called to be faithful to what we've experienced." But they love that we're here. And that was the same desire when we moved to St. Vincent's. The pastors were concerned that we would be a faithful presence. I had many of the pastors say, I don't know if we're ready for this shift. And by the grace of God, God made us ready and he's grown us up and he's established presence through us. And in this neighborhood, we're weaving into the fabric of Shelby Park and Smoketown and other neighborhoods that surround this place.

[Jamaal] There is a story in church history of a young pastor who went to a seasoned saint and asked for advice and this is what he had to say. He said, "Pastor, according as I am able I keep my little rule and my little fast, my prayer, my meditation, contemplative silence. And according, as I am able I strive to cleanse my heart of thoughts. Now what more should I do?" And the seasoned pastor rose up and replied, stretching his hands out to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire, and he said "Why not become fire?" And that's what we are saying as a church! Why not become fire... become a movement that's burning with fire? And we see that in the text in Acts chapter 2 46-47 "... with glad and sincere hearts! With burning hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all people, the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

So there is this picture of them gathering together and doing what this acronym says, they are building this BRIDGE, the Holy Spirit is moving in... and is at work. And as a result people are being saved by the multitude. There is this fire burning that is similar to what we read in Jeremiah 20: 9. Jeremiah said "But if I say, I will not mention his word or speak any more in his name, his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shed up in my bones. I'm weary of holding it in and indeed I cannot, and we want to be a community of people that is multi-cultural, multi-generational, that is burning with fire because of the holy spirit indwelling us, and because we have received the very grace of God.

So here is a question for you. Are you burning with fire or are you burnt out? Are you burning up with joy and thanksgiving because of what God has done in you and through you and for you? Or are you burnt out? And we want to point you back to this passage in scripture and point you back to these things that scripture calls us to as Christians, look to the heavens and say, "LORD! Make me on fire! Set me ablaze!" And Acts 6:7 we read in the word of God, "Increase! And the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly!" In Acts 12:24, "But the word of God grew and multiplied!" In Acts 19:20, "So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing!"

And that's what we want as a people, as a church. We want the word of God to grow mightily! We want it to spread like wildfire in all that we say and all that we do. When God send his holy fire, the church grows and it spreads like crazy! And this wasn't just a one-time deal! This was a way of life. That's what we read in verse 36. It says, "...every day the church was being the church! And everyone was filled with awe!" And that's our definition of a burning movement. It is the spirit filling everyone and everything, everywhere. It is God having his way with his people, it is us praying to the Lord, fill us! Fill us up!

[Daniel] That's our prayer, everyone, every day, everywhere. Say that! Everyone, every day, everywhere! I mean, that is the essence. Look at Ephesians 1:22, "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be the head over everything for the church which is his body, the fullness of him, who fills everything in every way." It's not just out there! It's saying through us, the church, God in Christ fills everyone in every way! Everywhere!

We're just claiming what God has given us in Christ Jesus. We want to see this begin here! We want to see this spread out through the neighborhoods! We want to see this among university students, we want to see this in our homes! We want to see men and women in the marketplace move beyond just the grind and treadmill, working day in and day out, and catch a bigger kingdom vision. That transforms the way you do your work, that transforms a way you do your school. And transforms the way you do church because you see that church, we are an embassy in foreign territory. And we are in ambassadors of Christ. We have a message. It means what we do matters. But it matters even more in Christ Jesus. SO, we know this is really big. We know you're like, "alright, uh, I don't know about this." And we want you to strike the match! We believe God's given us the fuel in Christ Jesus, but pastor, break it down. Give us the ARC.

[Jamaal] The ARC, that's right. So, here is some application. What do we do with this vision? The first thing is, AWARENESS. As a church we call on our members to grow in awareness. We have a new website that is going to be launched here in a couple of weeks. It's going to be full of resources on how you grow as the multicultural, multigenerational church and people. And I want to encourage you to go to that website regularly and to read the articles, to read the recommendations, to see the vision, and also to make other people aware of what we are trying to do as the church.

There R is for RELATIONSHIPS! We want to encourage you to press into people. And to get to know people who don't look like you, and who are not in the same socio-economic status as you, and to move toward people. Even on a Sunday gathering when you come here. Don't just try and get into this holy huddle and go around the people you always see and that you always know. Go, introduce yourself to someone who is different, or whom you haven't met yet. Be kind to them, invite them over to your house! Invite them to your community group.

And finally is COMMIT! I praise God since I've been here, this church is growing in commitment. I mean this is a big vision that we've laid out. It's a lot of new stuff for new people! But you all are here, you are rooted! You're saying, "we want to be a part of this, and we are getting encouragement quite often!" But we want you to commit and commit like never before so that the Lord would burn us up together, that we will be on fire for God and that we will be able to say that eyes have not seen and ears have not heard what the Lord has prepared for us as his people!

[Daniel] I want to encourage 3 things with relationships to commitment.

1. Those of you who aren't members, who are Christians, we want you to commit and become a member. You are needed here. The harvest is plentiful; the workers are few. And how you can become a worker is by committing to the local church! We are pleading with you to be committed to the local church. Put your roots down somewhere. Now, if that means somewhere else in the city, go bless another church with your presence! But be committed to your local church.
2. The second thing is PRAY. Let's pray for this vision. We are asking that the Lord would specifically raise up a number of leaders. People who are burdened with that deep burden to lead groups in prayer, to intercede for gatherings like this over various regions of community groups, over various ministries and new initiatives. We pray that the Lord would mature us and grow us and prayer-ers.
3. And the third thing is just, COMMIT and be eager and willing to apply what you're hearing. Be eager and willing to apply! I mean God is doing a work. The last time we set a vision frame before you all as a church was 2010. Remember what's new? Who was around then, raise your hand. So just about 50 people in this room. Let me just give you a vision of that. We said that by 2020, we want to see 25 new international units, by 2020. 3 years from now. You know how many we have? 50. That was the vision. And so what we are going to be doing through the next several weeks and several months, is we're going to be making, drafting, with the elders and deacons and members of this church, declarations of impossibilities.

We want to stop doing what we think is possible, you hear me?

[Jamaal] Pastor, I'm going to cut you off real quick, because I don't think they heard you. I said, in 2010 we had a vision for 25 units and the Lord gave us how many?

[Daniel] 50! It's CRAZY! Last night, Jamaal and I were wrestling through this. We're kind of putting out numbers and like, well, how many multicultural churches? Because we want to start all kinds of churches, but we really want to come behind multicultural churches. And we are like, what can we do in our own power? And we were throwing out some words... Let's dream! Let's dream of what it would look like if businessmen and women got inspired and were like, "dude, I'm in with this." I want to see churches planted across inner cities in this nation. And what would it look like?

Again, God has blessed us and has done far more than we could've ever asked. But to be honest with you, there is a lot going on. And it is easy to get in a grind and just be like, "how do we survive?" And I get it! It's like that at home, it's like that in your marriage, it's like that in your work, and your school and it's like, "wait, hey, hey, look up!" Just look up! The harvest is plentiful, right? Let's be a people who are eager to look up and dream big. And so, you could pray for us as we are making those declarations, and you can make those personally. What would a declaration of impossibility look like in your home, in your marriage, with your finances, with your school? What are you doing that requires God to show up in your life, or else you will fail?

[Jamaal] William Cary has a great quote, "Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God." And we live in that tension of the already and the not yet.

[Jamaal and Daniel] What God has done and what is not yet. This is the final tension we feel:

Already	Not Yet
Incomplete	Complete
First fruits	Harvest
Appetizer	Entree
Is our worship <i>now</i> making us insatiably thirsty for worship <i>then</i> ?	Ponder long and hard the worship of heaven. Fill our hearts with heavenly visions.

God has given us a not yet that we have not even begun to understand yet. I want you to smell the grass of the new heavens and new earth. God has already broken the barriers, but we have not yet experienced the healing that he wants to experience. God has already built the bridges, We haven't unpacked We haven't experienced the fullness of what God has in store for us!