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SERMON TITLE: "The Outcome of Your Testimony"
SCRIPTURE: John 20:29-31, 21:24-25
DATE: July 15, 2018
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ John 20:29-31, 21:24-25 and Isaiah 60:10-18

We talked last week about God's desire that we as God's people bless our city because we have good news to give.

It is interesting that God talks about cities and he talks about us as individuals using our gifts, talents, and call of God to bless the city.

God's interest in cities actually goes back to Genesis when God said to the first humans, "Go out and fill the earth and subdue it." This meant much more than having babies; it meant fill the world with the products and processes of culture.

So look at this chart:

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|--------|----------|---------|----------|
| Gov't. | Business | Schools | Churches |
|--------|----------|---------|----------|

These are segments which make up a culture. Former Duncanville mayor, David Green, refers to these segments as a four-legged stool. When they all work together, the city flourishes. Where do you fit? Let each "X" represent a person.

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|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--|
| Gov't. xxxxxx | Business xxxxxx | Schools xxxxxx | xxxxxx Churches xxxxxx xxxxxx |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--|

The X's in the church segment represent all of us as part of the church. But that is not our entire life. Christians are involved in other things. So the X's in the other block represent you as a Christian in your daily life—whether you work in business or government or attend or teach school. And, each of us brings our faith with us when we are in school, as we work, as we are involved in civic organizations or wherever we spend our time. We are to be very intentional about God's call on our lives in all segments where we spend our time.

Everything we do is to be subject to God's call on us—this is our testimony.

Our testimony affects those around us, and spreads everywhere—to other cities, to other nations. We talked last week about the effects of our faith on Duncanville. But we could make a chart of how many nations have been affected by people from this congregation. For instance, many have been missionaries; others have been or are currently a part of the military; still others have been or are international teachers. Think of Grant who currently teaches in Korea. Perhaps those of you who know some of our history can put together a list of all the nations in which people in this congregation have lived and worked.

While we have impacted this and other nations, it is not an easy task to stay faithful in your segment because there is pressure for you not to let your faith shine. We have made some not necessarily good decisions as a nation, for example, walling off, or privatizing, the church:

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| Govt. | Business | Schools | Churches |
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But that does not mean you park your faith at home when you go to work. We are, as believers, to center our life in our faith, not to dominate those around us but to bring good news, to bless, to resist evil, and to contribute to the wellbeing of everyone. This is called approaching life with *common grace* because even though people don't realize it, God permeates this world everywhere.

As we bring God's story to our city, God keeps doing what the Creator does—God involves himself in all events, and directs all things to their appointed end. J. I. Packer, a prominent theologian says, "God is completely in charge of his world. His hand may be hidden, but his rule is absolute." (*Concise Theology*, 1993)

Isaiah gives Israel, God's people, a picture of the appointed end which God has in mind, and it involves a city. We are included, too. When you wonder how, think of the New Jerusalem John writes about in Revelation 21. In both Isaiah 60 and Revelation, God promises massive blessing. Isaiah writes:

"Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. Your gates shall be

open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession” (Is 60:10-11).

Here come representatives from all the nations bringing their wealth to you. Why? **You have told them about God.** If they do not respond to your message:

“Then they will perish; they will be utterly laid to waste” (v.12).

According to God’s promise, God will make you

- majestic forever;
- a joy from age to age.
- You shall suck the milk of nations;
- you shall nurse at the breast of kings;
- Instead of bronze you will have gold,
- instead of iron, silver;
- instead of wood, bronze;
- instead of stones, iron. (v. 15-17)

This is very good news indeed. But there’s more:

“Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise” (v. 18).

Why? Because you have passion for bringing the good news to the culture of your city.

It’s not a political party or ideology that is going to bring our nation or the world peace and prosperity. Your job is to subject your political views to your faith, and then you be that healing balm that brings people together through the light of Christ that you carry; the knowledge of the Way, which you continue to grow deeper into; and the eternal life Jesus gives, because IT’S TRUE—

However, people struggle with those two words: “IT’S TRUE!”

After the resurrection, only one person believed without actually seeing Jesus and that was the beloved disciple. (Jn 20:8) We suspect it is John, the writer of this book. READ Jn 20:29-31. It begins with Thomas, who couldn’t believe the resurrection was true.

Thomas really wasn’t different than the rest of them in his need to see Jesus in person—Mary Magdalene, the women, the other disciples had seen Jesus. But when he did see, Thomas believed, “My Lord and my God!” he proclaimed. But the time was drawing near when no one would see him any more, in the physical sense. So how will anyone believe?

People believe through your testimony. They believe on the disciples’ testimonies. These testimonies can be trusted because IT’S TRUE, God made Jesus the Savior who gives life. You and I clearly experience his presence when we believe and when we pray.

Did you pray for the Thailand soccer team to be rescued from the cave? The SEALs who rescued them posted this message, “We are not sure if this is a miracle, a science or what. All the thirteen Wild Boars are now out of the cave.” Some believe; some do not.

. But those of us who know the Lord know that God is always at work. Seeing God is our testimony, even if every single prayer we pray is not answered exactly to our specifications.

John wrote his book as a testimony so that people would be able to say, “IT’S TRUE!” For when people believe, they will have life through that faith.

John’s final words are this:

“This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate. Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written” (21:24-25).

Do you know why? Jesus did many other things then and Jesus continues to work now, like the Father. He works in answer to your prayers as you carry your faith and Jesus’ story into your school, your business, our government and into the world. We tell our testimonies because faith in Jesus has the greatest happy ending we can imagine. Do you want more peace? Do you long for a more harmonious culture?

That’s the outcome of your testimony.

Are you willing to bless your community? Are you willing to take your skills and talents and give them wholly to the Lord? If you do give him all, he will certainly use you, just as he has used the testimony of this church.

What a great, bountiful reversal we will see—the blessing of the nations will return to us. We, whom God has asked to bless the nations over the course of history, will now be blessed by them. God is at work to make you majestic forever and a joy from age to age. How good it is to believe that IT’S TRUE!

AMEN