

## *“The Warnings Against Desiring Spiritual Success”*

### **Holiness**

Thomas Hansz

Luke 10:17-20

June 19, 2015

**Tom:** Thank you, guys. Especially, thank you all for your showing up and supporting me and being patient with me this morning. It’s a real privilege to be here. Let’s start off with a word of prayer first.

You know, heavenly Father, we just can never imagine how great You are and how loving You are, and how You support and maintain each one of us in our lives and our families and what we do. We thank You for the life in Christ that You’ve given to each one of us and the fact that you’ve brought us here today to learn and to be more aware of Your Son Jesus Christ. And let Him live in our lives, and let us be more like Him. We ask You to be with our brother Bruce while he’s traveling. Help Him in His travels. Help him in his pain and his working with his disease. We just thank You so much for what You’ve done for us, and we commit this hour to You in the name of our loving Lord and Savior, Jesus. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Tom:** Well, I’ll turn this on, yeah! Now I’m on. Okay.

Back in April, I was attending a seminar on leadership. And there were several interesting guys there that are already in very commanding positions of leadership here in Pittsburgh. And we started off our morning session. And I had done my devotions that morning, forgetting the one I usually carry. So I did “My Utmost For His Highest.” And I read that and I thought, “My gosh, this is on leadership today! It’s amazing!”

So I shared that when I got together with a couple of the guys. “Yeah, we read that too.” So we decided that we were going to change the agenda for the morning and start off reading that, discussing it and meditating on it for a minute. And it changed the whole discussion that we had.

And I was sharing that with Bruce the other day, and he said, “That would be a good lesson to do for the men. Would you do that?”

I said, “Sure.”

So we started off reading April 24<sup>th</sup>, “My Utmost For His Highest” by Oswald Chambers. And the title is “The Warning Against Desiring Spiritual Success.”

A warning against success? That’s what’s interesting, because in America that’s what we all promote, you know?

Now listen to this. He takes it from Luke 10:20, and we’ll get more into that. It says, “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you. But rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

What’s going on? Well, the whole background is that Jesus has sent out the Twelve. And they’ve come back with a lot of great things. And then they had the Transfiguration. And then Jesus collects seventy-two disciples and He’s going to send them out again.

So He gives them these instructions of how to go into the village and what to do. Well, they all come back just phenomenal. Their feet are off the ground. (*Paraphrase.*)

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“We’ve done this. The spirits, the demons obey us.” They just can’t believe how great it is.

Then He gives them kind of, almost, a rebuke. But actually, let me just read it for you.

“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name.”,”

“He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and to overcome all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”,”

So this is what’s in “My Utmost For His Highest.” “Worldliness is not the trap that endangers us as Christian workers. Nor is sin.”

We have to think about that for a minute, because that’s what we usually worry about. I don’t want to be too worldly. I don’t want to do the wrong things.

“The trap we fall into is extravagantly desiring spiritual success, that is, success measured by and patterned after the form set by this religious age in which we now live.

“Never seek after anything other than the approval of God. And always be willing to go outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

“In Luke 10:20 Jesus told the disciples not to rejoice in successful service. And yet this seems to be the one thing in which most of us do rejoice. We have a commercialized view. We count how many souls have been saved and sanctified. We thank God and then we think that everything is all right. Yet our work only begins where God’s grace has laid the foundation. Our work is not to save souls, but to disciple them. Salvation and sanctification are the work of God’s sovereign grace, and our work as His disciples is to disciple others’ lives until they are totally yielded to God. One life totally devoted to God is of more value to Him than one hundred lives which have been simply awakened by His Spirit.

“As workers for God, we must reproduce our own kind spiritually. And those lives will be God’s testimony to us as His workers. God brings us up to a standard of life through His grace, and we are responsible for reproducing that same standard in others. Unless the worker lives a life that is hidden with Christ in God, he is apt to become an irritating dictator to others instead of an active, living disciple. Many of us are dictators, dictating our desires to individuals and to groups.

“But Jesus never dictates to us in that way. Whenever our Lord talked about discipleship, He always prefaced His words with an *if*, never with the forceful or dogmatic statement, *you must*. Discipleship carries with it an option.”

To me, that was a lot to think about because it says a lot of things that I’m not accustomed to. I mean, I was just involved in a thing the other day. We had a thousand men show up! And an offering to receive Christ was made and we had what? Something like a hundred and seventeen men either pray to receive Christ or wanting to renew their commitment to Christ. Fantastic! We didn’t do that. Our job now is to follow up with those men and to disciple them, so that what God has raised up in us we are passing on to them, so that they might raise up and pass it on to others.

But we get so focused on the numbers.

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**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** And we need to get a new mindset. And that’s why it’s so neat that Christ says, in effect, “Don’t get excited about the fact that the demons obey you, but that your name is written in the book in heaven.”

And what that means to the guys in that age is that every community, every city, kept a role, a list, of who are the citizens of that community. Not everybody was. So if you were on the roles of Jerusalem, for instance, you were a very important person.

And Jesus is saying in that same context that “your names are written in heaven.” You’re a very important person. That’s as far as it goes for you. You don’t need to do anything. You’re in by My grace. Your name is written on that book by the finger of God.

**Men:** Amen.

**Tom:** So it was very important that they stop and think not about what they do or what they’re involved in, but the fact that God has brought them into this family and has written their names on His book, never to be taken away, you know?

And also, Jesus says, “I saw Satan fall from heaven.” I’ve seen the whole thing. I know what’s going on. But you focus on where your names are. Focus that you’re one of Mine.

And I think that gets us back to what we’ve been learning the past few years about being in Christ. We always think, “I’m a Christian.” Well, I think Bruce has done a great job in helping us understand that we’re in Christ. Christ is in us. We are in Christ. And it’s not what I belong to. It’s who I’m a part of.

Also, in our walks, and like the disciples, the Seventy-two, we get focused on the details. We get focused on the wrong things. We get focused on the outward when God really wants us to be focused on the inward. We focus on manifestations rather than the principles behind them, on symptoms rather than the disease that causes them. We also get focused on the fruit rather than the life that produces the fruit. And I think that’s what Jesus is telling those guys. You know, here are seventy-two fellows. Focus right. Get back to God. Get back to the Father. And then we’ll start from there.

So I think also, in our lives today, too, as Christians, as we try to be obedient, sometimes our focus gets on sins rather than sin. We were talking about this a week ago or so. When you say you’re obedient, is it that you’re following all the rules? I don’t do this, I don’t do that, I do this. Or is it that, wait a minute! I’m in a body of sin, you know. It’s not a matter of following rules. It’s something else. But we’ll get to that in a minute. Is this better, like that? (*The position of the microphone.*)

**Participant:** A little bit higher would be nicer.

**Tom:** Okay.

**Participant:** We’ll change the rules.

**Tom:** We’ll do that. Okay. Good.

**Participant:** Hey, Tom?

**Tom:** Yes?

**Participant:** Can I ask you a question?

**Tom:** Sure, go ahead.

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**Participant:** My concern is, I understand what you’re saying, that for us Christ has touched us. But I have a hard time with non-Christians getting excited about that concept.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** In the world they live in, in the creation that is before us, in their potential. You know, the world is set before them to make money, to do great things, to live a great life. In fact, I’ve even had reformed Jews not caring about the next life because we don’t know enough about it and it’s not their concern. It’s “do the best you can in this life.”

**Tom:** Right.

**Participant:** And so, I mean, once you’ve tasted it, how can you go back? I understand that.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** How do you get them to taste it?

**Tom:** Well first you have to go to Him. And that’s what Jesus is saying. You know, in that, what was it? Shoot! I forgot the verse. But you go out, bearing His reproach. Go out of the—

**Participant:** Hebrews 13:5, I think.

**Tom:** There you go. God bless you. Yes.

**Participant:** Go out to the city gate, bearing the disgrace that He bore.

**Tom:** Yes. And that’s what we’re supposed to do. You know, it’s not a matter of well, it’s great being in this church and doing this stuff for people in this church and all that stuff for people in this church and all my friends. But go out of the gate. Go out to where the people are, because our ministry is the ministry of reconciliation. You know, that’s the thing we forget about.

If you go back to 2 Corinthians, we talked several months ago. That ministry is what we have been given—to reconcile others to Christ. God finds them. God brings them to us, or we to them, and we share that part of it. We help them grow up, or introduce them to the gospel. But it’s our work to be out there, not to be inward. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Brother, I respect what Oswald Chambers is saying.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Don:** And certainly Christ did say, (*paraphrase*), “*Don’t rejoice that all these great things are happening, but that your names are written in heaven.*” However, number one, I think Christ did say *must* sometimes. “*You must be born again.*” You must take up your cross, etc.

**Tom:** Oh, yeah.

**Don:** And also, I think that if we find a situation in a church or wherever where nothing is happening, where we’re stagnant and just going through the motions, that’s not good either. And I think there has to be a balance there. We don’t want to focus on spiritual success and numbers and everything. But neither do we just want to go through the motions and just have small congregations that don’t want to grow in the knowledge of Christ, that don’t want to grow numerically, if the Lord is pleased to do that.

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**Tom:** I think that part of the times, some Christians might not really understand being born again and being in Christ. And you’re right; that’s where it starts. But that again is a work of the Holy Spirit.

**Don:** True.

**Tom:** Does that help? Yes?

**Participant:** Reverend Hansz? I mean, excuse me—

**Tom:** Whoa! (*Laughter.*) Okay.

**Participant:** You’re doing me a great favor today with this title—attitudes necessary for spiritual life and working against desiring spiritual success. What I’ve heard from you in the short time you’ve been teaching is that I’ve already attained spiritual success. I’m secure in heaven. My identity is secure in heaven, where there is inestimable wealth, inestimable beauty, un-calculated wonders. And heaven is my home regardless of whether I am blessed financially on earth. I’m already blessed in the kingdom of God eternal. I mean, I want to do better on earth too. I just had a grandson yesterday and I haven’t thought of that. But yet what I’m saying is that means is that you’ve helped me a lot and I thank you.

**Tom:** Oh, well, thank you very much, because that’s the whole point—what we’ve attained, and yet we have a whole life ahead of us of working for Him. Don’t get excited about these things. Be grateful.

And also, I think that one of the greatest things is when you stop and when you think about it’s not what I do. It’s not that we had so many people come to know Christ. It’s not that we had an attendance of such and such. It’s that my name is written on the book. And what does that produce in me?

**Participant:** Gratitude.

**Tom:** Big time gratitude. And what’s behind the gratitude? Humility. You know, many a good theologian will say that humility is the greatest of the graces that we have.

And look at Christ, how He modeled Himself—the perfect example of living a humble life—humility. And should we have any more pride? Yes?

**Participant:** Tom, I think that’s what this text is talking about. He’s telling them, in effect, “Beware of your spiritual pride.”

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Participant:** Because everything that you do comes through Me. And once we understand that it comes through Christ, we recognize that it’s not about us.

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Participant:** And once we understand that it’s not about us,. Then we have-- That’s why Jesus told the Seventy, “Beware!” He said, (*Paraphrase*), “Listen. I saw Satan fall.” So, you know what?

**Tom:** (*Paraphrase.*) “I’ve seen it all.”

**Participant:** Get your foundation.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** Keep your feet on the ground. Because so many of us, we get puffed up because society says, “Be puffed up when you have success.” “Oh, my goodness, I’ve led somebody to Christ.” Like Bruce says all the time, we haven’t led anybody to Christ.

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**Tom:** That’s right.

**Participant:** We’re just allowed to participate in His salvation.

**Tom:** And if we’re puffed up, what are we involved in? Pride. Pride versus humility.

**Participant:** Right.

**Tom:** You know? It’s really interesting. It’s one of the few times that Christ really rebuked His disciples. He’s saying, (*Paraphrase*), “No, wait a minute. This is what you need to do.” But also, He’s trying to give them instructions in leadership, that this is the way you need to focus in your life.

I saw an interesting comment by Matthew Henry. He said, “Power to become the children of God is to be valued more than power to work miracles.”

**Participant:** Mm-hmm.

**Tom:** For we read of those who did, in Christ’s name, cast out devils, as Judas did, and yet who will be disowned by Christ on the great day.

That’s Matthew 7:21. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many of you will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? And in Your name did we not drive out demons and perform many miracles?’”*

*“Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.’”*

And think. The Seventy-two went out and even a few days before that the Twelve went out. Judas was one of them! And he was casting out demons!

**Participant:** Yes, yes.

**Tom:** The spirits were obeying Judas! What does that tell you? It kind of helps put spiritual gifts in the light of the best thing is the grace of God. It overpowers everything we have. Yes, Don?

**Don:** In support of what you’re saying, Tom, you know it’s really easy for us to be excited and see good results. And we are to bear fruit, no question about that. When results come, praise God!

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Don:** But, you know, it’s really easy for us to say those things if we’re living in relative comfort and that kind of thing. But think of the people, for example, in the Middle East,—

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Don:** Who are being tortured and persecuted every day because they name the name of Christ. And this verse that you quoted in the beginning—rejoice not that you see all these things, but that your names are written in heaven—you know, that’s the only thing that these people who are suffering this persecution need and have, that their names are written in heaven.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Don:** Think of the apostle Paul.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Don:** I mean, the apostle Paul was certainly not successful by this world’s standards. Imprisoned and beaten and shipwrecked and everything else. Read 2 Corinthians 4.

**Tom:** Right.

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**Don:** And yet it is he who Christ bestowed such blessing to. *“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*

**Tom:** That’s right. Once you understand what other Christians around the world are going through, whether it’s in the Middle East or in China or in Africa, what people pay as a price for acknowledging that they’re in Christ. We have it so easy. And yet we can fall off the path and be so full of pride because of what we can accomplish and what we have and what we do.

The other thing that Matthew Henry says is, *“Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts. Holy love is a more excellent way than speaking in tongues.”* I thought that was interesting.

So *“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven,”* Jesus says. And then Jesus thanks His Father for revealing these things to His disciples and not to the men whose names are written in the records in the town. So He’s thanking His Father that the great knowledge of the universe is given to simple guys, not the important guys,

Also in Philippians 2:5-8 we read: *“Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross.”* So there’s our model.

**Participant:** Tom?

**Tom:** Yes?

**Participant:** I wanted to go back for a minute to what you said about casting out demons.

**Tom:** Yes. Mm-hmm.

**Participant:** In the beginning of this verse 17 that you read, it says in Luke that they are subject to us through Thy name. And then at the end, in 20, it says that their names are written in heaven. And I think that it goes back to our identity.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** You know our identity is in Christ. And I think it’s interesting that Judas did it in the name of Jesus. It wasn’t anything in his power.

**Tom:** Not his own power. That’s right. That’s a good point. We can do nothing in our own power.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** But it’s only through the name of Christ that we are able to do this.

And I like what Spurgeon said about humility, in terms of once you understand that it’s a gift that’s been given to you of eternal life. And you are humble. He says, *“Humility is making a right estimate of oneself that is right in God’s eyes.”*

**Participant:** Mm-hmm. Oh!

**Tom:** Who am I? I’m a child of God. That’s as far as it goes.

Okay. So I think also I want to talk about going outside the camp. The idea is that this is what we’ve been talking about with these little cards for the past three years. Keep that in mind. Your ministry is who you are, where you are. And it’s a matter of that you’re in the church. You’re in a Bible study. You’re in a fellowship to be built up, to

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help others. But your main work then is to go out, to reach others, taking that ministry with you.

So what’s holding us back many times? In Colossians 3:3, *“Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”* Those are words to go by.

Getting back to the idea, though, of pride and sin. I like what C. S. Lewis also said. He said that pride is the basic sin behind all particular sins. And this is what I think is interesting. *“At this very moment you and I are either committing it, or about to commit it, or are repenting of it.”* (Laughter.) Wow! That puts us in a whole level plain, doesn’t it? Pride does not leave us until we leave these bodies. And I think that helps us understand sin in terms not of doing. Sin is almost like who we are in the earthly sense. While Christ is changing us from the inward man, we still don’t get rid of 100 per cent of our old selves because of pride. And that can lead to all kinds of issues. Any thoughts? Yes, Bob?

**Bob:** Yes. I have a question. In our earthly life, in our human life, we all tend in one form or another to want to measure something.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Bob:** The danger is that we measure success. And so my question really is this. Based on what you’re teaching today, is there a way that we can measure our effectiveness in this spiritual journey beyond rejoicing that we’re written in the book? Is there a measure, or should there be a measure? Or do we really ignore this thing that we’ve been taught since we were little boys? Talk about that for just a moment. Is there a measure?

**Tom:** A measure of?

**Bob:** A measure of what effectiveness is in our spiritual journey.

**Participant:** The measure of spiritual success is when you stop measuring your spiritual success. (Laughter.)

**Tom:** Amen. That’s a good way to put it. What God wants—

**Bob:** I’m just saying that it’s so foreign to everything that we do. Everything that exists today is—

**Tom:** We measure things because we want the credit. Look what I did! Look how we succeeded, you know? The thing of it is again to focus back on Christ, to become more like Him, to learn more of Him, you know. Be in the Bible. Be in prayer. Get more into Him. Some of these things might be brought out to you. Some of these things might never be brought out to you because it’s not important at this time in His mind, in God’s mind.

**Participant:** Right.

**Tom:** So you don’t have to worry about that. Yes?

**Participant:** I think in our lives it’s a great precaution. But in the work of the church, all we do is measure. All we do is report what we believe is the measurement of our effect. I mean, we talk about attendance. We talk about how much money we raise. We



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talk about the effectiveness of each ministry—how many kids we’re serving in Sunday school, how many people who are serving. I’ll tell you, the difficulty is that in the work of the church this thing is twisted up in the worst possible way. And then the special folks in ministry spend a good deal of their time simply trying to communicate what they believe the congregation wants.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** Which is evidence of the fact that this donation I put in this plate is doing something. And it’s a lack of transparency. As soon as the church gets out of the business of equipping and starts doing,--

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** Then we have a professional ministry class. (*Laughter.*) That creates a giant problem. It really is a “*Catch 22*”, because the more you serve that beast the worse it gets.

**Tom:** Ted, help me a little bit. Being involved in an organizational hierarchy, --

**Ted:** Yes.

**Tom:** Isn’t that one of the hardest things to avoid—this reporting and counting and—

**Ted:** Well, you know, you’re required to do it. But for us Anglicans it doesn’t amount to a big deal. (*Laughter.*) You may not have that much growth, but also I think it’s because our church is set up on that very historic model that doesn’t go into this.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Ted:** And I often wonder how we have men in Brave Men come Friday after Friday after Friday and tell us not to count these things, not to look at big personalities. And yet they continue to support and go to churches that do this. I don’t understand the disconnect, where you go to churches that love to count numbers and announce big numbers and want the professional athlete that got saved. Oh, we’re having him come! Listen to him!

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Ted:** As if that guy had anything to say. I’ve listened to some of these guys. Their theology is anemic at best. But they were NFL superstars.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Ted:** And so I’m throwing that question out. I’ve always often queried in my mind as to why we have to even hear this. They say they believe what you say and yet continue to support churches that come out with a different message.

**Tom:** You don’t think someone would say they believe it and not really believe it?

**Ted:** Well, they might say that. Or they might also say, and often it comes down to “*Well, if we don’t do those things we won’t get people saved.*”

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Ted:** So they start using earthly, human mechanisms to achieve heavenly ends.

**Tom:** Yeah. Bishop?

**Bishop:** Actually, I think we have to recognize, to hitchhike on what Ted is saying, we need to stop glorying in the man and start glorying in the Master. We need to recognize that Jesus said, “*If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Myself.*” And that’s where we’ve got to go. We’ve got to continue to lift up Jesus. It’s not about numbers.

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It’s about souls. When I say that it’s about souls, it’s about lifting up Jesus. He says, (*paraphrase*), “*I’ll draw all men. Lift me up.*”

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Bishop:** If we would just step out of the way and just do our job. And our job is to give the gospel. He said, “*Go ye therefore into all the world.*”

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Bishop:** But if we just give the gospel and lift Him up, He will draw them.

**Tom:** That’s right. And that’s part of our ministry—being ambassadors of Christ, our ministry of reconciliation, to reconcile the world. We work for God in doing that.

But I think it also points to something else. I mean the real issue comes down to who we are in Christ, and to examine ourselves, not to examine a program or other people. Yes?

**Participant:** Deadlines matter.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** Deadlines matter. Jesus in His word said, “*Today is the day of salvation.*” Today is the day to be saved. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, how many people were saved at the preaching of the gospel? It’s recorded. Numbers matter. I have a friend. He’s a Reverend Doctor in a huge denominational church.

**Tom:** Okay.

**Participant:** The congregation has him paid for three months. Thirty years ago I said to him, “*Go ahead. Stop preaching the gospel. Eventually people will stop giving. And eventually you won’t be able to depend on your denomination. And now they’re threatening to cut his insurance benefits.*”

**Tom:** Okay.

**Participant:** It matters. If you’re a father in a house, your budget matters. How many children you have matters.

**Tom:** Thank you. Bill?

**Bill:** Yes. When somebody says to me, “*We were at this meeting and a hundred seventy people were saved,*” my first question is “*How do you know that?*”

**Tom:** Yeah. You don’t know that.

**Participant:** Good point.

**Bill:** But the problem is, like Doug was saying, it is economics, because people only give to what they see happening. And we have para-church ministries. We have TV evangelists. We have everything that people are giving their money to. But in the Scripture it says, “Bring your tithes and offerings into the storehouse,” the church. They distribute those funds according, hopefully, to God’s will to wherever it’s needed, not to these para-ministries.

**Tom:** Okay.

**Bill:** People think that they’re giving the tithes to the para-ministry, but they’re not giving the tithe.

**Tom:** Giving to the church. Okay. Jim, do you have something?

**Jim:** Yes. I was just going to say—and you touched on it there—I think there’s a balance here and it’s a matter of priorities. In Scripture, in the story of Acts, when Peter

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preached, the Scripture does count the number of people who came forward. I mean, that’s inspired Scripture.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Jim:** But I think it’s a matter of priority. The numbers aren’t the first priority. The first priority is Christ. And yet there is a place for concrete, specific realities in Scripture. It’s just that I think we need to keep it in its proper perspective.

**Tom:** There’s nothing wrong with the numbers. It’s being overjoyed in what you’ve accomplished, that you’ve got those numbers.

**Jim:** Or that you accomplished it.

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Participant:** There you go.

**Tom:** It goes right back to pride.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** Don?

**Don:** Yes. Just to piggyback on what my brother said a few minutes ago about the lifting up. I think what Christ was saying there about the lifting up is His crucifixion. “If I be lifted up, then I will draw all men to Myself.” In other words, focus not on gimmicks, or that this man was so successful and he came to Christ. Focus on the message of the cross, the message of the gospel. And that will be what God uses, whether He brings a few people or a lot of people in. My pastor at the church I attend has said that yes, a lot of people are coming in now. But whether that happens or whether we go through a dry spell, we preach the Word, and that is what Christ wants. And I don’t think there’s anything wrong with us being grateful for the results that God has placed—

**Tom:** Not a bit.

**Don:** As long as we are grateful to *Him* and don’t become puffed up with pride, “*look what we’ve done!*” That’s the important thing.

**Tom:** Yes. Bishop?

**Bishop Rodgers:** I was just thinking about your original text. There’s nothing wrong indeed, there’s a great deal of good—about delivering people from demons.

**Tom:** Oh yes.

**Bishop Rodgers:** It seems to me that the issue is where do you put your fundamental treasure? It’s very easy for a church which has a somewhat embracive ministry to lose the fact that the most precious part of the ministry is to lead people to Christ and then help them to grow in Christ, and particularly when the challenge is if I’m faithful to that, I am going to lose numbers.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Bishop Rodgers:** For example, when the whole issue of abortion arose, there were many clergy who would not address the subject for fear of losing members.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Bishop Rodgers:** Whereas you see that what they did was to lose what they were there for, and that is to see things in the light of Christ.

**Tom:** That’s right.

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**Bishop Rodgers:** So I think it’s a question of focus on your fundamental calling, which is both to lead people to Christ and grow in Christ, both.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** Because a lot of times we get so caught up with the fact that we’ve led someone to Christ, we think, and we don’t disciple them.

**Participant:** Right.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Bishop Rodgers:** But that’s what I’m saying. That needs to be and that needs to remain the central focus in the life of a congregation. It’s our relationship with the Lord.

**Tom:** Yes. Which is all done in faith.

**Bishop Rodgers:** (*Unclear.*)

**Tom:** Very good. Thank you. Anything else?

**Participant:** With what Bishop Rodgers just said, I’m reminded of what we call ourselves—ambassadors for Christ. And in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks about this. And he says, *“So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way.”*—as we can all understand. All the apostles thought He was going to restore them and beat the Romans and whatever. *“Though we regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation. The old one is gone, the new one has come. All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.”* And of course we have the message of reconciliation.

But when I read this, it sort of hits me that we’ve got this supernatural thing, that the world becomes secondary, not even part of the equation. We don’t look at men the way we used to. We look at them as men that need reconciled to Christ. That’s a very difficult concept for me to grasp and buy into and give up with the world around me, and count my money and save it well and have enough for a rainy day, or whatever. But when I read Paul in this, it’s like we’ve died. We’ve died to the world. We’re now new, and this is totally different. This is a strategy we never dreamed of. And to really give up that worldly way and to look at men as Christ’s own that He is reconciling to him, it’s like-- I mean, it’s hard to translate. It’s hard to—

**Tom:** And as he said, he’s in the world and he has a lot of the issues of the world. But he puts them in their proper place.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** And he maintains his focus on Christ.

**Participant:** Right, yes.

**Tom:** Yes?

**Participant:** I’d kind of like to add to that too, because I kind of think about this stuff. You know, it says to be humble and don’t think highly of things. But you know, we all as professionals kind of take pride in our work, and I wonder how that balances out. You know, how do you become a professional or be successful, but still humble?

**Tom:** Mm-hmm. Yes.

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**Participant:** I struggle with this a lot, actually.

**Second Participant:** The way that some do it is they realize that this body is a vessel. It's nothing more than a vessel with the Holy Spirit working through you. Any success that your body generates is the Lord and what He is doing. It's nothing that you're doing right. It's not a gift that you have not been given. Or if you have been given it, then why boast? And it's the same thing with the way we carry out our ministries. Basically, there is no success, there is no failure. Paul says in another one of his letters, in effect, *“Why rejoice when this is just a job?”*

**Tom:** There you go.

**Participant:** When we go out and do our ministries, whether it's saving souls, reconciling people or whatever, if you've got success, that's the job.

**Tom:** I think that gets back to what I was trying to say earlier about the difference between *sins* and *sin*, because, like you're saying, it doesn't matter if you're the president of the company or if you're the janitor. You know, from a spiritual sense, it has no relationship to your worldly sense. But mainly know that you are in Christ and work your relationship in Christ, and -- Okay, Bob?

**Bob:** Well, I was just going to say that if we bring it back to your earliest comment, when you were talking about leadership,--

**Tom:** Yes.

**Bob:** If we're thinking about leadership, when I think about leadership, I don't think about numbers. I think about somebody who made his team or his group knowledgeable on what we're to accomplish or what we're to do.

**Tom:** Yes.

**Bob:** And if he has loyal followers. He's respected. So in many ways, those attributes of a leader can relate back to our story that you're trying to tell us this morning about Jesus.

**Tom:** Good point.

**Participant:** To answer your question about professionalism, taking pride in accomplishments, I just think that the older I've gotten, the older I get,--

**Tom:** Yeah. (*Laughter.*)

**Participant:** It's those Anglo-Saxons in the brain. But I just realize that it has less and less to do with me. I'm just a happy recipient of things that kind of follow close. And right now I'm in Clarion, Pa. doing a campaign. We're going to raise over \$8 million in a county of 31,000 people. That is absolutely extraordinary. But it's not even on the radar screen in terms of the fundraising. And you know, it has nothing to do with me. I really believe it. And when this campaign finishes, people will say, “Hire Ted Wood. He can raise a lot of money.”

And I'll say, “No. I was just a—excuse me, Don!—a blind squirrel finding a nut. And I just—

**Don:** I heard that! (*Laughter.*)

**Ted:** I said that at a board meeting for a society for the blind and it didn't go over well. (*Laughter.*)

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**Tom:** When you have that type of success, all you can say is *“Thank You, God, thank You.”*

**Ted:** I feel immensely privileged. You know, I was at a meeting the other day and they were saying, *“Oh boy, isn’t that great! We really appreciate it! We couldn’t have done it without you!”* I said, *“I just feel privileged to be here.”*

**Tom:** Amen.

**Ted:** And I mean, I think that when you’re younger you take a great deal of pride and think it has to do with you. And the older you get, you realize that it doesn’t have anything to do with you. You just have to be the beneficiary of a lot of other people and a lot of other situations.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** That’s growth. And that’s what we need to encourage—growth in Christ. Bishop? One last comment.

**Bishop:** Don had his hand up.

**Tom:** Okay.

**Don:** Yes. Ted is right on. And I think that we can take our models from two people in the Old Testament, Joseph and Daniel. When Joseph came before Pharaoh, you know, *“It has been said of you that you can interpret dreams.”*

And what does Joseph say? *“Interpretations belong to the Lord.”*

And then the same with Daniel.

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Don:** When Nebuchadnezzar comes to him and says, (*Paraphrase*), *“I’ve heard that you can interpret my dream.”*

And Daniel said, (*Paraphrase*), *“I can’t do that. But there is a God in heaven who can.”* So Ted’s right on there.

**Tom:** Yeah. I think the amazing thing about Joseph, and why he is a good example for us, is that when he finally gets his brothers down to Egypt, and wow!—they finally realize who he is and the trouble they’re in,—he says, *“You meant it for evil, but God used it for good.”*

**Don:** Mm-hmm.

**Tom:** You know, he didn’t take any retribution. He understood that it was God’s hand that took him to prison twice. He had all kinds of problems. It took him away from his family. But God set him up, and then brought his family down to save him. Yes, Ted?

**Ted:** I just want everyone to know that I took no pride in Don’s compliment. (*Laughter.*)

**Tom:** I just turned off the mike. (*Laughter.*) Well, let me just wrap up in terms of getting back to thinking about sin. And you know, we think well, like a lot of times, I remember John MacArthur came out with a book. And he had a list, something like this, what we’ve done a few years ago, that God’s will is revealed to us. How do I know I’m saved? Or what am I supposed to do now that I’m saved? And his book wasn’t all that accepted because they all said, *“Well then, there’s nothing for me to do! What am I supposed to do to be saved?”* Nothing, you know.

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And that’s the whole key. It’s like Cain when he’s being confronted by the Lord. And he says, (*Paraphrase*), “*You’ve rejected my offering! What’s with that?*” And God says, (*Paraphrase*), “*If you do what’s right, you’ll be fully accepted. But if you do what is unacceptable, sin is crouching at your door.*”

**Participant:** Mm!

**Tom:** Yeah. And it’s not the *sins* that we do or avoid, but it’s the nature of *sin* that wants to take us away from Christ. And we get caught up in pride because we’re not humble. And when we get closer to Christ, more in the Word, more into Christian fellowship, to let Him change us, to grow, to mature, and to be used by Him as He sees for His glory, and we can only thank Him very much.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Tom:** One last thing.

**Participant:** I was just thinking. If the greatest thing in your life is your relationship with Christ, if that’s what you treasure most, that’s how you will see other people.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Participant:** And if you’re not seeing everybody as the thing that I’m most interested in you is that I helped you know that your name is written in heaven,--

**Tom:** Yes.

**Participant:** Then you’re probably reflecting the fact that it’s not the most important thing to you. (*Laughter.*) And to your congregation. I mean, Anglicans are not known for their burning zeal to evangelize the local community.

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Participant:** Why not? It’s because they themselves are not rejoicing that their names are written in heaven.

**Tom:** Yeah.

It’s like Sig, when he said that I will no longer see others after the flesh, if you don’t see yourself after the flesh.

**Tom:** That’s right.

**Participant:** So it calls us to repentance, it seems to me.

**Tom:** Very good. Thank you very much. On those words, let us thank God for this time together. We ask You Lord again to keep us in mind of Your will, that we follow Christ and we rejoice in the fact that our names are written in your book in heaven. And it’s not in the things that we do on this earth, but we can take joy in watching You change lives, make things accomplished, and make Your reality fulfilled to the day when Christ returns and we can be with Him. Thank You for this time. Again, be with our brother Bruce. And we thank You so much in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. (*Applause.*)