



November 16, 2020

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

I felt lead to write a letter of Thanksgiving this year. To say that 2020 has been a little crazy would be an understatement. I think most of humanity today feels like they have little to be thankful for. I could make a list that would cover pages of all the injustice and loss that we have all felt. Between COVID-19, the election, and everything in between, some days it is very hard to be thankful.



As followers of Jesus, we have everything to be thankful for. As we read in scripture throughout history, nations have come and gone, even nations that were totally devoted to the God of Israel. Nations that had revivals have since fallen. God called prophets to go and witness and minister to ungodly nations. The nation Israel is our example of a nation that risen and fallen because it has taken their eyes off the one true God. Throughout all of history, there has always been one true constant, and that is King Jesus. He is on the throne and in control. Nothing happens that our God does not know will happen and He allows leadership to be appointed as He pleases. The scripture is clear that things will get worse before they get better.

In all of this we can reflect on the culture that Jesus ministered in. The Romans were basically in control at the time and the predominate religion was a far cry from what God had intended it to be. The Sadducees, Pharisees, and scribes had no compassion for the lost and the outcast. If there was one thing Jesus despised it was their hypocrisy. Jesus loves the lost and called them "The least of these." This included the prostitutes, tax collectors, and ALL the sinners. Jesus had no agenda other than to love "The least of these." He did not need to point out their sin and their shortcomings. Do you notice that Jesus never once judged them? The only man on the face of this earth who could have cast the first stone did not.

My Brothers and Sisters we need to first look to the cross. Everything in life was taken care of at the cross. EVERYTHING! All my issues and all your issues are forgiven. Because of the cross we have the freedom to live out the greatest commandment. "... 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:37-39



As our culture becomes darker, we the Church have an amazing opportunity to be the "Salt and Light" that Jesus created us to be. We know that real change in our culture will only come by way of revival for Jesus, one heart at a time. My prayer for the Church is that we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus in these days.

God has given our team and I favor as we are one of the very few ministries in the country, of our kind, that are doing face-to-face ministry. Since mid-June we have been doing two church services on Wednesday evenings, three

bible studies weekly, and countless one-on-one visits with kids. Additionally, we have been able to take kids to church on Sundays and have had kids from the C.L.I.P.S. Program (Community Living Independent Programing & Skills, a program at the West Central Regional Juvenile Center, and one of two in the whole nation) lifting weights and working out 2-3 times a week at our facility over the summer. Many weeks we are in the facility every day of the week. We give praise to God continuously for the opportunity to be used by Him in a mighty way.

God has also been providing opportunities to connect with kids once they are outside of the facility and in our community. This has been our biggest challenge and our greatest joy. In the last six months, we have had more kids reach out to us than in our previous 3+ years of ministry combined. We pray we continue to grow our aftercare ministry to be able to connect with kids and stay connected. We aim to continue to minister to their needs and continuously keep pointing them to Jesus.



*Grilling Out at Red River ALC*

One of our biggest losses during the COVID-19 shutdown has been the ability to connect with kids once outside of West Central. We have been working very hard to stay connected with kids when they leave the facility. One of our strongest methods of connect is through Red River Alternative Learning Center in Moorhead, MN. As local kids leave the facility, many attend school at Red River ALC as they make their transition. With the constant transition from online to in person and back again, we have limited opportunities to connect. However, we did get to do a cookout for them about a month ago. One young lady who we meet at the detention center is now going to school there and it was so great to see her. We have tried to reach out to her, but we just have not been able to connect. I got to spend some time talking with her that day. She told me she needed to reconnect with God and us. She asked about getting baptized and I told her I would love to talk more about that. We had many good one-on-one talks while she was at West Central. She was always very open with me about her story and knew she needed Jesus in her life. Please be praying for her as well as Danielle and I as we continue to connect with her.

As stated previously, we have everything to be thankful for. My Brothers and Sisters, Jesus is in control. In the last chapter of Revelations Christ calls us to come to Himself. *"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life."* Revelations 22:17 We have everything to be thankful for, amen!

We Love & Miss You, God Bless,

Mike, Patty, & Family

