**Acts 20 Sermon**

**Merced Inaugural Service**

Thanks to Gregg Marutzky who was my Soul Talk leader 44 years ago, who married Jan and I, and has been an example and mentor all these years.

Thanks to Tom Brown who is the paradigmatic campus minister to me.

Thanks to Robert Carrillo who believed in me and supported me as a teacher in San Diego, with whom I taught together and wrote a book on Hebrews together, and who showed me what it means to be both a teacher and evangelist.

Thanks to Blaine and Eve Lyons who were crazy enough to hire me in Bakersfield and who took Jan and I under their benevolent wings.

Thanks to Gary and Chris Simmons who have been the perfect partners in the ministry.

Thanks to Jan, without whom not a single thing I have done as a teacher or as a leader would have been possible. It has been a 39 year-long adventure with her by my side. Anyone who knows us knows how key Jan is to all this. I love you Jan.

For me this is a bit like the story of Colonel Sanders, who started his first KFC at the age of 62.

I “retired” at 62 to teach, travel, write, do podcasts and the like.

I told Blaine etc that I am NOT an evangelist.

The first I know of who was a teacher first and then an evangelist.

It is time to preach.

We will look at the parting words of both Jesus and Paul.

**Acts 1:8**

Jesus’ farewell address

Jesus is addressing a group of relatively poor, uneducated, political outcasts, fromthe boonies of Galilee, with no connection to power, most of whom did not even know Greek or Latin, whose worldview was diametrically opposed to that of the Greek and Roman world.

You will bring my witnesses in Merced, and also in all Merced County, including Atwater, Los Banos and Chowchilla, and to Turlock, Modesto and Stockton—to the ends of the California Central Valley which has a population of 7.5 million. Merced metro area 256 thousand

Acts 1:8 This is not Jesus' drop the mike moment. It is his raise the body moment.

Like Deut 31-32 for Moses. His farewell address, in which he said to the people,

(Deut 32:47 “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you today… They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”)

**Acts 20 Paul addresses the Ephesian elders.**

Context: Ephesus was Paul’s favorite church.

He had spent three years there—more than any other church.

He had left Timothy—his right hand guy—there to lead the church.

From Ephesus, and the campus ministry at the Lecture Hall of Tyranus “All the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia head the word of the Lord.” (Acts 19:10)

Acts 20:17-38 is Luke’s most careful and thorough description of Paul’s ministry. It is Paul’s farewell address to the church he held most dear. It is a bit like Matthew 28:18-20 or Acts 1:3-8 for Jesus. We should pay very careful attention to this passage, which is one of the most important in the book.

20:18 You know how I lived in the province of Asia…. Q: How did Paul live? Let it challenge you.

Imagine, at the end of your life being able to say to those who knew you well, “You know how I lived.”

Could you say this? How have you lived?

Imagine your own funeral. What will they say.

How did Paul live his life?

Gave up the right to a family and a career. 1 Cor 9:1, 12-18

2 Cor 11:23-29

Coll 1:28-29 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all the energy with which Christ so powerfully works in me.”

This is my goal: that at the end of my life I could say with a sincere face, “You know how I have lived.”

What would that look like for you?

v. 19 I served the Lord with great humility… Imagine having served with such humility that people would say of you, “She lived with great humility.”

Imagine being able to look at those you had ministered to in the eyes and make this bold statement. “I served the Lord with great humility.

There is serving with humility—sufficient that others would say that about you.

Then there is serving with SUCH humility that you can say it yourself.

Is this what your ministry is like?

What was Paul’s ministry like that he could say this?

Paul endured the worst sort of insults from Jews and even from Judaizing Christians. He worked for a living when he certainly deserved to be prayed to preach.

He gave up the right to have children and a wife in order to plant churches.

What does a life lived with that kind of humility look like?

How would you have to change in order to be able to say this?

Could you say to your friends: I have served you with great humility?

v. 19 and with tears…. Note the passion of Paul for those he ministered to. Have you cried for those to whom you minister? What were these tears about?

Are you passionate like Paul?

Paul’s ministry: 1 Thess 2:5-12. Let us be challenged by this. Paul gave himself to those he was ministering to. v. 7 Like a mother…. V. 11 Like a father…. Sometimes we must minister like a mother, sometimes like a father.

v. 20-21 What did Paul preach? Repentance and faith. Which is harder to call people to????? Biblical repentance or biblical faith?

Are you calling people in your life to repentance and of faith?

Where did he do this? Publicly and from house to house. On campus, at work, in your neighborhood.

v. 22-23 Q: Why to Jerusalem? (because the Holy Spirit told him) What was he expecting there? (v. 23 prison and hardships)

Paul’s attitude: If that is where God is sending me, then so be it.

Paul wanted to preach to the powerful in Rome. The only plan he could think of was to go to Jerusalem and get himself arrested, so he could be sent to Rome in chains.

What would you be willing to do to see the gospel spread?

Would you leave your comfortable lifestyle and job? Would you be willing to be farther than you would like from your grandchildren?

v. 24 I consider my life worth nothing. What was Paul holding on to? Nothing. All of his value came from God. How did it affect Paul to feel this way? Imagine how freeing it is to put your life totally in God’s hands. If only we could do this!!!!!

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Q: How can you move in a direction to be more like Paul in this?

[If time, Phil 3:4-11]

v. 25-27 How could Paul feel “innocent of the blood of all men.”? Had he literally shared with everyone? No! But he had made the most of every opportunity “to proclaim to you the whole will of God.”

Can you look at your family and make this declaration?

Can you look at your classmates or co-workers or neighbors and declare yourself before them to be “innocent of the blood of all men.”?

What part of God’s will do you hesitate to preach?

v. 28-35 advice to shepherds….

v. 28-31 Protect against false teaching and false Christians.

You are not in it for selfish ends.

v. 32-35 Do not seek financial gain, and do not only hang out with the “sharp”

Be willing to help the weak and the vulnerable.

Paul’s advice to shepherds is very similar to that in Ezekiel 34. Shepherd/take care of my flock.

v. 36-38 A final extremely emotional farewell.

This is how Jan and I feel about the members of the MCC.

You know how I have lived.

I served with great humility.

I served with tears.

I preached repentance and faith.

I consider my life worth nothing.

Let us strive to be like Paul in our ministry.