

Vision Sunday: Church Mobilization, 11/14/21

Have you ever been part of team when you could just sense that you were playing with something a little extra, so in sync for a game or a season that was just beyond the ability of any one player and it just sort of carried you to victory? In sports we call that momentum, or nicknamed Big Mo- The Eagles playoff run that won a superbowl with a back-up QB... The Holy Spirit moves among His Church in much the same way sometimes. You can see him moving in the book of Acts, throughout church history, on town to town, city to city... in a variety of small and big ways. In the early 2000's we were in a season at Frontline, a DC young adult ministry, where we sensed the Spirit preparing us for an external focus. There was an awakening to the significant needs of the underserved communities of the District, a compassion and sense of calling to explore ways to make inroads to share the love of Christ through word and deed. Groups gathered to pray and explore and walk the city to see what God might have in store.

Julia was a Frontliner who worked as a teacher in the District. Every day after school she would drive past a rundown park in Lincoln Heights, which was the most under-resourced community in DC, it was the Riverside or West-Center of DC. She had driven by this park countless times, without ever really having the eyes to see. But this time was different. She saw lots of young kids hanging out in the park... She said she was reminded of Jesus, looking out over Jerusalem seeing people harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd who had compassion on them and said, *Matthew 9³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

Julia suddenly felt compelled to stop her car, get out, grab a couple children's books and sit on the broken bench. Slowly but surely children began to make eye contact and see the kindness in her eyes. And one by one they came over as she read a story to them. For several weeks Julia would stop by the park each day and bring books. And then God began to give her a vision for more. What if she and other Frontliners could start a basic after school program right here in the park? And so after sharing with her church family, a few at a time began to come with her, and then a few more and a few more. They began to meet parents and grandparents, guardians of these children, find out more needs, the church helped pitch in to buy some supplies, books and snacks. Opening the door through relationship, they were able to begin sharing stories of Jesus with the children and families. Asking if they can take the kids to a local church on Sunday mornings. Fast forward a few years, Julia and a small community of other Christian young adults at Frontline started a non-profit called **Daybreak: Sharing the gospel with under-resourced communities while nurturing children and strengthening families.** They were making such an impact that the city gave them 2 houses to use for **their program.** Today 20 years later, multi-church partners, Daybreak has served thousands of children and families. Hundreds have come to Christ, been mentored and nurtured, been the first of their family to graduate college, and many serving the Lord all over the city and country. A generational, transformational impact has happened in Lincoln Heights, DC because a local church caught a vision of sentness, and Julia obeyed the simple call to see the need and get out of her car to do something about it.

[Blank Slide] I believe the Spirit is doing something similar here at Brandywine. He has been preparing us for an external impact in our community at such a time as this. I believe there are

many Julias in our midst. We sense the call to be mobilized. When the Spirit moves among a church or community- there are always two results: **The power of the Gospel, through demonstration, through good works. The Truth of the Gospel through declaration and people are saved.** It's not either/or...hand out some tracts, stand on a street corner... it's also not just giving turkey boxes out- it's both together, embodied through presence in a community

Notice how Jesus describes his ministry: **Luke 4 ¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.**

Notice the declaration of the good news was accompanied by the demonstration of the good news. And this is the pattern everywhere Jesus went. He preached and taught, but he also brought physical relief to the sick, he sought justice for the poor and marginalized, he spent time among people who were the most under-resourced showing mercy and giving freedom. He preached on the mountain but also fed the 5000. **"But the pattern of the kingdom that was revealed through those signs must continue in the church. We cannot be faithful to the words of Jesus if our deeds do not reflect the compassion of his ministry.**

Kingdom evangelism is therefore holistic as it transmits by word and deed the promise of Christ for body and soul." -Jonathan Edwards

The Holy Spirit moved through the early church to transform people and communities in the very same way. In the book of Acts, the church demonstrated the power of the gospel- ministered to the sick, carried the burdens of the financially disadvantaged through the ministry of the local church AND declared the saving message of the gospel of Jesus and called people to repentance and belief in Him for salvation.

Paul said that our demonstration of the gospel is a vital part of our purpose for which He saved us. **Titus 2:14 He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.**

Ephesians 2:10 We are Christ's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that he prepared beforehand that we might walk in them. Jesus didn't save us to sit and soak, but to be transformed and go!

We've built this aspirational value into our DNA- Core Value **Gospel Partnerships for our City** **The gospel of Jesus is humanity's only hope both now and forever. God has placed us in our city to be a lighthouse for Christ. To be most effective we must partner with other like-minded churches, agencies and ministries. Therefore, we will seek to earn the right through love, service and effective ministry partnership to proclaim the truth.**

The Spirit is on the move friends- I believe he desires to fresh movement of demonstrating and declaring the gospel in our community who desperately needs to encounter Jesus. I believe

Brandywine is has been freed from debt for this reason, God has resourced us, primed us and is preparing us to make a significant gospel impact not only inside but outside the doors of our church. We've talked a lot but now it's time to put it into action. You hear me say all the time, we are blessed to be a blessing. Brandywine is not a cruise ship, it's an aircraft carrier. We want to equip and send you, both individually and collectively to declare and demonstrate the gospel. To teach you to share and defend your faith. To learn how to serve our community in humble and empowering ways that help not hurt our city. Not in transactional ways- merely handing out a track or a food box and then never interacting again. But in embodied ways, relational, transformational ways- the way of Christ, the apostles and the early church.

There are three tangible next steps we are taking to live out our calling. Because of our debt freedom we have made room in the budget to hire a full-time **Pastor of Church Mobilization and Groups** and designate administrative help for support. This pastor will be the flag-carrier for external impact in our community. His job will be to help us identify our unique and specific calling as a people in our community. He will help build a pipeline to partnerships through One4Wilmington, existing local partners like SBM, and identifying new partners and opportunities in areas of focus. He will build volunteer teams to coordinate the ways we are serving our community. We have exciting news that we have a candidate and are in the final stages of vetting and hiring.

We have also freed up nearly 200k setting it aside in **Church Mobilization fund** to seed and help launch our church mobilization efforts and establish a pattern for future local outreach budgets.

Praying and Dreaming. The church moves forward on her knees We are going to start praying for this- **prayer gathering on Zoom** this Tuesday. This will be our topic. We sense the Spirit's movement. What will be our Daybreak story? Where might He lead us as a church?

[Praying and Dreaming] Dream together: #1 statistical factor for what prevents children from thriving? Fatherlessness/Father figures. It's an epidemic no one wants to talk about but is behind every statistic. U.S. Department of Justice, children from fatherless homes account for:

- **Suicide:** 63 percent of youth suicides
- **Runaways:** 90 percent of all homeless and runaway youths
- **Behavioral Disorders:** 85 percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders
- **High School Dropouts:** 71 percent of all high school dropouts
- **Juvenile Detention Rates:** 70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions
- **Substance Abuse:** 75 percent of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers

I wonder if the Spirit would want to move among the Churches in Wilmington to do something about? As Pastor Derrick says, to transform Murdertown into Mercytown. There are other likeminded churches who desire to see this too.