

PP (Sermon Graphic) Multiply³**Matthew 28:18-20 *Multiply Churches*****3/26-27/2022**

In the Museum of Natural History in Chicago, there was a checkerboard display with 64 squares, and starting with the first box, they put a grain of wheat and doubled it for each consecutive box: 1, then 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 so on, until they couldn't fit all the grains in a box. Then the display flashed a question: *'At this rate of doubling each successive square, how much would you have on the checkerboard by the 64th square?'*

Push a button for the answer: one sextillion, enough grain to cover the entire subcontinent of India 50 feet deep, or 153 billion tons of rice, 1,000 years of the world's rice harvest. Leading me to share from **PP** Walter Henrichsen who said, *'The world is multiplying while the church is merely adding. Addition can never keep pace with multiplication.'*

Last week I explained that in 2012 we shifted to a multisite model ministry. Multisiting has been exciting, but there are some weaknesses in it. It has limited the uniqueness of each campus as the sermons are the same for both. It has not leveraged the full gifts of the leadership team by keeping them primarily in the shepherding role but not a church-leading, church-shaping role. Many have bounced back and forth between the campuses and with the same preaching, often the same worship it would seem it wouldn't matter. But that impedes rich community development on each campus. The end result is, multiplying campuses is not the same as multiplying churches. Where we are going represents a shift, but one that was in mind as far back as 19 years ago. In 2003, I was sent by our Board to Manlius, NY, to learn how a church there was multiplying. It birthed in me a desire to plant churches in the most organic family style way possible. Last August, the Elders asked me to clarify where I believed God was leading our church. I presented a 38 page vision document, and central to it was an adjusted vision to multiplanting. What I did not know at that time was that our district, the Eastern District Association of the Evangelical Free Church, was actually moving in the same exact direction. **PP** (Video) Here is Tony Balsamo, one of the two District Superintendents talking about it.

Let's turn to the book of Acts and get our bearings as we look toward this adjusted vision of multiplying churches, what we are calling multiplanting.

PP *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Acts 1:8

What began with 120 people in that upper room, just days later spread to include 5,000 men and in addition many of their wives and children.

Clearly, the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God moved the people of God to witness of the Son of God, and the number of believers were multiplied.

This growth by multiplication continued, for not long after, **PP** *"And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."* **Acts 6:7**

While all this was happening, the gospel had yet to really break out of the land of Israel.

But that suddenly changed because of this truth: **PP** *The work that God performs, the devil will try to hinder.*

This is true every time, and we have seen it happen here at Cornerstone, and the enemy will never stop trying to hinder the gospel's expansion in this church
Persecution broke out against the early church and the believers scattered, many fleeing outside of Israel

Remember this: **PP** *The devil will never succeed in thwarting the plans of God*

For as the early church scattered, they dropped the seeds of the gospel as they went, and those seeds brought forth fruit, **PP** *"Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word." Acts 8:4*

Phillip was one of them who went to the city of Samaria **PP** *'and proclaimed to them the Christ...so there was much joy in that city.'* Acts 8:5, 8

All of these new believers inside and outside Israel began to gather together in churches, and churches were springing up as far away as Antioch

And from Antioch up into Galatia which is modern western Turkey

And they continued to multiply all over Asia Minor, and then all over the Roman Empire and Beyond to the known and settled world

When God increases His people like a flock, He increases churches for them to gather together
The Apostle Paul wrote to his missionary partner Titus, **PP** *"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you"* Titus 1:5

Crete was located in modern Greece, and it seems there was a church in every town there that needed Elders to shepherd them

Paul-along with the other Apostles-would go into a town or city to preach the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit would empower the Gospel to bring many to repent and believe

These believers would gather together as a church, and Paul would help them establish their servant leaders called Elders

All of the Christians would then do the work of witnessing, wherever they went, and bring more and more new believers into churches, and start new churches for them to belong to

It is incredibly exciting to hope for the same thing to happen today, in our area!

The way it will go back to our main text today: **PP** *"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."* Acts 9:31

Walking in the fear of the Lord means they serving God wholeheartedly

They could do that because they were walking daily *in the comfort of the Holy Spirit*

The Spirit of God gave them the want to do what they ought to, the power and desire to obey

Fast forward to our day...multiplanting will succeed in the same way!

We are not adopting some new methodology, or utilizing some church growth technique we read About, but rather multiplying as the early church did

PP We will Pray and ask God to increase His people like a flock, and Declare the gospel to the spiritually dead all around us, and Serve Him wholeheartedly, He will direct us to multiply churches

PP (Diagram of churches) As worshipers and disciples are multiplied, we will need to multiply churches for them to gather together in their unique communities

Friends, I had someone leave our church over a decade ago, because he wanted us to become a

mega church thinking that a massive church was God's intention for all His churches
 We are not intending to become a mega church, but a multiplanting church
 Imagine multiplying churches in a family network that looks similar to how a family grows
 Millions upon millions of parents have experienced the mixture of happiness and sadness as their children grow up, leave home and begin their own families
 Parents pour into their children values, teaching, traditions and they bring those into their new families, and start new traditions becoming unique in their families
 So imagine what we call Second Street Campus now, in 2 or 3 years becoming its own church
 They have their own church name, their own Board, their own budget and their own preaching
 The same DNA of Vision, yet unique in their own context
 Each church will sign a **Cornerstone Multiple Member Church Agreement**
 We will be forming a Multiplanting Team that will manage a Church Planting Fund, which is one reason we have hired Doug Ranck as our Executive Director
 Each church in our Family Network of churches will give a % of their budget to this fund, so that we will always have a fund the next plant

I won't be the lead pastor overseeing the other pastors, they are responsible along with their leadership teams for their own churches
 We have launched a 3 month Deacon and Elder training program so that leaders are ready to serve and lead these new churches
 Imagine 10 years from now we have several churches in our family network of churches, each one with the same vision and mission, yet each autonomous and unique, multiplying worshipers, disciples and churches in their area in the way God leads them

Cornerstone, we will be rolling out more communication in the next several months, but let me leave you with this: We believe God's favorite math is multiplication
 Yet, if we are to be successful with the vision He has given us, we need to learn to the 3 difficult things: Simplify, Shift and Spread
 It is where the rubber meets the road, and it is where we are heading next week
 Friends, remember the **PP** Hourglass diagram as we look to Multiply Worshipers, disciples and Churches
 Remember to pray **PP** Ezekiel 36:37, *"Thus says the Lord GOD: This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them: to increase their people like a flock. Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the LORD."*
 And look forward with us to planting more and more Christ-Centered Churches
 Pray