

We are Impacting the World Around Us.

Pastor Mandy Barkhaus:

So here we go. We are in the final week of our sermon series, Guided by Values and Fueled by Generosity. And we have been looking at the life-changing power of being generous. Now, we believe God has called us to partner with his kingdom and work in the world by participating in the church in various ways.

Now, each week of this sermon series, we've heard from people who are part of Horizons, and we've heard how this community has changed their lives. Today, we are going outside of the walls because we value the importance of serving the world.

So here is our value. And in this part, you get a say with me.

So here is our last value. Please join me. We are impacting the world around us as Jesus teaches. We intentionally and boldly serve others to show God's love by doing justice and showing mercy.

We humbly care for all people. God's kingdom shines brighter when everyone shares their talents and spiritual gifts. Now, the word impact is a really great word. I love the word impact, and the word impact means the force of impression of one thing on another. Now Jesus makes an impression on us, Jesus impacts us, and so, therefore, we do the same thing by shining Jesus's light in the world, by praising God, by doing the good work and joining the Holy Spirit, doing the work that Jesus already started.

So Jesus makes an impression on us, and we make an impression on others. But there is another part of this word impact the definition of it and the definition of impact includes that it's a significant or major effect. So not only is it just a little impact, has a little effect on people, but a significant one, which is why we have in our value that we serve not passively, but rather we serve intentionally and boldly.

If Advent starts next weekend, then that makes this weekend, the day that we celebrate Christ the King Sunday, or sometimes it's called King of the Universe Sunday. So that is what we are doing today. We are celebrating that Christ is our King.

Now, Christ the King Sunday comes at the very end of the liturgical year. Now, I get that Horizons is not an overly liturgical church. You're like, What does that even mean? But the liturgical year in the church is designed to help us understand the mystery of Christ as our Savior from the very beginning, the time of creation, to us, to that to the life of the Israelites through the life and service of Jesus on this earth to Jesus's death, on in on the cross, His resurrection from the tomb, that the Great Commission that he gave to his disciples, his ascension into heaven and Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given to the

church, and then everything else in between. This is a big, long story that we celebrate every year. And if Christ's life story can be defined in a whole year, then the very first chapters would introduce the characters. We'd have Joseph and Mary and, of course, Jesus, the main character of the story in every good book. Every good story, you know, has this climax.

And where there's this tension that builds up, the story starts to get a little bit more exciting. And that's where we are. We are at the very end because Advent next week will be the beginning of the story. And suppose you are a book lover like you understand a good story. In that case, you understand a good

story that when you finish a book that's so good that the ending just like ties everything together, it'll give you're a book lover like you feel like you are a better person because you just read that book like you have a new best friend, right?

And so here we have this story of Jesus that is so great that we tell this story year after year. And today is when we celebrate all that we know from reading and hearing, and living the story. And we think about what's expected of us as we claim to believe that Christ is our King. Now, the word king to us in this country has a different meaning than it did a long time ago, or in this country or in other places.

It just doesn't hold the same meaning. And so sometimes we can think about Jesus instead as our leader or our ruler or something like that, where we can relate to more. But I want to remind us of this interaction that happened between Pilate, who was the governor at the time and Jesus, and this happened right before Jesus was crucified.

This comes from John Chapter 18 verses, starting in verse 33. Pilate went back into the palace. He summoned Jesus and asked, Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus replied, My kingdom doesn't originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight so that I wouldn't have been arrested by the Jewish leaders. My kingdom isn't from here, so are you, a king, Pilate said, and Jesus answered.

You say that I am a king. I was born and came into this world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Whoever accepts the truth listens to my voice. Now, here in this passage of Scripture, the Pilate is mocking this man. Pilate is mocking Jesus, the Jesus that some are calling the King, and Jesus is standing before him.

He's bruised because he was just slapped or punched in the face just hours earlier. His friends had betrayed him, had deserted him. And then he's he's going to be flogged. The next day, he'll be executed. So, Pilate is standing, thinking that he holds all of the power in this situation. This King that is standing before him stands before him.

Not much of a king, or so it seems to Pilate. But the problem is that Pilate thought of the small cell when he asked if Jesus was King of the Jews. Now, the idea that Christ as ruler is sometimes rejected in a society that is very individualistic like we don't want to say that we have a ruler, right?

We that that sometimes can be rejected. That idea is sometimes people will reject the term Lord or King for Jesus because they believe that these titles have been borrowed from oppressive systems of government. And it's true that some kings have indeed been oppressive and unjust. But if we think about Jesus like this, then we've missed the whole point of Jesus.

If we believe in the power, the kind of power that Pilate was thinking, then we've missed the point of Jesus because Christ's kingship is one that doesn't come from this place but is currently at this place. And this kingship is one of humility and service. It's not the same kind of power that the Pilate was thinking. And I think that sometimes we also get stuck thinking too small as Christ the King's followers; our responsibility as stewards goes far beyond our money or our generosity.

It's really about recognizing Jesus has the power to remove our burdens and replace those burdens with ever lasting life and our actions should reflect our gratitude for that kind of power. Matthew, Chapter 5:16 says this in the same way: Let your light shine before people so that they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

See, Christ is the King of the universe. Jesus was there when it was when it all started. He has dominion over all things. And as followers of Christ, we are responsible for caring for the universe, for the creation, to be good stewards in the same way that Jesus cared. Now, that's what we are called to do from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden and Jesus's life.

And words testified to that said, Yes, that is how you are supposed to live, caring for one another. And caring for creation. But the universe is a really, really big place. So how do we do this? We start with our own little world around us, and we're going to change. We're going to impact one life at a time and then one world at a time to be a part of God's kingdom.

Christ is the Lord of the Universe, and we are stewards made with a purpose. But the story, the story that we repeat every single year over and over again, the story actually isn't over. It's just the beginning and will continue throughout eternity. So Advent next Sunday is the beginning of the story, but it's not just about preparing for the birth of a baby boy.

It's about preparing for the birth of the King of the universe. And that is that is our story. That should be our story that we live out every single day as we prepare for Jesus to return again. That's what we are preparing for when we get to Advent next week. We've been talking about generosity these last few weeks, but generosity is more than just about money and giving in that way.

It's about our whole life. It's about impacting the world. If we want to impact the world, we have to all be all in to do that. Now, there are plenty of things here at Horizons that we are doing to do just that. We are impacting one life at a time one little community at a time one little school at a time, and one little orphanage out of time.

Here at Horizons, we care about people's emotional needs. But several months ago, we offered mental health first aid training for our youth leaders and others who wanted to make sure that we were caring for one another in that way. This year, we are having a special blue Christmas service. Now, this is a special service, different from our normal Christmas Eve service.

It'll be on December 21st, and it's for anybody who this year has experienced a loss or is in pain or stressed about anything. And during that service, we will recognize that this time of year that's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year for some people. We recognize that it's a really hard and difficult time of the year, and the service will be open to anyone.

So if you've lost a loved one, if you experienced a change in your life, or you're just experiencing a difficult time, you are invited to worship with us on the 21st. And more importantly, there might be somebody in our community that, you know, that might just need this kind of service. So I invite you to be invitational and invite them.

We also care about people's physical needs here. We provide food and hope for people through our food, through giving food to the little free pantries, and our support of To The Brim Community. We give blankets and Bibles to the People's City Mission. We support teachers and children and parents and families at Zeeman Elementary. Here is a thank you from some of the people in our community to you.

Pastor Dee Jay:

All right. Hello, I'm Pastor Dee Jay and I'm here at People City Mission and I'm the pastor of PCM Connections here at the Mission and the chaplain here. So, I am here to talk about the blankets that we

get and the Bibles that come with them, as well as how important they are to our guests during this time of the year.

My favorite thing to watch is when I'm walking through the Mission and I get to see a teenager or a grade school child being wrapped up in one of your blankets. You send one of the blankets that we receive from Verizon. And it warms my heart because many of our family shelter guests and our children come with limited items.

And so when we have this blanket to give to them, to give them that that that much more comfort, it's like wrapping Jesus around them, even if it's for a little while. I also, during the wintertime, I'll have people come in that have been camping, and they need they need something more to keep them warm. And so I keep some of those put aside so that I can share that with them as well.

And we have single ladies here and every Christmas we have what we call we give them a present, which is and we use these blankets to wrap up some special items for those that are here during Christmas. So these blankets are so important. And if I'm able to give a Bible with it, that makes it so much even better. So, thank you so much for providing these blankets.

Dr. Rick Devaney:

I'd like to take a minute to introduce myself. I'm the principal at Zeeman Elementary School. My name is Rick Devaney. I want to take an opportunity to personally thank everyone at Horizon's church for your endless support to our students and our staff and our families. Your congregation goes the extra mile, and it does have an impact on our students and our staff and our families here at Zeeman, everything from the Backpack program to supplying our students and families with school supplies to providing good treats for our our staff throughout the school year for the help that you provide our families through the holiday seasons.

All of those things really, truly do have an impact. I know that it does not happen without a dedicated congregation. Dedicated people who have a heart for giving others. And so for that reason, I again want to personally thank everybody at Horizon's for all that you do, and please know that you do have an impact. Your work has an impact on our school, and for that we are eternally grateful. Thank you.

Pastor Mandy Barkhaus:

Yes. Thank you for your generosity in making this happen here in our city. And we didn't even ask him to use the word impact. So that was pretty cool. And some of you are really passionate about showing mercy in these kind of ways and giving to others. And some of you are really passionate about doing justice.

And I think it's really cool because there is room for both mercy and justice work. And not only is there room for doing mercy and justice through work, but we are repeat widely called throughout Scripture to do both. So here's a thank you for some of the work that you have been doing in our community.

Beth and Olivia:

Hi, I'm Beth, I'm Olivia. We're with Justice in Action, and we want to say thank you to Horizon's your partnership with other faith communities here in Lancaster County is what makes doing justice possible.

Pastor Mandy Barkhaus:

Thank you for your generosity in making a more just community. That's not all we're doing. We're also going even beyond our community. Project Hope was started here at Horizons simply by one person who met somebody while they were on a train, and they started this relationship and they realized that there is some port, some support that we could give to some places that are not in our community.

In fact, they're across the world in India. So here is a thank you to you from the other side of the globe.

Pastor Brabin Sipka and Susama Sipka

Hi friends, I am pastor Prabin Sipka Director of Bethel system, with me, my beautiful wife, she's with me. Yes, I am Susama Sipka Director of the children home.

We are thankful to all of you for your love for your support, for your prayer. We are also praying for you in India, so thank you for your token of kindness. Thank you for your love. And mercy for the Bethel children home because of your support. And help children getting a good education. They are getting every bit of good food. They are enjoying the security are mostly they are enjoying the new reading, which is supported by you. So they are enjoying every day in their new building. Thank you for your kindness. And help, really, we are grateful and thankful for all your support. bye friends bye

Sister Jesse:

Hi, Pastor Mandy and all the members of the Horizons community church, especially the sponsors of Project Hope, Molly, and Me. We come to thank you in a very special way for all the support you have rendered us in the past many years. Because of your support, we achieved our Mission, and we will continue to do the same in the future. Thank you very much.

Pastor Mandy Barkhaus:

Thank you for your generosity in impacting children's lives across the world. Matthew 5:16 Again, in the same way, let your light shine before people so that they can see the good things you do, and praise your Father who is in heaven.

But if Jesus is our King and if He is the King of the universe, there is more world to impact. More than half a million people are homeless in the United States. About half of all Americans 117 million individuals have one or more preventable chronic diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, type two diabetes, some cancers and poor bone health.

17 million households in the U.S. are food insecure. More than 110 million people in the world are forcefully displaced from their homes. 43 million of those are children, 771 million people in the world don't have close access to clean drinking water. And every minute an infant dies from infection caused by a lack of safe water and an unclean environment.

Is there any hope?

David O.:

Mandy just said there's a lot of darkness in the world. We see it every day. We see it on the news. We see the hunger that she just talked about it. You see the tragedies. You see the hate. And a lot of times, we can get that into our heads. And it just seems almost inevitable that we'll be just will succumb to our anxieties and our fear.

But there is a hope and there is a light.

Yeah. And these past five Sundays have just been a reminder to us that we do have hope and together as a community, we can share in that hope and our Mission and our values help us point the way.

Our first one is we are guided by the Holy Spirit.

Amy L.:

And Brian Thomas reminded us that that Jesus mission and his work is the same as our own, the same spirit that guided Jesus guides and empowers us now in continuing that work, we first need to be anchored in Scripture and in prayer and spend time really paying attention to what God is calling us to do.

David O.:

The next one is we are growing together.

Amy L.:

One of the biggest reasons that we have a church community is to help each other grow, and we need to continue to grow all throughout our lives, not just not just today or tomorrow, but all throughout our our time.

David O.:

We are impacting the world around us.

Amy L.:

So today we celebrated that it is Christ the King or, King of the Universe Sunday, and we learned about how doing our part to transform the world is again Jesus work continue and Jesus is our King and we are a part of the kingdom to come.

David O.:

We have a place for you at the table.

Amy L.:

Yeah. So the Bible is really this big long story about God welcoming and God including. And if you think about it, the story goes on, and God's table just continues to get bigger and bigger throughout the story. It's about thousands of people in our own radius, in our own communities, who don't have a church home, who don't already know the hope and the love of Jesus, and who don't understand the importance of living in a community of love and support.

David O.:

On week one of the series, Pastor Mandy shared with us our Mission. Our Mission is Horizons a community where we mature as disciples and lead all to Jesus for the transformation of the world from one generation to the next. And she shared a powerful illustration I'm actually going to read this to you. This was from her sermon, and I'll probably not deliver it as good as she did.

But I want you to imagine a path to God. And it's a dark. And it's dark because there's darkness and evil in this world. And the path is not an easy path. It's a winding, dark path. And imagine that if you had a lantern to carry, if you had that lantern and that light was Jesus, that's going to be really helpful for you on this.

Walk along the path and imagine someone walking on that path without your light as well. Your light is going to be helpful for them. You're going to be able to walk beside you. They are going to be able to walk beside you and find their way down that path, and imagine a few more people than showed up. Now, my light for the 10th person behind me or the 20th person behind me isn't going to be very helpful for that person.

But imagine, like the passage in Exodus 36, everyone doing their part and every single one of us carrying the light of Jesus. If we were able to light the pathway to Jesus, we all stood in a row all along this winding path and everybody who wasn't carrying the life or the life light could see the way. Eventually, those people without light could see the love, the generosity, and the light radiating from the church being the church on that path.

And then eventually, maybe they wouldn't. They would start carrying that light along with them too, and then they would add to the path, and it would continue on and on each day myself, you all are invited to continue to join in this work.

Let's say a quick prayer. God, today, we consecrate our prayers and commitments to and for this ministry; these personal giving goals symbolize our commitment to our faith and to this community. We make them freely and willingly, knowing that they will help us continue to follow the Holy Spirit, grow together, impact the world around us, and welcome others to the table.

We now bless and guide us and use us to further your kingdom. May our pledges be used to build up this church, spread the good news, and serve those in need. In Jesus name, Amen.