

A couple of months ago we started on a journey. The first message I preached this year was meant to be a wake-up call for us, individually and as a church. I asked the question, “Is Restoration becoming, or has it become a silo?” Since then, we’ve been working through the importance of reaching out to the lost and I’ve been working on providing you with tools to witness to those around you, and encouragement to use those tools. This morning, I want to talk to you about the flip-side of the message on silos. This morning, I want to talk to you about being lighthouses, both individually and as a church. As I’ve said before, God made it clear when he commissioned the church that reaching the lost with the good news of Jesus Christ is something that is very important to Him. And because it’s important to God, it should be important to us individually and as a church.

Please stand, if you're able, for the reading of today's scripture. (Matt. 28:18-20 & Acts 1:8).

Those are the same scriptures that I used in the message on silos. When God gave the great commission, he wasn’t

asking. He wasn't suggesting. He was commanding, and He wasn't kidding! Obviously, it's very important to God that the church, and specifically WE as a church, are reaching out to the lost around us...

Remember in the message about silos that we talked about how a silo is designed to do two things – Keep what's inside, inside and what's outside, outside.

We have the most valuable thing in the world, the truth of God's love for us, shown in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of His son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for our sins. There's a dark scary world out there that needs that message, but a silo is designed to keep it safely stored inside and keep that world out. A silo is the opposite of what the great commission calls us to be doing.

The great commission is about being a lighthouse.

(Lighthouse slide)

A lighthouse is really only designed for one thing, and that is to shine a light into the world in order to guide away from danger and toward safety. Lighthouses shine forth a bright

light that cuts through darkness, fog, and rain for all to see for miles around. Did you know that the light in a lighthouse may shine at over one million candelas? In case you're wondering what that is, go home today, turn on your 100-watt lightbulb and stare into it.... Now imagine it being almost 8000 times brighter and you're looking into the beacon of a lighthouse... How bright is the beacon that Restoration is shining into our community? How bright is the beacon you are shining to your family, friends, and co-workers? A lighthouse without a light may be a tourist attraction, but as soon as the light goes out it is no longer really a lighthouse... The Bible refers to Christians as lights in the darkness... Cities on a hill for all to see. It says, "let your light so shine before men." We are called to be a lighthouse, both as individuals and as a church. But if we're keeping the light inside instead of shining into the dark world out there, we're really just a well-lit tomb.

For the last several months, actually pretty much ever since God convicted me about whether I was going to follow MY calling to just do pulpit supply or His calling to be the pastor

here, I wake up many mornings between 2 and 3 o'clock. I get up, have a time of prayer, reading my Bible, meditating on what God is trying to tell me in what I've read and what he has done and is doing in my life, thinking about what I am going to be doing that day, and how I can be moving myself and Restoration closer to where God wants us to be, and then I usually work on writing or polishing messages. (For example, I started writing this message at about 2:30 in the morning and at this point in the message it was 3:45.) One thing I've noticed... at 2:00 in the morning it's awful dark in my house. If I don't turn on a light, I can't read my Bible or do anything worthwhile. Just bump into things, stub my toes, and try not to fall over all the things that want to trip me up. Life is like that. We have access to a light that is powerful and effective. The question is, are we going to turn it on and walk in the light, or are we going to stumble around in the darkness. One thing that I've found over and over going through the dry times in my life where it felt like God was miles away and my prayers were bouncing off the ceiling – If I'm not plugged in to the power source, God, His

light isn't going to be shining in my life. And if His light isn't shining in me then I can't be a lighthouse to anyone else. At best, I'm a penlight in a fogbank... not doing any good for myself or anyone else... How's your light? If you'll spend some time, even just a few minutes, every day praying, reading God's word, and remembering all that God has done for you, I guarantee you that it will start glowing brighter. And if we individually are glowing brighter, then we as a church can shine more of God's love into the world around us.

Something that I've found out in reading about and visiting lighthouses - A lighthouse usually isn't a very comfortable place to live. It's not designed for comfort - It's designed to shine a light into the dark. Remember that I said in the silo message that I was reading Restoration's constitution and found that one of the things we commit to in it is, quote "to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort." Unquote. I don't know, but I sure hope that the last couple of months talking about our need to be reaching the lots around us, both as a church and as

individuals, has made you a whole lot less comfortable and complacent. By the way, we haven't done anything official on the constitution yet, but I've gone through it and made a lot of proposed changes that need to be reviewed and approved, and the policies and procedures document and a lot of other documents have been revised or created, and reviewed and approved by the leadership team. I can attest to the fact that a lot of the things I pointed out before won't be issues or omissions moving forward.

(picture of lighthouse from Alaska trip)

This is a picture of a lighthouse Cindi and I saw when we were in Alaska the last time. On a calm day, at low tide, it sits nearly 100 feet above the water. In past storms there have been waves that reached the base of the lighthouse. Before this lighthouse was built, this stretch of water between Juneau and Skagway was the site of many shipwrecks and a lot of lives were lost in storms here. We know all about the storms of life. They rage around us, and sometimes in us, and without the knowledge of God's truth and the presence of what the Bible calls, "the peace that

passes understanding” we would be at risk of being torn apart and shipwrecked every day. Well folks, again, if we aren’t shining our light into the darkness out there, people all around us are being torn apart and shipwrecked every day, and dying without hope. What we have inside these 4 walls is the light and hope for a future that the people out there need.

Did you ever notice where they put lighthouses? I mean real functional lighthouses, not the phony ones that they sometimes put in a park or outside a restaurant to attract attention and draw a crowd. (By the way, there are a lot of phony churches out there that draw big crowds but don’t shine any real light, but that’s another sermon.) When Cindi and I were on vacation out on the east coast a few years ago, we spent some time driving up the coast of Maine looking for lighthouses. There were some in towns, lighting the mouth of a harbor, that were pretty easy to get to. But most of the lighthouses we found were on a rocky point or a remote little island that we couldn’t reach. We could just look from a distance.

The locations of lighthouses says a lot about their purpose. They are there both to guide a ship to the safety of a port and to warn them away from the danger of hidden rocks. Like a lighthouse, the church is here to shine a light into the dark world outside. To steer people away from the rocky shoals of sin that lead to their death, destruction, and eternal torment and to guide them into the safe harbor of God's love, grace, forgiveness, and the eternal celebration of heaven.

Remember when I talked about silos, I said that I had been looking at the neighborhood where God has placed our church? I told you about the demographics for this neighborhood and Sioux Falls, and found that within ¼ mile of the church there are over 1200 people, with nearly 30% living below the poverty level, a 7.8% unemployment rate, and one of the higher crime rates in Sioux Falls. I also told you that, at that time, not including the people in the House of Boaz, near as I could tell, we had about 5 of every 10,000 people who lived within a one-mile radius of the church attending here. I know we've been working on outreach over

the last couple of months, and I think, hope, and pray that people are starting to take notice, but we still have a long way to go.

I want to tell you a story that you've all probably heard before, but it's 100% relevant to today's message...

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur there was a once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost.

Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, so that it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding areas, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews were trained. The little life-saving station grew.

Some of the new members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and so poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea.

So, they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in an enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they re-decorated it beautifully and furnished it as a sort of club.

Less of the members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired life boat crews to do this work.

The mission of life-saving was still given lip-service but most were too busy or lacked the necessary commitment to take part in the life-saving activities personally.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people.

They were dirty and sick, and some of them had different colors of skin, and some spoke a strange language, and the beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So, the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal life pattern of the club.

But some members insisted that life-saving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the life of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. They evolved into a club and yet another life-saving station was founded.

If you visit the seacoast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, only now most of the people drown.

Over the past 7 weeks, hopefully you've noticed that my messages have had a theme:

We talked about breaking down the walls of our silos, we talked about being fishers of men, overcoming the fear of witnessing, lifestyle evangelism, how to present your personal testimony, how to have a spiritual conversation, and tied them together with how to be an effective witness.

All of these topics were aimed at equipping you and encouraging you to reach out to the lost around you with God's love and truth. To get you started witnessing and inviting people, not just to come to Restoration, but more importantly to come to Christ.

So again, I want to ask you – Is Restoration a silo or a lighthouse? I challenge you and I beg you – Let's continue to kick down any walls that are keeping God's truth in and a

lost and dying world out. Let's rekindle the flame in our hearts and turn it into a beacon that shines brightly in the darkness around us. Let's continue moving forward toward truly making Restoration the lighthouse to our neighborhood and our city that God has called us to be.

Recently, I was reading a book called "Rediscovering Discipleship" and came across a poem that is a good description of how I hope to interact with you, and how I hope you interact with the people around you. It's by Edgar A. Guest, and is called, "The Sermons We See" –

**I'd rather see a sermon,
Than hear one any day;
I'd rather one would walk with me
Than merely tell the way
The eye's a better pupil
And more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel is confusing,
But example's always clear.
The best of all the preachers
Are the men who live their creeds.
For to see good put in action
Is what everybody needs.
I soon can learn to do it**

**If you'll let me see it done
I can watch your hands in action,
But your tongue too fast may run.
The lecture you deliver
May be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lessons
By observing what you do.
For I might misunderstand you
And the high advice you give,
But there's no misunderstanding
How you act, and how you live.**

Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to be talking about being disciples of Jesus. About removing the self-imposed obstacles to spiritual and physical growth and reaching our full potential as a church... Basically getting our B.U.T. "buts" out of the way and getting our B.U.T.T "butts" moving forward... We've been on a journey since the beginning of the year, but it's a journey that, if we do it right, has no end in this life but a final destination in the presence of God's glory of heaven.

Let's pray.