Introduction to the Churchwide Retreat 2024

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[0:00] All right, so this is just a short introduction, but you can turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. I'll speak on a verse from there, famous verse, 5 verse 20. By the way, yeah, in a moment we'll hand out the questions for the discussion.

There are, at the back of the booklet, there is kind of space for notes. So if you want to take notes, and you still have your pen from the bingo, then feel free to make notes at the back.
But yeah, retreat is great. I love retreats. It's such a wonderful foretaste of the new creation, right? Being here together in community.
But this is not why we are in Hong Kong. We are not in Hong Kong to just be together. We're going to do that forever. Now, why are we in Hong Kong? Well, because Jesus gave us a mission, right? Jesus is saving people, and he's doing that through us, through the church. Which is why, yeah, we are here, right? We are here to make mature disciples who love Hong Kong.
[1:06] So I want to just think about that for a moment as we get into our topic. And that verse, I think it's a great verse. So 2 Corinthians 5, verse 20.

This is one way that Paul describes our mission. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
So the image of an ambassador. Now, an ambassador is a representative, right? Someone who represents their country. You go somewhere, and there's a Dutch ambassador, and they represent Holland.
And basically, they're there to, yeah. You know, the king of Holland, of course, isn't there, but the ambassador is there. But a representative function, I guess we don't know ambassadors.
Let's change the image slightly. How about, like, the press secretary? So I'm sure most of us, you know, you watch the news, and there's, like, the U.S. and the White House.
[2:07] And there's the, you probably know that background, right? There's a lectern, and the blue background. And then the logo of the White House, and the American flags. And there's someone, yeah, the press secretary, who is speaking for the U.S. president, right?

Announcing new policies, or new actions. That's, yeah. They're representing the president. And they are saying things that will affect, well, the whole U.S., sometimes even the whole world, right? If there's wars involved. Now, would you just go up there and stand behind that lectern and speak? It's quite a job, right? You know, if you say things wrong, you're going to dishonor the president, don't you?
You know, people, you make a big mess of this, they will think badly of him or her. I'm not making any future predictions. At the same time, you're going to affect so many people, right?
If you mess it up and the whole U.S. is going to hear the wrong thing and all those kind of things. It's quite a big responsibility that many of us wouldn't want to have.
[3:13] But how much more than as a Christian? Let's think about us as ambassadors. What is our... Let's first think about who we represent. We don't just represent a U.S. president, right?

If you are an ambassador for Christ, you get Christ is the king of the universe, the lord of all history, the creator and judge. And you are there to represent him.
Think of your workplace. You are there to represent the king of the universe to other people, right? Someone far greater than anyone, the most important person in the universe.
And you are there to represent him. And what people will think of you is what people will think of Jesus, right? You don't want to dishonor him, right?
The Bible talks about living a life worthy of your calling. Worthy. Worthy of belonging to the king of the universe. Can you think of that?

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[4:08] Right? I mean, how do we represent him, second thing? I mean, one big thing is just our lives. And Jesus says, let your light shine before men so that people see your good deeds and glorify God.

And give glory to your father in heaven. Or the way Peter puts it, live such good lives among the pagans that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits.
People should see you in your workplace and think, wow, God is real. Look at that supernatural love. Look at that patience. Look at the way this person endures suffering.
Look at their good deeds. God is real. They give glory to God as a result of you. Not just individually. As a church, a few years ago we went through Ephesians and the church is supposed to be like a billboard, right?
This big advertisement that people see and think, oh, wow, I want that. People should come to Watermark and see our community, our love and think, wow, I want to be part of that.
[5:11] I want to be part of God's people. This is so amazing. It's quite a responsibility, right? It needs to be a pretty good billboard. And of course, if it's pretty poor, what's going to happen, right?

We all know people who turned off Christianity basically because of people who say they're Christians, but their life doesn't measure up. They're hypocrites.
Their life isn't changed. And people think, well, if their life is the same, then maybe Jesus isn't real. That's our lives, of course, our words as well, right?
We have this message to proclaim, this gospel. It says God is making his appeal through us. And just think about the importance of that appeal.
Your job is to spread the message of eternal salvation. The king of the universe has the most important message ever. That people can have eternal life instead of, well, eternal death.
[6:10] People are on the way to hell, but through your message, through your witness, they can turn. They can have eternal life. That's the greatest consequences ever that is on our shoulders, right, as ambassadors of Christ.

You know, think of this person. You don't just turn them off Christianity when they're turned off. They may just end up, well, eternally damned. At the same time, if you do it well, you know, your words don't just get someone to come to church.
Your words may lead to someone having eternal life. Are you feeling the pressure? It's incredible, right? The person we represent, the way we represent him, the significance of what we're doing. And then just think of who we are ambassadors to. A wonderful world of lost sinners that God loves, that God wants to save.
But, you know, the Bible isn't always very positive, right? If you're here and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, it's really wonderful that you're here. At the same time, if you've read the Bible, you know that probably sometimes the Bible isn't very positive.
[7:25] It says that people who are outside Christ are blind, deaf. That means unresponsive, right? People who don't want to respond.

So you want them to see your good deeds. And the Bible says people are blind. Right. You want people to hear the message of salvation. And the Bible says people are deaf. How are they going to see your good deeds?
How are they going to hear the message? Right. Deep down, it says people are hostile to God. Deep in their hearts, they're biased against him. Jesus says you're sheep among wolves, which is a great image.
So here, here is our mission. Representing the king of the universe to people who probably don't want him. And their eternal future depends on your words and needs.
Now, I know how I feel, right? This is truly mission impossible. This is too daunting. In the words of Moses at the burning bush, Lord, please send someone else.
[8:27] That is my response, right? But then again, who else? Think of your workplace. How many Christians in your workplace? How many Christians in your family?

How are people going to be saved if it's not for you? Now, the alternative, I guess we should cry to the Lord for help, right?
It should make us a dependent church. Because with man, this is impossible. But not with God. All things are possible with God. If we want to do this, we need to be dependent.
We need God to help us. And so that's where we're going. We need God to love you.
We need God to help you. We're going to keep you. Asha.

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