

So That All Men May Know
Tim Brubaker
Wasilla Bible Church
December 07, 2008

Good morning! It's great to be here with you this morning. Again, my name is Tim Brubaker, and it's a real privilege to be here with you this morning in Alaska, quite a distance from Rwanda and a little bit different weather. When we got there, the temperature was hovering around zero; that was on Tuesday. It's cold! I think we had completely forgotten what cold is. For the last four years we've been living in a tropical climate, so... Anyway, it's been great to be here. Despite the fact that I have tropical children now--they've spent most of the years of their lives in Rwanda—they just absolutely are having a great time playing in the snow. And it doesn't matter what the temperature is...at least it doesn't matter to them. It matters to us, but it doesn't matter to them at all.

So anyways, I just wanted to say before we get started this morning, I wanted to say a "Thank You." Thank you for what you are doing; thank you for making it possible for us to be where we are in Rwanda. And that happens because of your partnership with us. And so that's a real blessing to us. We know that so many of you are praying for our ministry. And again, thank you, thank you, thank you.

I want to begin this morning by reading a passage out of Psalm chapter 145; Psalm 145. And these are the words of the psalmist, Psalm 145 beginning in verse 8. You don't have to go there. Let me just read it to you.

*The LORD is gracious and compassionate;
Slow to anger and rich in love.
The LORD is good to all;
He has compassion on all that He has made.
All You have made will praise You, O LORD;
Your saints will extol You.
They will speak of the glory of Your kingdom,
And speak of Your might.*

Until now, the psalmist is talking about worship. 'They'll speak of Your glory, speak of Your might. They will praise You, O LORD.' Now, in verse 12, here's the purpose. Here is the purpose; here is the ultimate purpose of worship.

*So that all men may know of Your mighty acts
And the glorious splendor of Your kingdom.*

Worship exists for the glory of God, but it also exists to make God's glory known to all people. Worship exists to create more worshipers of God. That is what it's all about. And as a matter of fact, this entire book, from beginning to end, is all about God's heart for reaching the nations. From beginning to end, God's concern in the Bible is to reach not just one people group, Israel; not just a few nations, but to reach every people group, every tribe.

Genesis chapter 12...again, you don't have to go there. But you remember the story of the calling of Abraham, before he was called Abraham, while he was still Abram. Genesis 12...

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country, and from your kindred and your father's house, to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse.

And here's the catch. 'All of this...all of this exists not for you, Abraham, but here's the reason. In you, Abraham, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

Here we are in the season of Advent. Jesus is the hope of the nations, Jesus is the desire of nations, Jesus is the climax of all of history, because in this seed of Abraham all the nations find a blessing.

Exodus chapter 19...at the giving of the Law, at the separation of one people group, Israel, to be the special people of God, God calls them a kingdom of priests. Oftentimes we think of Israel's having priests. But here He says, 'You are the priests, all of you.' And the idea is that Israel will serve as a link between God and man. Israel will serve as a link between God and all the nations. Israel's call, according to Exodus 19, is to be...is to be reflecting God's glory to all the nations of the earth.

Then all throughout scripture...you remember Matthew chapter 28, the very end of the book, the very last scene of the book...it's sort of a...if you're reading a good novel it seems a bit anticlimactic, but the very last scene is Jesus standing there with His disciples, and you remember what he says. He says, "Go therefore into all the nations." Again, this reflects God's heart for the nations. And then the very last scene of the very last book...you remember Revelation...Revelation chapter 7...John, while he's in exile in the isle of Patmos, he has this vision; and this is what he writes in Revelations 7:9. He says

After this I, John, looked and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Imagine this scene of the throne room of God. All peoples—representatives of every people group throughout the world—standing in that room, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, crying out with a loud voice

"Salvation belongs to our God!"

...singular, not 'salvation belongs to our gods,' not 'salvation belongs to our ancestors.' People from every tribe, tongue, and nation saying "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

There is a story that God is writing throughout all of history, throughout all of time, throughout all the world, throughout your life and throughout my life. It is the story of God drawing people to Himself. It is the story of God reconciling, of God redeeming people so that He can have a relationship with them. We are just, as people, we are just actors within this grand narrative that God is performing throughout the world. It is God's story; it's not my story, it's not your story. And so often we think of our lives as being our own; but ultimately we are just actors within a play. What a beautiful, beautiful metaphor—we are actors within God's play, the play that God is performing within the world. And it is a play, it is a story, of God drawing people to himself.

Now we are actors within this play in a different place. This is a picture of our family, the Brubaker family. My wife Jessica, many of you remember her as Jessica Perry...as Pastor Larry said, myself...we have three children—Martin, Thomas, and Cecelia. God has called us to be actors in His play, but in a different place—in Kigali, Rwanda. And this morning what I'd like to do is to share with you stories about what God is doing in Rwanda, stories about what we see God doing, stories that I hope will excite you about God, excite you about what God is doing around the world, and also excite you for the things that you are doing through your partnership with New Creation Ministries in Rwanda. So this morning, again, I just wanna tell you some stories.

In asking Pastor Larry how to prepare for this morning, he said, "Tell stories. People need to connect with what you're doing." But I want it to be God-centered. So let me tell you some stories about what God is doing in Rwanda.

First let me tell you the story about some of the pastors that we teach. Again, we serve with a ministry. It's a Rwandan ministry; it's a Rwandan ministry overseen by Rwandan people. It's called New Creation Ministries. One of our main ministries at this point is called The Pastoral Training School. It's a modular program for pastors who have never had the opportunity to study. They estimate that ninety percent of pastors in Rwanda have never studied beyond primary school. That would be sixth grade. Can you imagine that? Ninety percent of pastors—ninety, nine out of ten—have never studied beyond primary school, beyond sixth grade. And so, as far as we know, we are the only ministry that is offering these pastors the opportunity to go back to school and study; because we teach at a very low level. We teach in their language, and we teach for them. And it's a modular program so that they can continue to study. As a matter of fact, the only prerequisites we have for them to enter the school are 1) they have to be in ministry, they have to be pastors at the time of study, 2) they have to be literate...and believe it or not, we have to kick some people out of the school because they're not literate. Can you imagine being a pastor and not being able to read the Bible? I'm not sure...that doesn't connect. 3) They have to have graduated from sixth grade.

So we have seventy pastors that we are currently training at three different years of study. This year we welcomed a class of thirty-six, part of that seventy, a class of thirty-six men from two different countries—from Rwanda and Burundi. They represent seven different denominations; again, thirty-six guys. And I want to paint a picture for you. Here we are...this is the first modular session of their four years of study. First session, first year, first class, and I'm their teacher. So they walk into the classroom and they see me. And you can just see fear all over their faces, because I look nothing like them, they haven't heard me speak, and they're wondering how am I gonna connect with them because they're wondering, "Does this guy even speak our language?" And some of these guys are sixties, and I think one guy, he might even be in his seventies. Some of these guys have 14-15 grandkids, and they haven't sat in a classroom since they were twelve years old. So there's a lot of fear there.

The first class of the first year of the first term is a class we call "The True Gospel." And it seems like a basic thing; why would you need to teach the pastors the gospel? Well, why would you do that? But in Rwanda there is a really serious misunderstanding of what the gospel is, so that's why we teach that class first. In Rwanda too many Christians, including the majority of pastors, understand that to be a Christian is to follow a set of rules. They think that if you are a Christian you cannot do certain things, and you can and you must do other things. So, for example, in Rwanda if you are a woman and you are a Christian you cannot wear pants. Now how many of you are guilty this morning? A vast majority of you. ☺ If you're a woman Christian you cannot wear pants. If you wear pants you're not a Christian. If you drink certain things, if you do certain things, if you say certain things, or if you don't do certain things, if you don't give ten percent of your money to the church, again you cannot be a Christian. So that is what we call legalism. It's defining your relationship with God based on what you do and don't do. So in this very first class our goal is to deal with all that confusion, and to help them understand a very simple truth—that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone. It's a real basic. So for three weeks that's all we talk about.

First week here we were dealing with these...I was teaching these thirty-six guys, and it was like a wrestling match, back and forth. I mean, they were saying, "No, but you have to do this!" "No, but a person cannot be like this and be a Christian!" And we're going back and forth, and back and forth—it was a wrestling match.

Then, in the second week, we started to use a metaphor. Again, this was in January of this year. We started to use a metaphor of a man who has a pet pig. He loves this pig. He wants to have a relationship with this pig, to the point that he takes this pig with him everywhere that he goes. He takes the pig to the restaurant, and you know, the pig can sit there and pig can eat food at a restaurant. He takes the pig to church. He can even dress the pig up in nice clothes, and the pig can put money in the offering plate. You can make a pig do a lot of different things. But the problem is that a pig is still a pig. And in the same way, spiritually, when we are outside of Christ we can't just make ourselves...we can't just dress ourselves up and become pleasing to God. God must change us. God must transform us. So that was the metaphor we were using all throughout that second week. And again, it was wrestling match—back and forth.

The second week is sort of our more difficult week, because we're teaching all day, every day, and we're on the... On Friday, early in the morning, I had...again, we're sittin in classroom, we're going back and forth, I was just drained. I was just trying to get through the material. This one pastor named Aristarch...he's in this picture. These are actually the pastors we taught. Aristarch raises his hand, and he says, "I've been listenin' to you for the last two weeks, and what you've been saying doesn't make much sense. I've never heard this stuff before. And I've had a hard time accepting what you're...what you've been teaching." And he said, "I think I've come to understand today. I think I'm understanding today the reason why what you've been teaching me is so confusing." He said, "I think I'm still a pig. I'm not even a Christian." He says, "I pastor five different churches. I've been in ministry for twenty years. I don't think I'm even a Christian!"

And I thought, "Whoa!" I said, "Lord, if you're doin' somethin' here..." I looked around and there were heads goin' up and down, agreeing with this guy. I thought, "Lord, if you're doin' somethin' here, please give me the words." Because I have... I was physically drained. And I just said to these men, I just said, "Listen. If this is the first time in your life that you are trusting in Jesus alone for your salvation, that you're trusting in what He has done for you—not in a set of rules, not in a set of laws, but what He has done for you," I said, "If this is the first time in your life you're trusting in Jesus in that way," I said, "I want you to stand up in front of everybody; everybody looking, every eye open." And twenty-two out of thirty-six pastors stood up. Isn't that amazing?!

God is doing amazing things! And what is amazing about those twenty-two out of thirty-six guys is not so much just them, but the people they represent. Collectively they represent ten- and fifteen thousand people across Rwanda and Burundi that now, for the first time, are able to hear the gospel preached as it is. That's a great reason to praise God!

And these pastors were so excited about it...actually during the third week we had some really interesting conversations. Some of these guys have been pastors for twenty-thirty years. They said, "What do we do now? We've been preachin' lies for thirty years. What do we do?" Imagine these...I mean, we had some great small group meetings. But after that week one of the guys, this older fella, he was just glowing with the light because of what he learned about Jesus. And he was waiting for the bus to go home. He led five people to Christ while he was waiting for the bus because he was so excited about Jesus.

So this is one thing that God is doing in Rwanda. God is drawing pastors to Himself; pastors are being made new in Christ, and that's an exciting thing.

I wanna tell you another story about a man named Kalisa Vincent. He's another one of our students. He's the guy standing there in the middle with the orange blazer. Kalisa is currently in his third year of study in our Pastoral Training School. He is a...he comes to us from a denomination with which we have never worked before. He comes from a denomination called...prepare yourselves...it's called the Church of the Apostles and Prophets for the Revival in Rwanda. It's sort of a mouthful. And we have, as an unspoken policy in our ministry, we want the strangest of the strange. So we'll take anybody as long as they're pastors of churches. So anyways, Kalisa came to us and we were just thrilled, because it seemed like an inroad into another denomination. In his second year we were planning to go visit Kalisa, and he was excited. So, very early on, he came to me and we set a date. We set a date in September. And the meetings, the visits, are geared to go to their homes and get to know their families, get to know the church leaders with whom they work, some of the lay leaders in the church. And Kalisa also wanted me to visit with his denominational leaders—the people that were above him, district leaders and denominational leaders. So it was an exciting time, it was an exciting opportunity. So we set that on the calendar for September. I didn't realize at the time that we planned it that I would also be teaching a class during the month of September, so it was a bit of a busy month. But keep that in the back of your mind.

Now, I'm teaching this class in September, during the time that I'm getting ready to go visit Kalisa in his home. I'm teaching a class on understanding the Bible, "Principals for Biblical Interpretation." And one of the principals that we really hammer home is that the Bible is our ultimate source of authority in understanding God and who God is. What the Bible says is a hundred percent accurate, and we have to measure every other source of knowledge based on what the Bible says. Now, that may seem like a no-brainer to us here in the west, but for the Rwandan church this is a big issue. Because in the Rwandan church people are having dreams and visions, and all sorts of prophecies. I mean, they're having all types of different... I mean, the majority of our pastors were saved because of visions of Jesus in their bedrooms. I mean, it's just...it's different. So we're helping them to understand that they need to measure all those experiences based on what's revealed in scripture.

So we're having this conversation, it was a Thursday, and this one pastor raises his hand. He said, "I've got a great illustration of what you're talkin' about." He said, "There's a pastor in Rwanda right now who is making the circuit, visiting all these different churches, and the Rwandans just love him. And he's preaching about how God has taken him to hell. To hell. He's been to hell, and he's...obviously he's back again...but he's been to hell and he's seen Satan, and he's seen in hell that Satan is not all that bad. Satan gives cars to people, stuff like that. I mean, he does good things. So anyway, this guy's back now in Rwanda; and he's preaching all over the country that Satan's not all that bad." It was a great example of how...I mean, we know that in scripture the Bible tells us that Satan is the father of all lies; he's pure evil. So again, this is a great illustration.

Now, that was the conversation we had the week previous to my visit to Kalisa's home. On Saturday I went to visit Kalisa in his home. Before we got to his home we went to visit the office of...actually it was the home of his overseer, the district leader. We got to his house, we sat down, we're drinking our tea, and we're trying to make small talk sitting on the couches. And he says, "Tell me about what you teach." And so I thought, "Well, I'll tell him about this interesting story I heard the week before." So I tell him this story about this preacher who's been to hell, and I wasn't sure if he'd heard about it. Anyways, he looks at me straight in the eye and he says, "So what do you think about that?"

I thought, "Uh oh." And he goes on to tell me that he has these out-of-body experiences, kinda like astral projection, every weekend. I'm not sure if it's like on a weekly schedule, but every weekend God takes him to hell. And he sees things in hell, and then he comes back. And on Sunday morning that's what he shares with the congregation. I mean, it's just really odd. And I'm tryin' to get my foot out of my mouth, you know, for having mocked this story. And so we go on to talk about his denomination, some of the things that they believe. And he goes on to tell me...he says, "We believe in Jesus. But we also believe that we have an obligation to appease the ancestors." That would be the dead people. I'm thinkin', "Whoa! This isn't even Christian."

And so after that, we walked out...Kalisa and I...we walked out arm in arm. And my mind was just “Phthst!” I was blown away by this stuff. And he says to me, “Tim, this is why it’s so difficult. Now you understand why it’s so difficult for me to come back to my church and to teach the kind of things that you’re teaching me in school.” He said, “This is why I wanted you to meet my denominational leader.” And he says, “I also want you to understand that when I came to this school two years ago,” he said, “I came fully prepared to reject the majority of what you were going to teach me.” He says, “I didn’t come to you to learn the truth.” He says, “In our denomination there’s spiritual knowledge, and then there’s theology. Theology is what you white people teach. Spiritual knowledge is what we get directly from God.” He says, “I was prepared to reject the majority of what you were teaching.” He says, “But in these last two years I’ve come to understand that what you’re teaching is the truth.” And he says, “Now I’m so excited about what I’m learning I want everybody in my denomination to study! I want everybody in my denomination to have an opportunity to learn what I’m learning.”

So here is another thing that God is doing in churches, in the leadership of churches. This denomination, which is pretty far out—so far out that I would say it’s barely Christian—and God is transforming pastors, allowing them to become seeds within that denomination to transform...to transform that entire denomination, and to transform multiple churches, so that they understand the truth of God’s word. Isn’t that exciting? Something that God’s doin’ in Rwanda.

Let me tell you a third story. Let me tell you a story about our pastor. This is our pastor. His name is Muyambano Joseph. When we got to Rwanda our mission board told us, they said, “If you don’t learn the language, if you don’t learn Kinyarwanda (that’s the language they speak over there),” they said, “If you don’t learn the language, we have no job for you.” So we thought, “Ok, we better learn the language.” So we had to quickly settle into a local church. Our ministry is not *in* a local church, but it serves multiple local churches. So we were just looking for a church in which we could participate as a part of the body of Christ, using our spiritual gifts as all of us do.

So somebody led us to Joseph’s church, Muyambano Joseph’s church. We went to his church, and we really loved it because we loved the man, although we couldn’t communicate with him—he doesn’t speak any English. But we just loved his spirit. And one thing we particularly liked was that he spoke slowly so that we could sort of understand him. But over the course of the next two years, as we were learning the language, Joseph would come over to our house almost every week. And he and I would sit in the living room, and I’d fumble around in Kinyarwanda, and we’d have these conversations. And many times the topics of our conversations would then become the topics of the sermons on Sunday mornings. So that was the kind of relationship we had. I mean, it was just a really tight-knit relationship. And he helped us out to process a lot of what was going on in our lives at the time, as well.

Now, that’s Joseph. I wanna take you to a different person, a different scene. In the spring of 2007, June of 2007, I was overseeing this pastoral training school. I was the director of it during that time. And there was another teacher with whom I was working, named Katabirora Laurent. He’s a teacher within our school, within this pastoral training school. It was a Wednesday, and Katabirora came into my office. And he said, “Tim, tomorrow I have to go to a court case. I’ve been summoned to show up before the genocide tribunal.”

If you don’t know, in Rwanda fourteen years ago there was a slaughter. A million people died in a hundred days because of their tribal identity, a million people in a hundred days. And so now, in Rwanda, there are these genocide tribunals all over the country, led by volunteers actually, led by volunteers. And the idea is to try and figure out who’s done what, and then to bring them to justice.

Anyways, there’s all sorts of false accusations going around, and Katabirora, our teacher, he said, “I have to go to the genocide tribunal tomorrow. I’m being accused of things. I just need to go show up, tell them where I was, and I’ll be home tomorrow night.” I said, “That’s great. You can go; I’ll cover your class. Just give me a call whenever you’re back.” Well, he never called. And he hasn’t come home yet. He’s been in jail for a year and a half; and he has a nineteen-year sentence for being part of a slaughter in a church building where almost three hundred people died.

That was really a low point for us in our first term there, first four years in Rwanda—really a low point. I mean, I went to the court cases. And court case sounds really formal; it’s sitting underneath a tree on the grass, listening to people talk back and forth. And I mean it was just a really low time.

Anyway, that was June. Then, in August of the same year, we went to church and Joseph, our pastor here...after the service he came up to me and he said, "Read this." Gave me his cell phone, and I read this message, and it said, "You are summoned to appear before the genocide tribunal tomorrow, on Tuesday." And I looked at him, he looked at me, and I was like, "What did you do?" And he looked at me and he said, "Listen, it's all a lie. I didn't do anything. They want money. They want a bribe. So they want me to go, they want me to show up," and he said, "Basically they want me to pay money." And ethically speaking, that's wrong. To pay a bribe is wrong. And he knows that, so he wouldn't do it.

But I was really discouraged, he was scared. I went home and I remember telling Jessica, my wife, and telling my coworkers. I remember...this...as far as people I trust in Rwanda, he's the top of the list. I remember tellin' our coworkers. I said, "Listen, if they lock this man up, I am outta here. I am not gonna waste my life on a country that locks up its best people." I mean, it was a hard day.

And then Monday came. Joseph came over to our office, and we spent the whole day talking and praying, and trying to get advice. It just so happens that our business manager at New Creation Ministries is one of the top-level judges within this tribunal system in the country. So he has a lot of wisdom, and we asked him for advice. And our business manager told Joseph, he said, "Don't go. If you go, you're not coming home unless you pay a bribe." And so he was a...it was hard. If he didn't go, that could cause more repercussions. If he did go, it meant he wasn't coming home. He was between a rock and a hard place. And at the very end of the day Joseph says, "You know what? I have to go. The told me I have to come; I have to go."

That was on Monday. Then, on Tuesday, that was the day of the trial. I went to my office across town. I have a little grass mat that I rolled out, and I just...I prayed all day for Joseph. And I fasted, and that was what I did. And across town, at home, Jessica, my wife, was at home doing the same thing at our house. And as I prayed for Joseph that day, as I knew he was standing trial, God brought into my mind an image—the image of Balaam and Balak; you remember the story from the Old Testament, Balaam and Balak? Balak was that bad king that wanted to curse the Israelites, as the Israelites were entering the Promised Land. Balaam was the 'Rent-a-Prophet'...wouldn't call him a 'Rent-a-Prophet'...he was the 'rental prophet' that Balak used to curse the Israelites. And every time Balaam tried to curse the Israelites, what did God do? What did He do? He changed the curse into a blessing. And so, as I was praying for Joseph, I was praying, "Lord, change what is meant to drag Joseph down, change it into a blessing." I mean the judges, who were the ones who wanted the bribe, they had already set up their false witnesses. Well, I had no idea, but across town there's my wife in a very different place. We hadn't talked all day, and God gave her the exact same image. And Jessica's praying, "Lord, change what's meant to drag him down into a blessing."

Three-thirty that afternoon I got a call from a pastor friend who was...who attended the trial. He called me, and he said, "I wanna tell ya they've let Joseph go. He's free." It was like this weight...it was awesome! Then he went on to tell me this story. He said the key witness, this accuser, was brought before the judges. The judges had primed this guy. I mean, he was all set to accuse Joseph so that Joseph would be sent to jail. The key witness came up and the judges said to the witness (and the witness is standing there with one leg because he'd lost it; I mean, he was a Tutsi during the genocide, so he...I mean, he was a victim), and they said to this witness, they said, "Tell us about your experience."

And he said, "I got to this road block. I got to this road block, and the killers wanted to kill me." Road blocks were all over the place. They were stopping cars, stopping people, looking at their identity cards and then killing them if they were of the wrong tribe.

And so the judges say, "When you got to that road block did you see Joseph?" And the witness said, "Yeah." And the judges said, "Well how did Joseph treat you?" And the witness said, "Well, the others wanted to kill me. But Joseph saw that I was injured, and he pulled me off to the side and he hid me on the side. And Joseph waited until the killers were preoccupied with somebody else, and something else. And then, while they weren't looking, Joseph took me to his house. And risking his family, risking his wife and his children, he hid me in his home for five days. His wife took care of my wounds. After five days they sent me on my way." And he said, "I am alive because of Joseph." God did it! He turned what was meant to drag Joseph down into a blessing.

This is the world in which we live. These are the people with whom we work. And it is exciting to see God at work! Again, the heart of God...the heart of God is that all people would know. Let me read that passage again.

*The LORD is gracious and compassionate;
Slow to anger and rich in love.
The LORD is good to all;
He has compassion on all that He has made.
All You have made will praise You, O LORD;
Your saints will extol You.
They will tell of the glory of Your kingdom,
And speak of Your might.
So that...*

...here's the purpose, here's the heart of God...

*So that all men may know of Your mighty acts
And the glorious splendor of Your kingdom.*

Again, all of us...not just myself and my wife, and Pastor Larry...not just people who are professional. All of us are actors within the story that God is performing within the world. We are just actors...just actors. God has given each one of us a part to play, and what a privilege it is to be performing these parables of the kingdom throughout the world for the glory of God.

Let's pray.

Thank You, Lord, for this day. Thank You, Lord, for what You're doing around the world. Thank You, Lord, that this story is not our own, but it is Yours; that there is order amidst the chaos; that You are leading history to a single purpose. Thank You, Father, that You are so intimately involved in each one of our lives, such that You orchestrate all the details of our lives for one purpose...to bring glory to Yourself. Lord, may all the people, all the peoples of this world know and honor You through Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in His name, amen.