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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA
NOVEMBER 11, 2007
DR. CHI HUANG

1 DR. HUANG: Thank you so much for having me today at
2 Bethany church.

3 It's great to be back in a church where I get a
4 taste of heaven, and for that I am so grateful.

5 I also want to thank several other people that have
6 made my visit so enjoyable.

7 One, thanks to the high school students for giving
8 us great music, and the God Rods, and that was very touching,
9 and at the end of the service I want the lyrics to that song.

10 Thanks also to the Hamanns for hosting me and for
11 their hospitality.

12 Thanks to the Minks, if they are here, for allowing
13 us to walk side-by-side with John and Michelle Eggan over the
14 last three years in Bolivia.

15 Thanks for all the folks at Bethany that have gone
16 down to Bolivia to catch a glimpse of what God is doing in
17 that town called LaPaz, Bolivia.

18 Thanks be to God for everything he has done in our
19 lives.

20 Lastly, I want to thank the Nebraska Cornhuskers for
21 winning yesterday.

22 (Laughter)

23 Because I was tremendously stressed out from last
24 week's loss and thanks be to be God that I wasn't here last
25 week and I'm here this week.

1 My name is Chi Huang and I'm a pediatrician
2 internist at Boston Medical Center, which is part of Boston
3 University School of Medicine.

4 But more importantly I have been blessed to be a
5 part of what is called the Bolivian Street Children Project.

6 And we are a Christian social welfare organization
7 based in LaPaz, Bolivia, with the mandate and the vision of
8 addressing the unique needs of abandoned street children in
9 LaPaz, Bolivia, and hopefully throughout the entire world.

10 Our goal is to provide holistic care, and when I say
11 holistic care, I mean pastoral care, I mean food and shelter,
12 I mean education, I mean psychological therapy for our kids
13 that have been so severely traumatized.

14 I mean being able to be part of the walk of
15 transforming the lives of these children as if they are our
16 own, because they are, and walking with them for the next
17 twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years.

18 I've entitled this talk "Transformation Sunday" and
19 I promise you that I will not be flashy in this talk. I
20 don't actually have enough hair to be flashy.

21 I promise you that I won't be inspirational, because
22 that inspiration comes from God.

23 So I pray that my words that you hear, that God will
24 inspire you.

25 My hopes for this sermon are three things: That we

1 will come to have an understanding of what transformation
2 means.

3 What it means to be transformed in Christ as a
4 person.

5 What it means to be transformed in Christ as a
6 church collectively.

7 What it means to be transformed in Christ as a
8 ministry when we reach out to those around us and those
9 throughout the world.

10 I begin this talk with a sermon and then a passage
11 from my diaries that I would like to share with you this past
12 summer.

13 The sermon reading today is in John 11, Verses 38
14 through 44.

15 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It
16 was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.

17 "Take away the stone," he said.

18 "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead
19 man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there
20 for four straight days."

21 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you
22 believed you would see the glory of our God?"

23 So he took away the stone and then Jesus looked up
24 and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I
25 know that you always hear me, but I say this for the benefit

1 of the people standing here, that they may believe that you
2 sent me."

3 When he said this, Jesus called in a loud voice,
4 "Lazarus, come out."

5 The dead man came out, his hands and feet were
6 wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face.

7 Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and
8 let him go."

9 I'm placing this passage in the Bible of the
10 greatest transformer, Jesus Christ, in juxtaposition to a
11 diary entry I had placed in my writings this past July when I
12 was in Bolivia to show the transforming power of Jesus in the
13 lives of Lazarus and Martha and those around him, and what we
14 are trying to do in Christ in Bolivia and around the world.

15 It is July 2007 and winter in the southern
16 hemisphere has set in in LaPaz, Bolivia.

17 The cold air rips through our bones as we inhale
18 each breath carefully at ten thousand feet elevation.

19 The streets are empty tonight at 1:34 a.m. Where
20 are the children, I wonder?

21 No signs of them. I don't smell the fresh wet human
22 excrement.

23 I don't see the small white empty bottles of paint
24 thinner, the children's drug of choice.

25 I don't see worn out tennis shoes without the shoe

1 strings, or the ripped cardboard mats that the children call
2 their bed, their blanket, and their home.

3 Suddenly five scruffy mutts come out of a store
4 front in an abandoned outdoor stadium.

5 Packs of dogs are the abandoned street children's
6 best friends, for they use them for protection from the
7 police.

8 The dogs scurry around in a circular motion, wary of
9 their new intruders.

10 The mutts sense an increased intensity in my voice
11 and begin to growl.

12 A hooded head pops out of the store front. A
13 coalition of four other faceless hooded eyes back up this
14 man child.

15 The oldest person screams out "Chi," and I scream
16 out, "Hello."

17 "Chi, don't you remember me?"

18 The boy has a look of hope that I would recognize
19 who he is.

20 We have made thousands of street children visits
21 over the past ten years in dark alleyways, abandoned parks,
22 bridges, open cemetery graves, into the sewers, and into the
23 red light districts.

24 My mind spins at about one hundred miles per hour
25 over the hundreds of children that we have met over the past

1 ten years. Luis, Lola, Jesus, Martha, Charo.

2 Most of the teeth of this child are well maintained.
3 He does not have any facial scars or any evidence of cutting.

4 His baggy jeans reach down to his mid crack and his
5 hooded jacket is like any of the other children that I've met
6 over the past few years.

7 His eyes finally give away and my heart drops to my
8 stomach as a flood of difficult memories pound my head.

9 "Marcos."

10 "You remember me." His face lights up.

11 "How's it going?"

12 "Fine," he replies.

13 "Where have you been over the last ten years?"

14 "Here, there, and everywhere," he replies.

15 "Where is everyone else?"

16 "The police, you know, they have been cleansing us.
17 They have been placing us in the vans and taking us down into
18 the jungle and dumping us to die."

19 Standing now at five feet-ten Marcos is no longer
20 the small petite child that I met in 1997-1998.

21 "You grew," I reply.

22 He replies back to me, "And you didn't."

23 (Laughter)

24 "What happened to your hair, Chi?"

25 "It went away. Where are you going to be tonight?"

1 "Right here, Chi."

2 I meet Marcos in 1998 at 11:17 a.m. in front of a
3 local theater in LaPaz, Bolivia.

4 He was a small, skinny ten year old boy at that
5 time, working and living on the streets.

6 Remarkably at our first meeting he trusted me enough
7 to come off the streets and for twenty-eight consecutive days
8 he stayed with me in my makeshift apartment, transforming his
9 life from a dirty, raggedy, abandoned street child into a
10 child of hope, a child of God.

11 He was polite and obedient at the beginning,
12 uncommon for most abandoned street kids.

13 Marcos aspired to be a pastor. But, unfortunately,
14 as you can tell, it never came true.

15 At the end of our month in 1998 I needed to return
16 to the states to complete and start my medical residency
17 program.

18 So I bought him some pajamas and some underwear and
19 some new shoes and socks and took him to the nearest
20 orphanage that I thought would take care of him.

21 Twelve hours later he was back onto the streets in
22 front of the same theater begging and asking for money.

23 "Why did you leave the orphanage," I asked him that
24 night?

25 "Because that's not where I belong. That's not

1 where my family is."

2 "Why don't you come back to the apartment for one
3 more night before I leave back to Boston?"

4 "No. No, thank you."

5 The juxtaposition of Lazarus and how Jesus Christ
6 came and raised the dead and my failings as a short-term
7 missionary to be a part of Marcus' life and to transform him
8 into a pastor and walk with him is shocking and humbling, to
9 say the least.

10 Here Jesus responded to Martha and was moved deeply
11 by her request and brought Lazarus from the dead.

12 And here I spent the last three days in 1997-1998
13 trying to be there for Marcus, and ten years later this past
14 summer I see the reflection of our failure and our inability
15 as a church to transform this child, who wanted to be a
16 pastor, who wanted to tell people about the love of God and
17 of Jesus Christ.

18 So how does one become transformed, as a person, as
19 a church, and as a ministry?

20 That is the big question.

21 So what I want to leave with you today is the three
22 be's of transformation, at least for me, and how I perceive
23 transformation and the whole idea of sanctification.

24 The first be is to be sanctified, to be justified,
25 and to be transformed.

1 We know that we are justified by faith. We are
2 justified by faith in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross,
3 who shed his blood for our sins.

4 We are not justified by our works.

5 We are not justified by this church.

6 We are not justified by our pastors nor or parents
7 who may or may not be elders or may or may not be active
8 members in the church.

9 We are justified by our faith in Jesus Christ. It's
10 plain and simple. It's binary. Zero or one.

11 But the next step that oftentimes we forget is the
12 process of transformation and the sanctification, and that
13 process is a lifetime process, and when we transform our
14 lives to be more Christ-like, and we will never get to that
15 goal of being fully sanctified until we are in heaven.

16 So how do you know that you are on that road of
17 sanctification and transformation?

18 There are a few things that I can suggest.

19 One, only you know that you are in that
20 transformational phase.

21 Two, are you having a daily walk time with God?

22 Three, are you accountable to anyone besides
23 yourself in your walk with Him?

24 And are you involved in church?

25 And this may be hard to hear, but the question is,

1 are you involved in church, not on Sunday, not giving a tithe
2 to the offering, but are you involved in the body of Christ,
3 in the transforming power of our church?

4 The best example that I can think about in a secular
5 sense is marriage and that transformation of being married
6 and becoming a husband, and for me a father.

7 I was blessed to have a wife that was able to
8 tolerate me as a husband and as a father and she is amazing.

9 The question that oftentimes I ask myself almost on
10 a daily basis in my marriage is am I working on my marriage
11 day in and day out to make it a better marriage?

12 Does my wife hold me accountable for who I am as a
13 husband and as a father, and am I receiving and giving
14 encouragement to other healthy marriages around me so that we
15 can grow stronger as couples.

16 And one of the transformations in that marriage is
17 that my wife has allowed me to dress a little bit better.

18 (Laughter)

19 Because before I met my wife, I could not dress
20 worth a lick, and my wife thought I was actually color blind.

21 So the fact that I'm wearing a purple tie with a
22 shirt is that evidence of a transformation that my wife made
23 in me as a married person.

24 So the first be is be justified, be transformed, be
25 sanctified.

1 The second be of transformation, in my opinion, is
2 to be present in body, in mind, and in spirit wherever you
3 are.

4 Whether it's at church, whether it's at work,
5 whether it's at school, or whether it's at home.

6 And I am as guilty as anyone in that I do not
7 oftentimes keep that focus on Him above when I'm here below.

8 That when I talk to my colleagues, when I take care
9 of my patients, am I looking at this patient as a creation of
10 God, a person that may or may not know God yet, and how am I
11 a servant for that person right then and there?

12 So I have a long road to go as far as that is
13 concerned.

14 One of my confessions that I need to make to you is
15 an example of me not being present in body, mind, and spirit.

16 And I want to digress just a little bit to give you
17 my failings in this aspect of being present in body, mind,
18 and spirit.

19 This past week I was given the honor of being able
20 to take care of my three daughters alone, a one-year-old, a
21 two-year-old, and a thirteen-year-old, as my wife was going
22 on a study retreat.

23 This past Thursday my daughter was going to play
24 soccer at 4:00 o'clock and the baby-sitter ended her time at
25 5:00 o'clock.

1 another daughter in the other arm, no socks on both kids,
2 both asking for milk, walk to the counter, use my head as a
3 knocking post to open the door.

4 They open the door. I put both of my daughters on
5 the counter, I'm sweating, the poor McDonald's counter person
6 is probably 16 years old, first day on the job, and I'm
7 saying, "I need some milk right now."

8 (Laughter)

9 I was not present in mind, body, and spirit at that
10 time.

11 But I do ask that we continue to check ourselves as
12 we are transformed body in Christ to seek and search and be
13 present and in the lives of others as Christians.

14 The last be is to be available for Him whenever He
15 taps you on your shoulder and asks you to walk.

16 As a transformed person in Christ, as a transformed
17 person present and available, the last step is to be involved
18 in that ministry, that transforming ministry.

19 Because we as a church are not in to building a
20 wonderful sanctuary.

21 We as a church are in the transformation business.
22 Plain and simple.

23 We as a church are here to be present for others, so
24 that others may see God through us.

25 In 1998 I left for Bolivia and I was convinced that

1 we need to walk along side of these children after what
2 happened to Marcus.

3 And in 2001 we built our first transitional home.

4 In 2002, with the help of Park Street Church in
5 Boston, we built our first permanent home.

6 With the help of this church, Bethany church, your
7 prayers, your capital, we built the Bethany Home.

8 In the last six to ten years we have seen
9 transformation in the lives of kids that you would not even
10 imagine.

11 We have made over six thousand visits on the
12 streets.

13 We have a coalition of kids that we call our own. I
14 not only have three girls, but I have 50, 60, 70 kids, that I
15 call my children as father.

16 We are in the business as a church to transform
17 lives of not only children, but those around us, whether it's
18 in Elkhorn, Boston, or Bolivia. We are transforming lives,
19 one child at a time.

20 I'm going to show you a film real quick about what
21 you have done, Bethany church, and the transformation
22 business.

23 (Video Played)

24 This is your house, the Bethany House, and it's
25 because of what you guys have done through prayer and support

1 and coming down that this is reality. So thank you for that.

2 In conclusion, I want to remind you what I've
3 learned over the last ten years in the whole idea of
4 transformation.

5 I'll ask some hard questions for all of us, because
6 I think it's important.

7 Are you transformed as a person in Christ?

8 Are we transformed as a church in Christ?

9 Are we involved in transforming ministries in
10 Christ?

11 Because the three be's of transformation, to be
12 sanctified, to be justified, and to be transformed, to be
13 present and available, and to be ready to serve him, whether
14 it's Lazarus, whether it's Marcos, whether it's in Bolivia,
15 or whether it's to be present at McDonald's when you are
16 trying to get milk, be available, be ready, and be present.
17 Thank you so much and God bless.

18 (Applause)

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