Transcript of Sermon shared on Sunday, February 7, 2016.
Sr. Pastor Bill Hudson

Clarity of Vision

Faith is living out the vision that God has for you. Where there is no vision the people perish. In this lesson, we look at things that dim our vision and realize that Jesus came to open the eyes of the blind.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came and the prophetic word, spoken by Joel, came to pass. And the Spirit gave them prophecies, dreams and visions. This is the working of the Holy Ghost to give you the vision that God wants for your life.

In the book of Habakkuk, we see that God wants us to see the vision, write the vision, and then endure until the fulfillment of the vision.

We anointed everyone at the end of the sermon and prayed that the LORD would speak a new vision into everyone’s life.

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New Albany First Assembly of God (Temporary Location)
2778 Charlestown Road
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Opening Thoughts

Go to Proverbs 29. I’m going to speak on something I’ve never spoken on before. This is what we took into our souls out in Los Angeles on this last trip we took and I want to share it. This is what God spoke into my heart out there and I want to share it with you.

*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.* (Proverbs 29:18)

In the English Standard Version, it says,

*Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.* (Proverbs 29:18, ESV)

It is interesting what that word “restraint” means, because they lose their vision, they cast off the restraint of God’s Word, and that’s what causes them to perish. If you lose your vision, you become lost. You withdraw from your life of faith because faith is walking by God’s eyesight.

Faith is really spiritual eyesight. If the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch. If we’re just going to latch onto a human being and follow a human being, then that’s “the blind leading the blind.” But if we will latch on to Jesus Christ, Who has perfect eyesight, and lean on His faith, then He can take us through life.

The reason I haven’t preached on vision is because I used to preach on this in the business world. I talked about it. It was part of our daily life. It was the very thing that kept us motivated and going. But for some reason, I lost the spiritual connection here in my life on how God wants to speak His vision into our lives. And what faith really is choosing God’s vision for your life instead of your own vision for your life.

We think, “Don’t lose my vision of Jesus.” Well yes, we need to keep our eyes on Jesus and we need to see Jesus because if you’ll see Him perfectly, you can see God perfectly. Jesus said to His disciples, “If any man hath seen me, he hath seen the Father,” [John 14:9]. If you want to get connected to the Father, then do what Bro. Trey was singing – just keep falling in love with Jesus. Just improve your relationship with Jesus and you’ll be able to see God more perfectly.

Also, we need to see ourselves. Job went through a whole lot of suffering in life. And at the very end of it all, if you’ll remember, the Bible
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says, “I have heard thee with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees,” [Job 42:5]. Job finally had a vision of himself where he was able to repent. So not only does God want to reveal Himself in the face of Jesus Christ, we need to fill our being with that and keep our eyes single upon Jesus. All of the light of His Word, the love of His Word, the glory of His Word will come into your being if you’ll just keep a single eye upon Jesus.

God Speaks Vision into Your Life through the Holy Ghost

Turn if you would to Acts 2. I shared a little of this Friday night. Mostly, I was just going over some slides of what Elizabeth and I experienced there at The Dream Center in L.A. But this really blessed me, because if you were to ask me, “What is the evidence of the Holy Ghost?” I would say, “Speaking in other tongues.”

If you were to say, “What is the fruit of the Holy Ghost?”

I would say, “Love.”

But if you would ask me, “What is the prophetic fulfillment of God’s Word of the Holy Ghost?” You would have to look in Acts 2 and you would see a verse that goes all of the way back, hundreds of years before this happened, to the prophet Joel. The prophet Joel prophesied and what he prophesied hundreds of years earlier was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

And in chapter 2, verse 15, they had all just received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Now, by the way, that is not our salvation experience. That’s a second experience after you get saved. God wants to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost. He wants His fire to come inside you and it will fill you in a way like you’ve never experienced before.

It happened to me asleep one night in my bedroom. The Holy Ghost just came into the room, came into my face – a bright light into my face – went all of the way through my body like a hot oil. I had love in my heart for everybody the next day. I loved the meanest of my employees. I loved everybody. People I didn’t love the day before now I was loving them. I couldn’t tell why I was, but the spirit had filled me with this fire. God wants to baptize every one of you with the Holy Ghost and fire. And He’ll give you an evidence of it; you’ll have a heavenly prayer language – what we refer to as “speaking in tongues.”
But this happened to the 120 in the upper room on that day, and in verse 15 Peter stands up and he tells everybody, “Hey don’t worry, they’re not drunk. I know it looks like they’re drunk, but it’s only the third hour of the day; they’re not drunk.” Verse 16:

*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; (Acts 2:16).*

Here’s he’s saying that God’s prophetic word was promised hundreds of years earlier, now it’s performed. Verse 17:

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: (Acts 2:17-18)*

So what God was saying is that when the Holy Ghost comes, there will be a prophetic utterance within the Body of Christ and young people will see visions and older people will see dreams – or a bigger picture. And I’ve always been careful about visions in my spiritual life because I didn’t want it to be an idol that I create. I didn’t want to form my own dream and push toward that and call it a goal or an objective because that would be my own idol. But to just go to the other extreme and say, “Well, I’m just not supposed to have a vision,” that’s not God’s Word. This is why the Holy Ghost came. If you have the baptism of the Holy Ghost, this is why you have the baptism of the Holy Ghost because God wants to give you a vision. He wants to give you a dream. He wants to speak into your life.

See a vision pre-plays the future. Just like our memory replays the past, a vision pre-plays the future. It’s important. You say, “Well, I just don’t understand that.” That’s because we’ve been taught that God just doesn’t speak to you or God won’t give you a vision or your vision has just been quenched or squelched or stolen from you by Satan all through your lifetime. I’m telling you God wants to speak into your life the very vision He has for you! What your life should be! What your ministry should be! What your calling is! What He wants you to do! He wants to give you that vision!

He spoke into Abraham’s life and said, “Get up and go!” He said, “I’m not even going to tell you where to go, I just want you to trust me. Get up and go, Abraham!” And Abraham needed a vision, so God took him up into the stars and showed him the millions and billions of stars. And when he
came down from that, he had a vision that God was going to bless his seed and his seed would be like the multitude of the stars.

Noah had to have a vision. He couldn’t have done what he did without a vision. God told him exactly how to build a boat. He could see the boat in his mind. God told him that it was going to rain when it had never rained before. Look at the faith it took to act on the vision!

For a lot of people, God’s trying to give you a big vision in your life and you say, “Well, oh that can’t be for me,” or, “Oh, that can’t be God.” I want to teach you today how to discern between your own vision and God’s vision. I want you to learn how to receive God’s vision into your life. Let Him speak it into your life. And see, if you get a dream, beloved one, you can change the world.

Martin Luther King didn’t just come out and say, “Hey guys, I’ve got a pretty good idea. Let’s talk about this...” No, he said, “I have a dream! I have a dream!” His dream was so big and bold that the nation got around his dream, that God used that man to further this nation along in its journey. He had a dream!

Do you understand the difference in, “Hey, you know I’ve got an idea here. It may not be God. Maybe it is God. I’m not sure. What do you all think?” No, let God give you a dream just like He spoke into Chuck’s life this morning. He spoke into His life through a dream and when Chuck woke up, he realized that Savannah Grace was in the arms of the Lord and she’s doing just fine. Chuck went from despair to great hope and courage because God gave him a vision.

**God’s Thoughts Toward You**

Go to Jeremiah 29. We were here last week. I may visit this a while until we all get it. It’s one of the most popular verses in the Bible that I’ve pretty well ignored all of my life. It’s awesome. I’ve been thinking about it every day. Jeremiah 29. He is talking about Him speaking into Israel, in Babylon, and His Word would visit them, and it would perform what He wanted in their life, and it would cause them to return. See God gives you a vision through words first. He was speaking into your life prophetically. God spoke into their lives and caused them to want to get up and go back home to Jerusalem.

And then He said in verse 11,
For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the L ORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. (Jeremiah 29:11)

To give you an “expected end,” or to give you a future hope. “A future filled with hope,” is what those words mean.

“I’m looking out for you. I know My thoughts. I know My plans. I know My intentions. I know what vision I have for you.” He’s saying, “I want you to listen to my word until you know what I have for you. I’m trying to give you a vision of your life, of your ministry, of your calling. I’m trying to let you know My thoughts toward you are shalom – peace, happiness, health. I want to bless you, I don’t want to curse you. I’m on your side. I’ve got your back. I’m a God that loves you more than you’ve ever imagined how much I love you! I know My thoughts; you don’t know my thoughts.” God is saying quit trying to think for Him. He knows what He’s thinking about you.

In fact, the origin of your faith is not in your experience, it’s not in what you believe in your mind or your heart. The origin of your faith is in God’s mind and heart. The fact that God loved you – that’s the origin. The fact that we can’t love Him, it would have been impossible, but He first loved us. We can’t even give Him praise if it weren’t for His grace coming in and filling us.

God loves you. His thoughts, His intentions, His thoughts toward us are so much beyond our thoughts. Isaiah 55 says, “My thoughts are higher than your thoughts. My ways are higher, or beyond, your ways,” [Isaiah 55:8-9]. Man lives down here in the Earthly realm and God’s up in the Heavenly realm thinking way different things about your life than what you’re thinking.

You’re looking at the Devil, you’re looking at your own limitations, you’re looking at your past experience thinking, “No way.”

God’s up there thinking, “Yes way! I know the way! I’m going to give them a vision!”

John F. Kennedy had a famous saying. He said, “Most people see things as they are and say, ‘Why?’ I see things that never were and ask, ‘Why not?’” I don’t know if you agree with his politics or not, but that was the president that put a man on the moon. That was the president that had vision for our country. Do you follow what I’m saying?
God wants to give you vision. He says, “I know the thoughts I’m thinking toward you, saith the Lord, they are peace – shalom – not of evil, rah, pain.” He said, “My thoughts are pleasure, not pain for your life. I want to give you a future like you’ve never dreamed. I’ve got beautiful things planned for your future.” Then He said, “and when you call unto Me, you’ll go pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. I want to answer your prayers, just call out for My Name. Just speak to me, I can’t wait to answer your prayers.”

“And ye shall seek me,” the Bible says, “and you will find me. And when you shall search for me with all of your heart, I will be found of you, saith the Lord,” [Jeremiah 29:16]. Beloved one, I don’t know about you, but that gives me a lot of hope that God’s just sitting there waiting for me to pray, waiting for me to call on Him, waiting to answer my prayer.

**The Necessity of a Vision**

Vision, we need vision. Ephesians 1:18, you don’t have to go there you know it.

*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, (Ephesians 1:18)*

“That ye may know,” see you need an eternal vision of the New City. Never take your eyes off of that. You keep your eyes on Jesus. Paul said, “I press toward the mark [that’s Jesus] for the prize [that’s the City],” [Philippians 3:14]. I’m not trying to work my way into the city, I’m looking at Jesus and I’m going to trust Him to take me to the city. But I have a vision of the New City. I want to be a part of the New City. That’s so splendid, so spectacular, so eternally beautiful.

I want my will to be sold out to God’s Will, that my will will be one with the Golden Street, or the Will of God, in the New City. That means I’ve got to lose my will down here and surrender to His Will. That means I’ve got to lose my vision and surrender to God’s Vision. I’ve got to trust God enough that when He speaks into my life, I will see that as His Vision and I will act upon it.

Many people have a vision, but they never get up and fulfill the vision. Many people let Satan steal the vision from them. When I was an 18-year-old kid, I said this Friday night, I’m in a little salvage store like Sanford and Son Salvage. It was like I was Lamont and dad was Fred. And that’s all I
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knew. It was a lowly job, I didn’t have a good education, I couldn’t read and write well. I found some old notes I had written that year and all of my spelling and grammar was all wrong, but I had a vision. And I loved it, I loved what I was doing for a living.

There was this store that got burnt down to the ground and my daddy gave the man just a little bit of money for it and he gave us digging rights. And he told me just to get a truck and a couple of guys and start digging. Well we dug the roof off of it and we found all kinds of good merchandise underneath there. I put it in my truck and took it to my little store and it made a lot of money – for me, in that day, it was a lot of money. And I caught a vision and I remember writing this down, “I want to be the world’s greatest retail salvage man.”

Now you know I was probably the only kid in the whole world with that particular vision, but that was a vision. God gave me that vision. It motivated me. And I just started learning how to do it. I started reading books. I started educating myself. I learned how to handle people. And God used that. As a young boy, I started growing up. As the company grew, we changed the vision, I had a bigger vision: that God would make Hudson’s the ultimate, extreme-value company in America.

Well, it grew to over 1,000 employees and I sold it to a guy and this guy’s almost doubled it since I sold it. He’s sold it now to a big shot out of Wall Street, a big company. And guess what’s going to happen to that company if it stays on this track. It will become the world’s greatest extreme-value retail company, but it started with a vision.

Now I’ve been in and out of God, going on and going the wrong way all throughout my life, but even those days when I was not going on for God I still paid my tithes. God taught me that. I had enough fear of God on me. I may have been drinking all night where I would fall over drunk, but I would mail my tithe into the church. I was just a country boy, not very smart, but I knew God was blessing what I did. So God supernaturally blessed that.

But He used that. I would not be where I am today, in front of you, if I had not of gone on that journey through my life, being this salvage guy – a retailer. That was a vision God gave me. Do you understand what I’m saying?

Now whatever He has done in our past is our past and now we need to ask ourselves today, “Where does He want me to go forward today? What does God want to do with my life? What is the ministry He has for me?”
What is the natural calling He has for me?” This is very, very critical that we ask this question because without dreams, you will reach nothing.

Charlie Brown, I often tell this story, shot an arrow into the wall. He went up to it and got a can of paint and he painted a circle around the arrow and said, “Bullseye!”

A lot of people approach life in that way. They don’t have a goal or a vision, just whatever in life they do and they wake up and look at themselves in the morning and they say, “Bullseye! I have arrived. I’m right where God wants me to be.” You might be just fulfilling your vision.

What if God’s called you to something greater? What if God’s called you for more responsibility? What if God’s called you to ministry? What if God’s called you to move out of your comfort zone and do something that, maybe, has always been in your heart to do, but you’ve never had the faith or the courage to do it?”

Maybe you’ve always thought that this was coming from God, but someone or some leader would say, “Oh no, that’s not God’s Will for your life.” Beloved one, what if God’s been trying to speak vision into your life, but you let yourself or some other person or Satan himself kill your vision?

You need to get on your knees and say, “God, what do You want from my life? What do You want from my ministry?”

I’m going to show you a little slide. This is the thing that I taught the most in the 32 years that I was in business. I taught this everywhere that I went. This is what God showed me early in life and it’s still so applicable today. I’ve mentioned this several times in the past few years, but I don’t think here since we’ve started Return.”

I always call this the trichotomy of success. I even had a little speech I would give to colleges and places when I would go around and share because I could work in the message of The Trinity while I was talking about what works in the natural world.

First, we have to have a goal or an objective. If you’re going to be successful, you need to set a goal. The second thing is that you have to have a strategic plan to reach the goal. The third thing is that you have to find a burning desire that will give you the fire to overcome all of the obstacles in life so that you will fulfill the plan to reach the goal.
Now the reason this works is because this is the way that God works. The Father is the goal – the unknown Father. The only way that we are ever going to get to the Father is through the Son – the Strategic Master Plan. He is the plan. Do you want to know what the Master Plan for your life? That’s Jesus, He’s the blueprint of how you get to the Father. And none of us would ever be able to get to the Son if it weren’t for the amazing Holy Ghost that comes into our life and draws us to Jesus. The Holy Spirit will draw you to the cross. He will convict you of your sins and cause you to hit your knees and confess and repent of sins because that’s what the Holy Ghost does. He’s drawing you to the Son, drawing you to Jesus.

So give up those sins and trade sins for His Grace and let Jesus wash you and make you whiter than snow and then learn to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ unto a perfect man as you’re going up the Plan to ultimately get to the Father. Do you understand what I am saying here?

Now in the business world, I know people that say, “Well I want to make one million dollars.” But they never come up with an idea or a plan of how to do it. And they have a desire, “Oh, I would love to do it, but I don’t have a plan so I going to buy lottery tickets.” You have a better shot of getting hit by lightning than you do winning the lottery. My point is, a lot of people have a goal that they want to be successful, but they never plan. And they may have all of the fire in the world, but no plan.

I look at religions that way. They have all of this fire and they want to reach God, but they don’t know the plan is Jesus. There are over 4 billion people on the Earth that don’t know the plan is Jesus. Jesus is the only way. He’s the way, the truth, and the life. There’s only one way to the Father, and that’s through the Name Jesus. The Name “Jesus” has all of the power in it. It’s not the name “Christ,” it’s not the name “God,” it’s the name “Jesus. Jesus! Jehovah! Savior! Jesus!”

I would love just to teach for a month on just the Name Jesus. There’s so much power in the Name “Jesus.” He’s the plan!

Other people in life set a real low goal. “Oh, I’ll never amount to anything.”

I had a school teacher that told me that I would never amount to anything. My daddy told me that I would never amount to anything. My momma told me that I was stupid. (You know, what would you tell a kid that for?) You know? And therefore, the kids would never have any
confidence. They would never have an image of themselves like God sees them.

See you have to see God like He wants to be seen: in truth and reality. And you need to start learning to see yourself like God’s seeing you. God doesn’t look at you and see all of your faults and failures, He looks at you washed in the Blood of Jesus, made righteous by the Blood of Jesus. He looks at you as hid in Christ. In other words, I’m hiding in the cross, hiding inside of Jesus. My faults and my failures are not on display. He looks at me as a Christian, washed, saved, redeemed, justified, holy. I’m a saint, not because I’m a saint, but because Jesus makes me a saint. Look at yourself the way that God looks at you. Get a vision of God. Get a vision of yourself.

Beloved this setting of a spiritual goal in life is paramount. If you aim at nothing, I will guarantee you something, you will hit nothing. Dreams require risk, risk requires faith, faith requires the Word of God, and the Word of God requires your absolute, undivided attention. That’s why people don’t want to follow God’s dream. That’s why people don’t ask for God’s dream. A dream will require risk. A risk will require faith. You want faith, then you have to get the Word of God in you. And when the Word of God comes, you’ve got to be accountable for that Word. You understand what I’m saying?

Waiting for the Vision

Look at Habakkuk. Go near the end of the Old Testament. You’ve got Malachi, Zachariah, Haggai (going backwards) and then Zephaniah, and then Habakkuk (if you go from the Old Testament backwards). Right in front of Nahum, Habakkuk. I love these small prophets. There are so many gems of truth in the small prophets.

Habakkuk the second chapter, he says:

_I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. (Habakkuk 2:1)_

See what he was saying is, “I have to get up on the watch tower. I have to go up to the mountain. I have to go to my prayer closet. I have to go to the place because I am waiting for the vision God is going to give me. He’s going to speak to me. I know He’s going to speak to me. He wants to speak to me.” Beloved do you realize He can speak directly to you? He’s
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not going to speak to me for you. He’s not going to go through somebody else. He’s going to speak to you. When the Holy Ghost came, the Holy Ghost came so that it would prophecy, or speak, into your life. That He will give you visions and dreams in your life. He will do this personally like He did for Bro. Chuck this morning. He will give you a revelation. But you’ve got to start asking Him for it.

In Jeremiah 29:12 it said, “If you ask Him, He’ll answer. If you seek Him, you’ll find Him.”

In Habakkuk, He says, “I’m going to get up on the watch tower and I’m going to watch to see what He will say.” I like that. See God, many times, gives you vision through words. He’ll speak words into your mind and then when the words come into your mind, your mind will see the picture of the words. So the first thing you have to do is receive the vision. You have to see the vision.

Verse 2:

And the \textit{LORD} answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. (Habakkuk 2:2)

Not only should you see it, but you should write it down. You should start praying, “Lord, what is Your Vision for my life?” Sure He wants you to go to Heaven, the New Earth, or the New City, that’s the afterlife. Yes keep a vision on the afterlife, but what does He want you to do with the rest of your life here in time? That’s the question I’m asking you today. Write it down, when you start seeing it write it down.

Verse 3:

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:3)

Do you realize that not only do you have to see a vision, not only do you have write the vision down and start believing it and understanding this is what God wants, but then you’re going to have to have some patience and wait. Because many times it may be years. Abraham was 25 years later before he saw his promised son, Isaac. Noah was 100 years building the boat. Some of you all say, “I ain’t got 25 years, Bro. Hudson.” Just wait for it.
Do you realize what “running the race with patience” is all about? That’s walking with God. To run with patience is walking with God. See we need to see the vision, understand this is where God’s going, and just keep walking, by faith, in the God’s Vision for your life. I love this in Habakkuk, it says, “See the vision, write the vision, and then wait for it.”

The Preliminary Mission and Vision of Return Ministries

I want to share something with you here, the next slide. I’ve been working on a mission statement for Return for a year. I shared this with our Board of Directors. I shared it with you all and we were at a threefold. I saw the three pieces of this. It took us nine months to see three pieces. Now, I’ve been a year now, I’m seeing all four pieces of the picture. This is subject to the board’s approval, of course. I just want to share with you all where I am in my thinking.

What is Return here for? See we’ve been a safe, healthy church. A place of refuge for wounded people, but God’s not going to always keep that our primary mission. God has something He wants this church to do. There’s a vision He has for this church, but we’ve got to understand what’s our mission.

Our mission: “It is the mission of Return Ministries to receive, daily, the grace of God,” that’s number one, that’s an arrow coming downward, “which will enable us to give Jesus Christ all of the glory, the honor, and the obedience that He so richly deserves.”

Now, if you’ll think about that, we’ve said a whole lot of doctrinal theology that they fight about out there and have just crammed it into one little, short statement. We’re going to receive the grace of God and because it’s His grace and not by works, His grace is going to enable us to give Him the glory and honor and obedience that He so richly deserves. So one arrow going down.

The next arrow is going up. Then we say, “To allow Jesus to grow in our hearts and lives,” that’s going inward, “and then to reach out to others with His unconditional love,” that’s going outward.

So we’ve got His grace coming down. Then we can have a reflection going up, giving Him glory, honor, and obedience. We’ll search our hearts inwards and deal with our flesh and allow Christ to grow in our life to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ unto a perfect man. And we’re not going to stop there, but we’re going to go outside of the four walls
of the church and we’re going to allow this love to be poured into others in the community and let them see that it’s unconditional love. Once we all start thinking like this as a unit, as a team as a flock as a congregation as a church as part of the big church as part of the body, then you will see God start blessing this church. He will start adding to this church on a daily basis.

Now, what is the vision for Return? If that is the mission, what is the vision? I don’t have this clear, but this is what I’m starting to see. Let me tell you what I’ve learned in 10 months: the building we’re renovating is not the church. You’re the church. That’s just become a small little part of what we’re doing.

There was a few months ago that I was all excited and worked up, can’t wait to get in to the new building thinking, “Wow, that’s the church!” Now we’re so busy with other things that that’s just one of the little old things that we’re doing right now. We’re going to get out of this rented facility. We won’t be embarrassed when I spill oil all over the pastor’s carpet. We won’t be writing on his envelopes or leaving trash around. We’re going to get out of here and say, “Thank you.” Maybe give him an offering. We’ll have our own place to go to church.

And we’ll have a prayer meeting every day of the week. I want an early morning men’s meeting. I want a noon prayer meeting. I want night prayer. I want different kinds of prayer meetings. We can have church as much as we want to have church. It’s a beautiful building and God’s blessed us and it’s going to be a sanctified sanctuary. We’re going to have a prayer room, a chapel where we’ll come pray an hour before service on Sunday, where we can have an awesome prayer meeting.

You know, someone told me last night the secret to Charles Spurgeon’s success. He preached to 4,000/5,000 people in a big building in London with no microphones back in the 1800’s. It was amazing. They came and just packed the place out for years to hear him speak. And they asked what was his secret and he took the guy down to the basement and he lifted up a door to the basement underneath there, and underneath the sanctuary was a room with 100 people down there praying. He said, “That’s the secret to success. That’s why they come from all over. That’s why the Word’s anointed. That’s why God is blessing.”

So this is the vision for Return, we’re going to have this beautiful church building, but the church is just a little small part of what we’re doing. And in this church building, I believe we’re going to be on fire for God. And
there’s not a lot of churches on fire. And fire is contagious and people will come from all around to look at a fire.

If there’s a building that gets caught on fire this afternoon, there will be people from all around standing around and just looking at that fire. When a house catches on fire, they show it on the news, there are all of these people looking at a fire. I’m telling you when our church catches on fire, people will come just to take a look. They’ll want to see the fire of the Holy Ghost that’s contagious. We’re going to have an old-fashioned, Holy Ghost-filled, blood-bought, water-baptized, blood, fire, and water foundation that’s not going to be found in this area.

We’re going to have a unique church. It’s going to be a church that God’s going to bless. When we get all of the judgmental spirits out of this place and we love everybody and accept everybody and embrace everybody and let everybody feel like they belong, then God will fill this church! And we’re getting there! We are! We’ve improved! We’re doing so much better than we did! My whole way of thinking is different than it was a few months ago.

So the vision is “A beautiful church in Clarksville. On fire for God. People receiving blood, fire, and water. Growing in God. Enjoying Jesus and each other.” That’s part of it, but we’re also responsible for others (or people wanting to affiliate with us around the world and in poor places and we’ve got to be a lighthouse to those people).

And then there’s this outreach – we’re probably going to call it The Dream Center of Louisville. This will be our outreach ministry. Touching thousands of lives with the love of Jesus. I see thousands of souls getting saved. I see a mission church where people of all kinds can experience Jesus. I see many ministries being built – find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it.

You say, “Well how hard is that going to be?”

It’s not going to be hard at all. Once we get over there and just start doing these things, we’re going to find a need and something is going to trigger inside of you and God is going to speak in your heart and He’s going to say, “This is the ministry that I have for you.”

I mentioned this when we were at the Mission Baptist Church, I said, “Return Ministries will be the parent ministry to hundreds of ministries.”
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Nobody said, “Amen,” nobody knew what I was talking about so I just moved on.

Today I’m starting to see that. We’ve got this vision in L.A. of how you could do so many little, specific things for specific needs. When you find someone and they’ve got a real problem and you can’t find any solution, then we’re going to pray and God’s going to say, “You’ve found the hurt, now heal it. I’ll heal it for you. Bring them to me, I’ll heal it. You find the need, I’ll fill it.” This is what ministry is.

So, we’re going to start off feeding people. We’re going to start off offering cheap clothes. We’re going to start off with a little church over there right there in the middle of Portland where they can come just as they are. We’re going to keep giving out Bibles. We’re going to still be full of outreach. But I’m seeing a church, beloved one, headquartered in Clarksville, but we’re not going to just stay in that beautiful building, we’re going to go outside the walls of that building and reach people with the love of Jesus. This is the vision I have for Return.

We’re not going to look like we look right now; it’s going to change because there are going to be people from all walks of life. From the north, south, east, and west. Republicans and democrats, big people, little people, fat people, skinny people, rich people, poor people. There will be all kinds of people. And beloved we’re going to love everyone of them and it’s not going to even be our love, it’s going to be the love of Jesus reaching out and grabbing them. Amen.

The Four Things that Dim Our Vision

Number 1: Satan’s Lies

What dims our vision? Why aren’t we living in the vision God calls for us? Well, in my life, I saw Satan squash 100 good ideas. Just took them right away. I felt this is what God should do. The system I was in, Satan found a way into the system and just squelched that like, “Naw, you’re not supposed to do that.”

I’ve heard people say they want to have babies and ministers that had no business in their life say, “Oh, you don’t need a baby. The rapture is going to take place soon. You don’t need a family.” This was twenty years ago.
I’ve heard people say, “Well I feel like I’m supposed to do ‘this’ for the Lord.”

“Oh you don’t need to do that! That’s your pride. You’re just trying to be a big shot. Your ministry is supposed to be in eternity.”

You see that’s Satan sneaking in there to kill your vision. There’s not a person in the room, if you’re a Christian, that God hasn’t spoken into your life something that He wanted you to do some sort of ministry. Beloved, we need prayer leaders. We need small group leaders. I see that we need twenty small group leaders by the middle of May if we’re going to stay on the pace where God wants us to go. I see the day coming where we’ll have 100 small groups.

This is church and homes. This is the way it started in the early church. When Paul went into cities, he left the city and there was a pastor and a home and this is how church was had. Churches in homes gets people connected, intimately with each other and helps them get intimate with Jesus. God is going to raise up these home pastors, or small group leaders. And if you want to do a small group, start praying on this. Ask God if that’s what He’s speaking into your life. If you are a small group leader, then let Him speak the vision into your life on how this thing can grow.

Jabez prayed to God, “Expand my boundaries,” [1 Chronicles 4:10].

And God blessed Jabez and said, “Yes, I’ll do it!”

Sometimes we get to feeling guilty that we even asked for God to expand our boundaries. Beloved, that’s the Devil trying to steal your vision. You need to ask God, “How much influence do you want my life to have.”

If there are over 4 billion people lost. I want to go help Jesus. I want to work for Jesus. I want to serve Jesus and see as many of those 4 billion come to Him as possible through my life. If every one of us will do it together, I’m telling you we can make a big dent in that number. We can see a ton of people come to know the Lord. Why not dream that? Why not believe for that? Why not stand on the promises of God’s Word for that?

I’m not just going to settle back and let the enemy steal my vision again. Satan will dim your vision. Remember when Jesus tried to talk to the scribes and Pharisees and the disciples said, “Why do you talk in parables?”
And He said, “Well, because it’s given to them. They have ears, but don’t hear. They have eyes, but they don’t see. They think they know and perceive, but they don’t; they’re blind,” [Matthew 13:10-13].

See we can be blind to what God is trying to do in our life. If you let Satan steal your vision, and you’re not walking in the vision that God has for your life, you’re walking in blindness. If you’re just doing your own thing, doing what you want to do in life, you’re walking in blindness.

Beloved one, sometimes what your desire is and what’s God’s desire will match because God puts a passion of certain DNA in your being because He’s called you to do a specific thing. If God wanted you to be a school teacher, then He’s got it in your DNA and you grow up in life and something starts calling or leaning you that way, “I think I’m to be a school teacher.” This is how God will speak into your life.

Some people are called to be firemen. Some are called to be football coaches. There are so many different jobs and professions. The key is finding what God wants you to do. The most miserable people I know in life are the people that work in a job that they were not called to do. They’re working in a job and they’re called to do so much more, but a teacher, a parent, a pastor, someone told them they couldn’t do it; therefore, they settled for second best. Beloved one start dreaming again. Ask God to give you a vision. Ask God to speak His Vision into your life that you might get your eyes open to exactly what God wants you to be and what He wants you to do.

Number 2: Loving Old Memories

The second thing that dims our vision, and I’m closing soon, is loving old memories. Again, I said a minute ago, memories replay the past. Vision pre-plays the future.

Look in Isaiah real quick. Isaiah 43. I’ll just give you one little verse here. I think there’s a country song about that, but I’m not sure how it goes (about memories). “Precious memories, how they linger. How they ever flood my soul.”

Isaiah 43:18:

*Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not*
know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Do you understand what He’s saying there? Let’s read that again, I’m not sure everybody caught that. It may have just went right over your head. Read it with me; verse 18 and 19, let’s read it together. Isaiah 43 verse 18. Are you read?

Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Powerful. Powerful. We’re not going to be trapped into thinking like we’ve always thought. One definition of insanity is, “Doing the same thing, the same way, and expecting a different result.” You do the same thing the same way you’ve always done it, you’re always going to be right where you are. And you’re insane to think it’s going to get better. You’re insane to think things are going to change. If you do the same thing the same way over and over and over again.

He said, “Forget the old way. I’ve going to do a new thing. I’m going to do a new thing.”

It’s taken us a year to get separated and become a cohesive group where He can take us to do a new thing. He said, “It may look like a wilderness out there and no water. Don’t worry about it, I’m going to bring a river right through the wilderness. I’ll make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the dessert.” He’s going to do a new thing.

So beloved don’t get stuck with old memories. Old memories kill dreams.

**Number 3: Delay (or Impatience)**

The third thing that kills dreams is your impatience, because of your delay. Some people don’t like any delay. They want it and want it now. Dreams don’t work that way. God will speak. You have to wait and be in His timing.

I’ve got this big vision for Return Ministries. I realize it’s out a ways and we’ve got to march toward it each day. The vision will be before us. We will keep marching toward it. It may take a year, it may take two, it
may take 10 for the whole thing to come together, but we’re not going to be discouraged because of delay. We’re not going to let the Devil steal our courage and faith because it’s not happening right now in our time. In His time, He makes all things beautiful, not in our time.

God delays for many, many reasons. Mostly in order to give us time to deal with our rotten attitudes and to get our hearts beautiful and gracious and broken before Him. Why does He delay our dreams? Because He’s only trying to fulfill the dream, but He’s trying to perfect you at the same time.

**Number 4: Secret Sin**

So Satan will lie to you, that will steal your dream. Loving old memories will steal your dream. Delay, or impatience, will steal your dream. And then the secret sin will steal your dream: things like unforgiveness, even discouragement. Remember Samson, he had all of this strength, but he had a sinful life – an unrepentant, sinful life – and he lost his eyesight. He went blind. He had all of that power and just like that he lost all of that power, then he lost his sight, he lost his ministry, he lost everything.

Beloved one, we teach a lot about grace, but grace is not a ticket or freedom or a license for sin. Grace is what deals with sin. Grace is what forgives sin. You can’t just live in sin and expect God to speak in to your life and you be able to fulfill this dream. Sin will separate you not only from Jesus, but from the vision that He has for your life.

You say, “Well, what do I do?”

That’s easy, you just trust Him to take away the sin.

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)

**Jesus Heals Blindness and Restores Visions**

Let me tell you something. Jesus is in the business of healing blindness, that’s what He did. He did so many miracles in the three and a half years, but I love the stories where He healed the blind people. And there were many different times in the Bible, but He seemed to have an extra special lot of compassion, or take time, for the blind people.

Blind Bartimaeus was screaming, “Have mercy on me, Son of David, have mercy on me!” [Mark 10:47].
And they told him, “Hush, hush. Quiet down. You’re making a fool of yourself.”

He got louder and louder and louder, “Save me! Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me!” And then that God Jesus’s attention. He called of Him.

You see sometimes you just need to scream. You need to let the Lord know you’re seeking Him. You need to let the Lord know that you want your eyes open.

He called for him and He asked, “What shall I do for you?”

And the Bible says also [Bartimaeus] cast off his cloak, he got rid of the sin, he got rid of the dirty cloak, and ran to Jesus and said, “I want my eyesight. I want to be able to see. I want to be able to see you.”

And Jesus said, “Go your way. Your faith has made you whole,” and immediately he got his eyesight back. I think that’s in Mark 10.

Go back to Mark 8. Jesus brought a guy out of Bethsaida. He had to bring him out of unbelief, out of the town of unbelief, get him out of the town of scoring and unbelief. Jesus couldn’t even do miracles there because they were so full of unbelief. He got him out of that town and then He spit on his eyes. Most people would have gotten angry and mad. This person was so blind that they were desperate. It didn’t offend him one bit that Jesus spit on his eyes.

How desperate are you? Are you desperate enough to holler for it? Are you desperate enough to let God spit in your eye? Are you desperate enough, beloved, to get your eyes opened?

You go to John 10 and you’ll see where Jesus spit on the earth and He took the wet earth and He put it on somebody’s eye and they got their eyes open. He’s trying to show you that everybody’s different, He heals in different ways. You’ll not to fall in love with the process of healing, you’re to fall in love with the Healer. You’re to fall in love with Jesus.

This is what Jesus does. He not only saves you from your sin, but He opens your blind eyes and gives you vision. I promise you beloved, the Holy Ghost, in your life, no matter what’s happened in the past, from this day forward, He wants to speak into your life. He wants to prophesy into your life and give you vision and give you dreams. I’m not talking about just on your pillow at night, I’m talking about giving you a dream to change the
world. Give you a dream to change this community. Give you a dream that thousands can be saved, that thousands can come to know the Lord. Give you a dream of what you might accomplish with your life.

He might want you to take care of orphans. He might want you to take care of widows. He may want you to be a coach. He may want you to be a mentor. He may want you to serve handicap people. There are so many needs in our area and people just crying, “Help me. Help me. I need help.”

Yea, the government does their thing. Other churches do their thing. Ministries do their thing. You need to find out what is your thing. Where is God calling you to work. What is He calling you to do?

Some people say, “Well, I was told not to go to college because the rapture would come. Or I was told not have kids. Or I was told not to start a ministry.” You know, I believe the rapture is probably going to come really soon. I haven’t been preaching on that because I’m tired of living my life like I know it’s going to come when I don’t know it’s going to come this year. I want it to come this year, but I don’t know it’s going to come. I’m going to live my life like it’s going to come today. I’m going to plan my life like I’m going to live to be 100.

Let me make that clear. Some people go over 100, let me up that. I’m going to plan my life life I’m going to 105. I’m going to live my life like Jesus is going to snatch me out of here this afternoon.

The Needs in Our Local Community

Ever since we’ve got back from L.A., I’ve been praying, “Lord, open my blind eyes,” because a vision sometimes starts with a little thought. This lady out in L.A., they were ministering on skid row and they met a girl and they found out this girl was sold for $2,000 and she’d been a sex slave for all of these years. And she came to them for the drug rehab program, but the drug rehab program couldn’t deal with that. That was dealing with people that chose drugs. This girl was put on drugs by her owner. She was a sex slave. He bought her and he prostituted her out and he kept her on drugs for years to numb her. This girl was messed up more than anybody they had ever found.

They started a whole new ministry to help this girl. They had to work with the Law Enforcement. They had to send her to another city to get her away from the mafia or the people that were doing this, but a ministry was
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.birthed for human trafficking all because they met this one girl that had this unique problem.

There are needs in the Louisville area, in the southern Indiana area, that are overwhelming. I’m telling you a whole bunch of kids are going to bed hungry tonight because somebody is not out there feeding them. There are a lot of families that are so dysfunctional and broke that they are going to bed hungry right here in the metropolitan area in which we live. And I know one thing for sure there’s a whole bunch of them that don’t know Jesus. There’s a whole bunch of them that are lost and miserable and unhappy and sad, with no hope, full of despair and they need someone to come into their life and speak Jesus into their heart.

Prayer Line and Anointing of Eyes

I just want to serve Him and I want to do exactly what He’s called me to do, but I will never let the enemy steal my vision again. Here’s what I would like to do. Just take a minute. I would like us to pray. I’m going to ask Bro. Fowler and Bro. Moerer to come up here with oil, if we didn’t spill it all. What I want us to do, I want to form two lines down the middle and I just want you to come get anointed. Now after you get anointed, you can go back to your seat, or if you want to tarry, just don’t clog the lines up, come off to the sides and pray.

Here’s what I’m praying for. See in Revelations 3, He talks to the church of Laodicea. They were lukewarm. He said they were poor, wretched, blind, miserable, naked. And He told them He said,

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.* (Revelations 3:18)

You see Jesus, He spit on the eyes, He put the clay on the eyes, He spoke to the eyes, He touched the eyes, many different ways. But what we’re going to pray for is that the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that came on the day of Pentecost, that He will speak prophetic Word into your life and that He’ll start giving you visions and dreams about your life. About what He wants you do specifically, this year, next year, going forward, what your roll at Return is. Does God want you to be a small group leader? A prayer leader? A street witnessing preacher? Does He want you to work in the thrift store or the food bank? Does He want you to work the neighborhood in Clarksville? Maybe you’re to be a prayer warrior and get in the leadership
role of this prayer. Beloved, there are so many ministries, so much work to be done, and I believe that God will speak right into your life and give you that personal vision.

So we’re going to pray, if you would just stand with me. I am going to ask you just to come form two lines down the middle aisle and we’re going to anoint you with oil and we’re going to pray and believe God, from this day forward, to give us a fresh vision of where He wants us to go.