

****Vid bumper – Unexpected Opportunity**

Welcome everyone. My name is Chris Fluitt. This is Redemption Church in Plano Tx.

For our friends watching or listening online, Plano Texas is a great city in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Plano is North of Dallas Tx. When we describe where we live, we often say “We live in North Dallas.” Many of us in this room work in Dallas. Some live in Dallas. We hang out in Dallas.

We love Dallas. We claim Dallas.

On Thursday evening, violence hit our City of Dallas Tx. During a peaceful protest, a sniper opened fire on the people providing protection to the protest – Police officers. It’s sickening that thousands could gather in peace and a handful of people can change the dynamic entirely. There is a life lesson in there... The Bible says “small foxes can spoil an entire vinyard.” (Song of Solomon 2:15) The Bible says “a little yeast effects the whole batch of dough.” (Galatians 5:9, 1 Cor 5:6)

14 people were shot. 5 officers killed. Much of America glued to their TV or to social media wondering – What, Why, How?

The actions on Thursday are just a piece of the strife, fear, and heartbreak we have felt this week. There is also the shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. They were shot by police officers in Lousiana and Minnesota respectively. We have stared in disbelief as aftershocks of violence have been present across our nation.

This is a broken situation. This is a broken world.

Race warfare, class warfare, political warfare, religious warfare... people killing each other... and it happens constantly. It happens ALL THE TIME.

People have been and are REELING. You know this. You have seen it. You have experienced it.

People have questions...

- How did this happen?
- Where are our leaders? Won't someone stand up and say the unifying thing that will stop this insanity?
- Why won't our courts pass a law that stops this madness?
- When will people see that our culture is hurting? When will people see the injustice? When will people stop the hate?
- What do I tell my children?

I think we can all agree that we are facing a disastrous situation.

What do we do when we are faced with an **Unexpected Disaster**

Disaster always has a way of finding us doesn't it?

- America tried it's best to stay out of World War II. Disaster struck us in Pearl Harbor.
- People built their retirement and investment portfolios so that they would be prepared for the unexpected... how surprised they were when an unexpected recession nearly wiped out their savings completely. This was just a decade ago. People thought their 401k was guaranteed. There are no guarantees...
- Relationship disasters, home disasters, national disasters, neighborhood disasters... They either have hit us, will hit us, or are hitting us.

This is not the first time we have been hit with a disaster in America. You would think by now we wouldn't be caught off guard... that we wouldn't be surprised... or that maybe it would hurt less because of the callouses built up by frequency... But no.

Disaster is always unexpected. It always hurts. It always makes our heads spin, our hearts hurt, and our blood rush.

Disaster always finds us... **Are we doomed by disaster?**

Are we to subscribe to the philosophy that "life sucks and then you die"?

Do we try to recover from this disaster to be ready for the next oncoming disaster that lays us out cold again?

I want to offer you some help today.

We focus on the disaster

Most of our prayers are – Make this disaster end. Take this disaster away.

Most of our tension and hatred is a collection of disasters that have been brought upon us. Some people are still focused on disasters that are decades old.

No one ever takes responsibility for the disaster by the way. The Republicans yell... Look it is the Democrats fault. The Democrats yell... Look it's the Republicans fault. And we are so dumb that we actually fall for it... No one ever seems to say "I will take responsibility for this disaster... I am going to change and bring change..."

How should we respond?

Disaster happened to Joseph

Joseph, the Old Testament patriarch was... (You can read about him in Genesis 37-)

- His father's favorite child
- Betrayed by brothers
- Sold into slavery
- He remained faithful to God. He remained true to Himself. He was the best slave he could be and was promoted. He made the best of a terrible situation.
- Wrongly accused of a despicable act that would ruin any man's reputation.
- Imprisoned

- He remained faithful. He used his gifts and abilities to serve others who were facing disaster. Once again he rose to prominence – Even in Prison Joseph was given leadership stature.
- Forgotten
- He remained faithful and true. And one day, unexpectedly, he was called before Pharaoh. Joseph did the impossible through the gift God had placed within him. He went from that prison to 2nd in command of all of Egypt.
- In a position of authority, Joseph was given a chance to exact revenge. Instead Joseph came to the rescue of the people who betrayed him.

Joseph was hit with disaster after disaster... But through it all He was always the Father's favorite child! Did you know that you are the Heavenly Father's favorite child!?

Joseph was faced with unexpected disaster... But he also took advantage of...

UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES

It's not what happens to you in life that is nearly as important as how you respond.

You have never faced a disaster so great that it left you with no opportunities.

Even if a loaded gun is aimed at your head it cannot take away your opportunity to control what goes on inside your heart or what your last thoughts might be. Even in death there is opportunity.

Stephen was being killed in Acts 7. It was a disaster. Yet Stephen looked up and prayed for them. What an opportunity!?

Apostle Paul sentenced to die. It was a disaster. Yet from Paul's jail cell he penned the epistles. From behind prison bars he converted prison guards.

Polycarp, a 2nd century believer was tied to a stake and was going to be burned alive. It was a disaster. Yet he sang praises to God and the flames never touched him.

There are disasters everywhere in life. On the global scale, on the national scale, in your city, and in your home...

We focus on the disaster but that never gets us anywhere. That always leaves us hopeless and angry.

But if you will be observant.. If you will look around... If you will seek wisdom in the moment... You will find Opportunity.

Focus on the opportunity

No matter how dark the disaster, there is an opportunity.

An opportunity for help

There is an opportunity to be helped. There is an opportunity to help others.

Look around and help someone. Look around and ask for help – allow help.

There should always be help in a disaster. The Body of Christ – THE CHURCH – should always be a help.

An opportunity for growth

Disasters often wake us up out of apathy. They often carry a heavy truth that we should change. Life's problems often lead to opportunities of learning and growth.

We have to admit there is a problem. We must own the problem. When we own our part in the disaster it leads us to change.

You can become bitter or you can become better.

An opportunity for God

Disaster brings sadness. Scripture says Godly sorrow leads us to repentance. (2 Cor 7:10) That is an opportunity for God.

Disasters can bring you to your knees.. But when we get on our knees and pray that is an opportunity.

Do not feel hopeless. Feel hopeful.

What disaster are you facing today? Do you understand that your broken mess is an opportunity for God?

Take advantage of the opportunity in front of you.

Church of Jesus, we have an opportunity in this disaster. We can be a help. We can grow. We can see an opportunity for God.