

Sunday May 18, 2008
Guest Speaker: Pastor Paul Penelton

To my friends at The Olive Branch:

Thank you for your enthusiastic support of the message on Sunday. I am very grateful for all your kind words but I wouldn't feel right if I didn't give credit where credit is due. The key ingredients that went into making this message were inspired by a book that I would recommend to any Christian: Chasing Daylight by Erwin McManus. Erwin is the Lead Pastor of a uniquely innovative congregation in Los Angeles called "Mosaic" and the author of many books including, An Unstoppable Force, Uprising and The Barbarian Way.

THE QUEST FOR ADVENTURE

In the fourth grade, our class got an opportunity to take swimming lessons at a local pool in Ottawa. Now, I'm not a big swimmer but the key selling point for me was that the lessons took place during school. Each week, as we were learning the front crawl, the back stroke or tread water, we would look over to the far end of the pool and see perhaps the greatest challenge and with that potentially the greatest thrill of our young lives...the high diving board.

If we were good little boys and girls, we had the option of spending the last fifteen minutes on the low diving board or the high diving board. Pretty much everyone conquered the low board. It was just a short dive into the water. The high dive drew the line between the boys and the men. For weeks I watched my little friends go off that board. All of them came up safely, and I could see that they were having a great time, but it just looked so high.

As I reflect on that experience, I realize a lot of girls were diving off that high board. The divide wasn't really between the boys and the men, but between the cowards and the courageous. At the time, I swam safely in the midst of the coward category. One day I couldn't take it anymore. I had to experience that which terrified me. I had to face my fears. I had to answer the bell.

I got in line, and the wait seemed to last forever to get to the ladder that would take me upward. As my hands touched the cold, wet steel and I began to climb, I could feel my heart pounding. I kept telling myself I could do it. I pushed myself beyond the ladder and stepped out like a pirate on to the very edge of the perilous plank. I looked down and for the first time realized it was higher up than it appeared down below.

I froze. As I stood there wondering why my feet had suddenly become glued to the board, I decided there was only one thing to do. I turned around very carefully and walked my way back to the ladder. I was going to come down, but there were two problems: The first one was the ton of kids hanging on the stairs waiting for me to jump. The second problem was the person directly behind me in the line. He was an older boy, much bigger than me, you know the guy who's two grades behind and very, very angry at the world.

He looked at me and said, “There’s only way down kid and it ain’t this way.” It suddenly became very clear to me that there was no turning back, no way out of it. I was going to have to jump. I’m not sure what gave me the courage to go for it. It could have been my fear of being pummelled by the schoolyard bully or my anger towards those at the bottom of the ladder who were doing the “chicken dance.” I took a deep breath, swallowed my heart, and leapt to my potential death. As I came up from the water, I was not only happy to be alive but I was filled with the thrill of my conquest. I...loved it.

I remember how desperately I wanted to go backward instead of forward and how I was willing to live with the humiliation of crawling my way back down the ladder. If I had done so, I would have never experienced the exhilaration of the jump as well as lived with a boundary created by fear.

Life is full of high boards, the place we stand where we realize that the altitude is higher than we expected. The place where there is no neutral – we either go forward or go backward. Many times this becomes the dividing line, the line that separates those who see their divine opportunity and those who seize their divine opportunity. At this stage of the game you’re close enough to taste it. You’ve made significant decisions to live out your divine adventure, but now you have to make a choice: Will you advance or retreat?

Perhaps, that’s where you are this morning. Maybe, you’re like me, someone who first came to The Olive Branch because you’d heard it was a safe place for hurting people, a safe place to heal. And, I can tell you, from my own experience, it is. And you need to take the appropriate amount of time to heal. But when the recovery process is complete, you’ve got a choice to make.

You can choose to play it safe, you can settle for less, or you can jump off the high board and start living out the adventure that you were born to live. Did you know that you were created with a divine destiny; you are called to fulfill a great mission. You were designed for a unique purpose. And when you make the choice to follow Jesus Christ, you are making a choice to accept the mission and live it out.

It is in this moment, in this calling that I think that God has been either terribly misunderstood or tragically misrepresented. All God seems to be known for is legalism, rules, judgments, commands and wrath. In fact, Jesus calls us to live a life of unimaginable adventure.

In John 10:10, Jesus himself declares: **“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10b NIV)**

He has not just come to free us from a life of meaningless existence but rather he has come to recruit us to a life filled with adventure. He has come to lead us out of the mundane and into the extraordinary.

A. THE UNSPOKEN REALITY

Strangely enough, that's not what we find when we dig into the lives of most Christians. What we generally find are people who profess to believe and to trust and to follow Jesus into this new way of living on Sunday but sink back into the comfortable, materialistic, and safe place the rest of the week.

Instead of living out our calling as the hope of the world, or the holy and mighty people of God, we do what we are warned not to do by the Apostle Paul. He tells us **“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...(Romans 12:2 NIV)**

Sounds easy...right? Until you do some investigation into the matter. George Barna, a well-known Christian researcher, reports that regular church-goers are shockingly similar to the rest of the world in so many ways: The number of people who gamble every week, the number of people who watch R-rated movies, the number of people who divorce, the number of people suffering from depression. This is not a very good billboard advertisement for Jesus, who said, **“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10b NIV)**

What happens to Christians? Why do we forget His promise that in Him we will find the life that our hearts have always longed for? Jesus was crucified as a criminal, but what His accusers didn't know was that He was planning and fulfilling history's most extraordinary prison break. And now we've been invited to come and follow Him on a divine quest. He's calling us to be spiritual pioneers, explorers, adventurers and warriors. But we must accept the invitation to go forward, to jump.

Where are you at today? Are you completely immersed in God's great mission or are you stuck in neutral? **Erwin McManus once said, “I am convinced the great tragedy is not the sins that we commit, but the life we fail to live.”** (book – Seizing Your Divine Moments) This may sound too simple, but the abundant life that Jesus promises is ushered in through the choices we make in the ordinary moments of life. Even those who change the world, who make a difference in history, who live life rather than simply watch it, have at least one common characteristic among them: they do something. They choose a life of meaningful adventure.

B. BLAST FROM THE PAST

This is where our story begins today. I want to take you back in time to a story of courage and boldness in the face of overwhelming odds. It's found in 1 Samuel, chapter 14. It's in the Old Testament. It's a story of a King's son named Jonathan.

The Israelites were at war with the Philistines. You might remember that, among the Philistines, were a family of warrior giants, whom Goliath belonged to, who inhabited the land that God had promised Israel. They were also a people described by God as both idolatrous and wicked.

It was God's desire to establish Israel as a nation that would reflect His character. Through them He would bring all the nations to Himself. The Philistines

were convinced that their gods were more powerful than the God of Israel, and so a war waged between them.

Jonathan's father as king, was the leader of Israel's army. Saul had been commanded by the Lord God to engage in battle and was promised a sure victory; yet he was paralyzed with fear and afraid to engage in the battle. Saul had been entrusted with all of the authority and resources of Israel, yet had misused his God-given privilege.

So while the Philistines prepared to crush the Israelites and claim the land for themselves, Saul and his armies slept under the pomegranate trees. His response to this dilemma was to do nothing at all. Now, in fairness to Saul, what he was doing seemed to make sense. He only has 600 soldiers left against the Philistines who have 3 thousand chariots, 6 thousand horseman and as many soldiers as the sands of the sea.

Any rational human being would understand that this is not when you would advance. This is when you would retreat or at best just hold your ground and hope for the best...but not Jonathan. He wakes his friend and says let's step out and engage in the mission that God has set before us.

Sometimes we think that people who live extraordinary lives are just made of different material than us. But the truth of the matter is that we are all made of the same material, it's what we do with that material that really matters. One of the characteristics of a person who unleashes the full potential of their life is that they have an advance mentality. They go until they get a no. And no matter how much self-doubt and no matter how much fear they feel, or how overwhelmed they are by the obstacles and circumstances they face they still move forward or jump.

Read 1 Samuel 14:1-3. **“One day Jonathan son of Saul said to the young man bearing his armour, ‘Come, let’s go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side.’ But he did not tell his father. Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. With him were about six hundred men, among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod’s brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord’s priest in Shiloh. No one was aware that Jonathan had left.” (1 Samuel 14:1-3 NIV)**

Let's step forward to verse 6. Read 1 Samuel 14:6-12. **“Jonathan said to his young armour-bearer, ‘Come let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.’”**

“Do all that you have in mind,” his armour-bearer said. “Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul.” Jonathan said, “Come, then, we will cross over toward the men and let them see us. If they say to us, ‘Wait there until we come to you,’ we will stay where we are and not go up to them.” But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands.’

So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. “Look!” said the Philistines. “The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in.” The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armour-bearer, “Come up to

us and we'll teach you a lesson.” So Jonathan said to his armour-bearer “Climb up after me; the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel.” (1 Samuel 14:6-12 NIV)

Now if you read this particular story with any objectivity, you've got to know that Jonathan's plan is absolutely ridiculous. By this I mean that what Jonathan is proposing is inane or quite possibly insane. As I'm reading this I'm thinking, “What do you mean let them see us? That's not a good idea. Why not stay hidden and kill them while they are asleep or drunk or less motivated. Let's do everything we can to leverage some sort of advantage.”

But not Jonathan. He says, “Let's move out of the invisible into the visible. Let's step beyond the point of no return because if this is to be our divine moment then it has to be moment where only God can see us through.” And then he adds to this insanity, after he says, “Let them see us. If they say to us, ‘Wait there until we come to you, we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands.”

C. SIGN, SIGN, EVERYWHERE A SIGN

Jonathan was working from a conviction that he was already called to move forward. The army of God had already been charged with this mission. Victory over the Philistines was a promise simply waiting to be received. Jonathan was so confident his actions were in line with God's purpose that all he needed was a sign that said, “Advance.” And he expected it to come from the strangest of all places – from the mouths of God's enemies.

If the Philistines were arrogant enough to challenge them, that would be the sign that the Lord had given them into their hands. The only words he did not want to hear were, “Stay where you are.” The call forward was the sign of victory. It was a call into danger. It was an invitation to engage in heated battle. He would be considered a fool by the measure of many, but from Jonathan's vantage point things were getting more interesting. He must have been thinking, “It just doesn't get any better than this!”

And so the Philistines saw them and began taunting Jonathan. They shouted out, “The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in.” They mocked Jonathan and said to him and his attendant, “Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson.”

Any reasonable person would tremble in fear and run for his life, yet Jonathan turned to his armour-bearer and said, “Climb up after me. The Lord has given them to us.” You can almost hear the exhilaration in his voice: “This is the sign we were looking for.” They were looking for a word to move forward.

We need to realize this is counterintuitive, but not “counter-faith.” Somehow Jonathan understood that when you're moving with God, you must move with an advance mentality. You move forward unless God tells you to stop. You advance unless God tells you to wait. There are certain things that you do not need a calling to do. You've already been commanded to do them.

Too many opportunities are lost because we keep waiting for a word when the word has already been given. For Jonathan “wait” was the kiss of death, and “come” was the sign from God. “Wait” made much more sense and took much less effort. “Come” implied increased effort and danger. Which leads us to an important question, “What kind of sign are you looking for?”

Jonathan was moving forward in alignment with the purpose of God, and the challenge to advance was the affirmation of God’s hand of power and blessing. I think sometimes we think of God as if he were a police officer. Those old enough to drive know what I’m talking about. You’re driving along, not a care in the world, hair, or what’s left of it blowing in the wind, and then all of a sudden out of the corner of your eye you spot him and whether you are speeding or not you automatically slow down. I think that we often see God as one who narrows our options rather than expands our freedom.

But the truth about God is that he’s up there saying you don’t need permission; we need a mission. We slow down and wait when God has already told us to go. We hold another prayer meeting or bible study just to make sure. We spend all of our time studying the map and asking God when we should go. And we think he’s up there saying no, no, no. when in fact he’s saying Go, Go, Go.

I think it’s because when we have risked, when we’ve dared or stepped out in faith we’ve often been left disappointed or experienced failure or humiliation and in that moment we conclude that God is a God of no. The question I have for you is, did you act and then ask God for His blessing or we’re you being obedient to his calling? U2’s Bono really nailed it when he said, **“Stop asking God to bless what you are doing and get involved in what God is already doing – it is already blessed.”**

D. JUST DO IT!

Jonathan’s sign was the taunting of a Philistine warrior. The only sign he needed was that God’s will needed to be done, and he was in a position to try to do it. But what would happen if we changed our way of thinking? If we heard the first word of Jesus in His Great Commission, Go, as all the permission we needed to do the will of God? How would your life be different if you worked from a giant YES rather than a giant NO?

While there are moments when God steps in and calls us to a specific task or assignment, even without that kind of special directive, we are not left without a mission or calling. Every follower of Christ has the prime directive of representing Him on this earth. We are all called to be His witnesses. We are all commissioned to make disciples. We are all given the assignment of serving as His ambassadors or reconciliation. We are all commanded to love not only God, but also our neighbours as ourselves. We are all mandated to follow His example by serving others even as Christ has served us.

What is it about our conversations with God that we seem to hear the no more readily than the yes? Many times when we claim we are waiting on God, He is waiting on us. It is true that Jesus instructed His disciples to wait in the Upper Room until they received the Holy Spirit. But then He instructed them that once they received the

promise of God's Spirit, they were to move out and change the world. We, too, have received the Spirit of God and are expected to move with confidence that God is with us.

Have you been stuck behind someone in traffic? Maybe on that day you were in a particular hurry, running late to an important engagement. There is just one car in front of you at the light. You're watching the light with an intense focus, waiting for it to change from red to green. It seems to take forever, but it finally comes to pass.

You take your foot off the brake, you're just about to hit the gas, but you realize the person in front of you is entirely unaware that she has permission to go. Instead of looking forward, she is fixed on her own image in the rear-view mirror. Remember what you were thinking? Move, lady. It doesn't get any greener than this. I wonder if that's what God is thinking? Quit looking in the mirror at yourself...Go!

I have to confess that when I was a kid, I used to love watching the races, NASCAR, Formula One, the Indy 500. As I got older, it led to a fascination with movies about cars, fast cars. I remember the first drive-in movie that I ever went to was *Smokey and the Bandit*. Do you remember that one? Of course the success of that movie led to a whole bunch of really bad car movies like "Cannonball Run."

I don't really remember anything about the movie except one scene where this Italian guy gets into his car at the start of the race with his buddy and the first thing he does is rip off the mirror and throw it out the window. It's the only scene and the only line from the movie that I remember and I've remembered it to this day. After he rips off the mirror and throws it out the window his buddy says "What are you doing?" And I always loved his answer..."what is behind me it, does not matter!"

I think we need to take that on as a mantra for our lives..."what is behind me, it does not matter." Do you know why we should do that? Think about it. If I were going to predict my future on my past, it would be very gloomy. So every time, we begin to feel our past, our fears, our failures creeping up on us rip off that mirror and keep going forward.

Learn what you can from those times you were humiliated, degraded, made fun of, left out or ignored then rip off that mirror and advance. Don't let the past define who you are today or who you're going to be tomorrow. Especially in relation to what your plans are with God. Remember that you were invited into God's kingdom and you are invited to take part in changing the world for good. Remember that God is not up there saying no, no, no, he's up there saying, go, go, go.

And if, just maybe, you become more aware of the signs around you, you'll start to discover a God who is constantly prodding us forward. If you're going to seize divine moments, you're going to have to start living with an advance mentality. You're going to learn to go and not let a no stop you from moving forward.

Do you remember your high school dances? Talk about risking humiliation. Like most of the guys in my high school, I generally hated dances. I think it was mostly because none of us could dance. We were a bunch of white robotic hockey players.

So for the first 30 minutes of the dance we would sit on the sidelines waiting for that one opportunity that wouldn't embarrass us completely...the slow dance.

Now I had my eye on a girl named Celine Leduc. I still remember her name because she had ... a great personality. I thought about her...personality a lot especially during French class where I would practice asking her to dance "en francais" in my head. I pictured myself strutting up to her like John Travolta in Saturday Night Fever and then popping the question..."voulez vous danser avec moi, ce soir."

The moment had arrived. The slow rolling piano sounds of Journey's "Faithfully" blared out over the loudspeakers. I looked across the dance floor and Celine was still sitting against the wall. My friend Normie, who was the epitome of cool, said to me, "Go, now's your chance."

I'm like "well, I don't know, what if she says no, think of the humiliation" and he reached down and literally threw me into a standing position and pushed me out into the open. I had reached the point of no return. So I mustered up my courage and found her and her friends sitting there and I said, "Would you like to dance?" And she said...no!

Yah! That's real life...it's not like in the movies all the time. So I stood there stunned for a moment thinking what do I do because I had no plan B, I had no backup plan in case she said no. So I muttered something and then slunk back to the place from whence I came and I sat down next to Normie and he said, "What happened?" And I said, "She said no." So he said, "Well, did you ask the girl beside her?" I said, "It didn't occur to me, I was stunned."

You see Normie's motto was, "If a girl ever says no, you just ask the girl beside her." No wonder this guy was always on the dance floor. He believed that somewhere out there there was a yes to be found. Not me! I believed there was a no waiting to attack.

I think a lot of us have spiritual muscle memories of failures and disappointments and humiliations of the giant NOs of life. And so when we enter into this relationship with God and we begin trying to put the pieces together of what it means to follow Christ we just think God's up there saying no, no, no when in fact he's saying you don't need permission, you need a mission. And when you have a mission, you don't need permission because you have a mandate.

E. MESSY IS THE BATTLEFIELD

In the writings of Paul, we find the messiness of real life. The first Christians didn't get everything right. The early Christian communities were far from perfect. No one, not even the apostles, had a perfect understanding. He describes this inner battle beautifully in the book of Philippians, chapter 3, verse 13. Listen to this: **"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13 NIV)**

You are going to make mistakes in this life, so make sure you make good mistakes. It is in that very weakness that God proves Himself strong. Even when we are committed to doing the good, we should not fool ourselves to think that we are doing the perfect. Yet in God's marvellous grace He strongly supports the work of those whose hearts are wholly His.

Those who seize their divine opportunities move with the God-given yes unless God says no. They work from the go and wait for the stop. They understand that the mission gives them permission. They know that the crisis encompasses their calling. They know that the danger is their invitation to step up to the challenge.

Everyone of one of us, like Jonathan, can live from an advance mentality. When Jonathan heard the Philistines say, "Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson", he heard it as a sign from God that the Lord had called him to advance. Jonathan wasn't simply defying the odds; he was defying fear itself. Nothing would stop him from moving forward and doing what was right. What would our world look like if we were a society full of Jonathan's?

F. ACTION MUST FOLLOW YOUR CHOICE

After risk comes advance. After "no turning back" comes "you must go forward." The closer you get to a divine challenge, the bigger it will seem, and the smaller you will feel. If the signs you are looking for are guarantees of success, you may retreat when you should be advancing. It would be great if the signs from God that we should advance were always things like a perfect situation, all the resources necessary to succeed, or a guaranteed win. Yet if that were the case, there would be no adventure.

Besides, that isn't reality. More often than not the signs pointing us to advance will be ominous. They will cause us to access who we are and who we believe God to be. They will make clear our priorities. The signs will expose our hearts, reveal our fears, and unleash our faith. There is a word for the mind-set of those who seize divine moments – advance.

In the whole description of this battle there has got to be one verse that is critical that is could not be omitted from the story. I think we find that unlikely spot in verse 13. This is one of the most profound and insightful verses in the Bible. Let me read it to you. "**Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and his feet, with his armour-bearer right beside him.** Wow, that's helpful. Aren't you glad that God took up space in this story for what seems like such a useless or obvious fact? Thank you so much Samuel that was very important.

But what if it was? I think that many times when we want to move forward and allow God to use us in extraordinary ways, we expect God to be the wind beneath our wings. The only problem is we don't have wings. What we don't realize is that many times the life that God is calling us to involves hard work. There are times, for God to do his work, we are going to have to struggle and sacrifice to get to that place. The path of God is not always the easy path. Sometimes he wants us to choose to climb up with our hands and feet. Is it possible that we haven't read the signs properly?

Jonathan read them right and here's what happened. "**The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armour-bearer followed and killed behind him. In that**

first attack Jonathan and his armour-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre.” (1 Samuel 14: 13,14 NIV)

I want to close this morning with a story of a real life Jonathan and the impact that that an advance mentality can have on the people around you. I found this story in an old Newsweek magazine about a Navy doctor named Richard Jadek. It says;

“Richard Jadek was bored. The lieutenant commander was shuffling papers while his fellow servicemen were heading out to Iraq. Once, many years before, Jadek had been a marine officer but had missed the 1991 Gulf War, stuck behind a recruiter’s desk. Now he was looking forward to leading a comfortable life of what they call a gentleman neurologist.

Jadek was 38, too old for combat duty, has a meeting with some other Navy senior medical officers who let him know that they are desperately short of doctors in Iraq. They ask him the question, “Whom can we send?” After thinking it over for a moment he said, “Well, I could go.” His friends said he was crazy and his wife who was nine months pregnant was none too happy.

In the summer of 2004, five days after the birth of his daughter, Commander Jadek shipped out for Iraq. It says later in the story that he changed his approach to medical care for soldiers while there. The night before an assault, Jadek jumped into a humvee on a reconnaissance mission. He wanted to see what he was up against.

In treating traumatic injuries there was something known as the “Golden Hour.” A badly injured person who gets to the hospital within an hour is much more likely to be saved. But Jadek knew that in combat the golden hour doesn’t exist. Left unaided, said Jadek, the wounded could die in 15 minutes and there are some things that can kill them in six minutes. If they had an arterial bleed it could be three minutes.

Jadek knew that helicopter evacuations were out of the question. There was too great a risk that a chopper would get shot down. Casualties would have to be driven out of the city on a trip that would take 45 minutes. Not close enough, he decided. Jadek wanted to push closer to the action. And because of this doctor, with nothing more than a nine millimetre pistol which would be more effective if he threw it at the enemy, jumped into the battlefield, he saved 30 soldiers lives

It struck me as I was reading this that our need to have an advance mentality goes far beyond our own lives. How far away are we emotionally, physically or spiritually from people who need the love of Jesus? What if we took an advance mentality in relationship to our relationships? Could you honestly get to them in time? What if someone was suffering a heart wound and they were metaphorically bleeding out?

Would you even want to get there in time or would you hope that God would send someone else? What if you did get to someone who was in need of hope and all you did was love them or served them and that was enough of a proof of God’s existence for them? What if all of us here took on an advance mentality for the kingdom of God? And understood that God was saying to us Go and not no.

By the way this article from Newsweek starts with a Scripture verse. The verse is found in Isaiah 6:8 and is a conversation between God and Isaiah but it can be taken as a conversation between God and humanity. It says, **“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,”** It’s almost like Isaiah is eavesdropping on God’s conversation between God and all of humanity. And God says, **“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, “Here I am. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8 NIV)**

I think that God is trying to have this conversation with us and we are hoping that God picks us like on American Idol when God has already invited us. You may be here this morning and all your life you’ve heard no and if you listen to everyone around you, you will have no capacity to do anything extraordinary.

God, who knows all your weaknesses, failures, humiliations and rejections, is asking you to step out and bring healing and compassion and mercy. God is always the source of life. Wherever He is, there is always a future and a hope. To know the life of God is to follow Him into this new frontier. As he did with Jonathan, God uses us to unleash an army.

The passage closes with this last thought: So the Lord rescued Israel that day, and the battle moved on beyond Beth Aven,” which is a good reminder to all of us that no matter how profound or dramatic a divine moment may be, we must never forget that the battle moves on. With the end of each day come new battles, new opportunities, and new adventures.

But now you know where to begin: take initiative. You know who God is, so embrace life’s uncertainty. Remember that the person you are becoming in Jesus Christ is your greatest gift to others, so use your influence. Every great adventure is filled with peril and danger, but the risk is worth it. You have already been authorized to move forward, so advance. And in that moment, each of us will have to choose. Will you retreat or will you take the opportunity to trust in God and seize a divine moment?

Let’s pray together. I imagine Lord that there is someone here who has not yet pulled the trigger on trusting you with their lives. They’ve been thinking, processing, listening, maybe even struggling in their own soul and they just haven’t stepped forward in their hearts. And I would pray that they would embrace your love and trust you with their life and choose to follow your son Jesus Christ and usher them into a future that will not be defined by the worst moments of their past.

I pray that you God would give us the strength, the fortitude, the courage, the guts to lean forward, to not only go to the point of no return but to step out into the unknown to allow you to meet us in those places where we are struggling with our walks, where we are climbing up with our hands and feet and it’s so difficult but we are moving toward in the direction of your heart, mission and your purpose for us.

And we trust that when we get there we will discover that you call us to a life that is bigger than ourselves, that we couldn’t have accomplished your purpose without your strength but more than that Lord I pray that we would in the process rediscover you in the journey.