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[*Introductory video*: Christmas bells music chimes at a brisk pace to accompany the bold messages which flash on changing backgrounds of bright green and red in time to the beat of the music:]

Christmas is coming

(the focus pans down a long row of stenciled pictures of a Christmas trees)

deck the halls

peace on earth...and all that...good stuff

(stenciled pictures of wrapped gifts multiply until crowding out the words)

Christmas is:

(one by one each word is succeeded by the next to complete the phrase)

family, love, home, joy, wonderful

(**wonderful** remains and these words stack up on top of it one at a time):

cookies, fruitcake, sweaters, crowded malls, this year's iPod, 10 office parties,

tacky ornaments, long return lines, credit cards, gifts, gifts, gifts, gifts...

(**gifts** is added uncountable times with increasing speed)

Let's be honest...more stuff

(the word *stuff* is multiplied above and below the word in the sentence)

doesn't make us happy

(again, stenciled pictures of wrapped gifts multiply until crowding out the words)

This Christmas could be different...and not just for you

LOVE ALL

[When the lights come back up at the video's end, Lead Pastor Sal Sberna begins.]

Good morning, everybody. So glad that you're here at *Jones Road Campus* and those of you that are joining us at our *Cypress Campus* and those via Internet. You've picked a great Sunday to come and worship with us.

We've been in a series called the *Advent Conspiracy*, and we are trying to return to the original meaning of Christmas for us as believers. The first week we looked at what it would mean for us to *Worship* (more) *Fully* this Christmas season, try to...

- Put aside some of the things that are distractions in our relationship with the Lord (and)
- Focus more on the way we ought to be worshiping Him (much like the original characters in the Bible [Christmas] story)

Last week we talked about *Spending Less* on the nonsense part of Christmas—not that we won't spend anything, but curbing back and looking for maybe a more important way to give.

That's what we want to talk about today: How we as a church *Love Everybody*. How can we reach out around the globe and become—to the people who need Jesus the most—*Jesus* to them. The Lord Jesus put it this way when He started his ministry (in *Luke, chapter 4*):

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...."

Luke 4:18a (NIV, 1984 edition)

Jesus meant what He said when He said those words. All throughout Jesus' ministry you'll see Him.

- He's ministering to the poor.
- He's ministering to the needy.
- He's also preaching the Gospel.

When we think of *poor*, we may not necessarily think of material-poor—and really there's a double meaning in this verse anyway—it's the spiritual-poor as well. That includes all of us. When you think about what Jesus did (even if we realize it or not) we are all in desperate need of a relationship with God.

Jesus stepped out of heaven, left all of that richness behind Him, and entered into our poverty as a human being. He came down here and lived just like us, but yet was without sin and gave us something that money could never buy—and that was His righteousness. In fact, the apostle Paul puts it this way; he says:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NIV, 1984 edition)

Priceless gift of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, given to us who could never afford it and certainly do not deserve it: Whether you think you're poor or not, (you know) everybody needs Him.

- Whether it was the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day (or)
- Whether it was the leper (and)
- The prostitutes (or)
- The tax collector (and)
- The ordinary worker like the Peters and the Jameses that you see in the *New Testament*.

We all need what only God can give us. We are poor spiritually, and He set an example for us that we who are the poorest receive this Good News: *That He has come to preach the Gospel to us*. Now because Jesus has done that, we need to use Him as our example. Those of us who have received this awesome richness of God through Jesus Christ need to begin sharing that with those who are poor.

At this time of the year we think about those:

- Who are the most marginalized
- (We think about those) who are the most neglected
- Usually the most overlooked this time of the year
- Not just the spiritual—but those that are materially poor as well.

We desire—those of us—

- Who have been blessed by God
- Who have been enriched by Him
- [Who have] received His awesome righteousness credited to our account (but on top of that)
- [Who have been] taken care of quite well, having the opportunity to live here in America

So what we're going to concentrate on today is what we as a church have been doing to reach some of the most neediest of the people that we can find on our globe. (Now) we haven't been able to reach everybody, but we've made a big difference in the lives of a lot of people because we really do believe that Christmas still can make a difference.

What Jesus did at Christmas—leaving His riches behind, becoming poor for our sake that we might be made rich—still changes the world.

In a moment you're going to see a video of the property that we purchased that now holds an orphanage—a children's village there—that reaches out to those that are the most needy in that area. Now, as we do missions as a church, we always look for strategic partnerships. We find somebody in the area in which we want to minister that's trustworthy and has favor. It's always somebody who already knows the Lord and loves the Lord, or a missionary that is in there that is representing the Lord for us. Therefore—

- We have partnerships in Mexico.
- We have them in the Philippines.
- We have them throughout South America.
- We have them in Uganda (as well).

Several years ago when we started expanding our global outreach, legal counsel (here at our church) advised us to set up another not-for-profit organization that we call *Elevare International*.

- One of the people that's in your *Big Give* brochure, DeWayne Everage, is featured in there. He is the Vice President of *Elevare*. God so moved on his heart last year that he quit his job and now volunteers 100-percent/full-time to that organization.
- The other, the President [Loren Hill, *The MET International Missions Coordinator*] of *Elevare* is also a member here at our church. He volunteers full time as well as doing his full-time job.

So we have *Elevare International* that helps us in our projects that we do around the world, especially where it involves property or ongoing missions like feeding children and that type of thing.

So what you're getting ready to see now is what your generosity has been able to accomplish over the last several years on this one piece of property in Wakisi, Uganda. So turn your attentions to the screen and rejoice in what the Lord is doing.

[Identities of each speaker are superimposed on the video as they begin speaking:]

Dr. Sal Sberna, Senior Pastor, The MET Church: We're back in Wakisi, Uganda, just outside of Jinja, at the site of our property. It was here six years ago (if you remember) that we as a church decided that we were going to do something about the problem of the orphans here in this area. Through our partners that we have in Jinja—our good friends there—we've been able to make some great improvements and a lot of progress in our project down here. I can't wait to show you, because Man! This stuff is just—well, let it speak for itself. Come in; let me show you.

[Video focuses on ELEVARE – UG spelled out in the placement of low-growing shrubbery in the landscape of a gentle hill near the entrance of the property.]

Loren Hill, President, Elevare International: I'm Loren Hill, President of *Elevare International*. *Elevare International* is a foundation that was created to help manage and represent the interests of The MET globally. Six years ago we were made aware of a need to help the children of Uganda. In doing so, we've met some wonderful Ugandan people who had the same heart that we did.

Mathias Sserugo, Board Chairman, Elevare Uganda: Since *Elevare Mission Uganda* started in Wakisi, there have been lots of ways the village, the community, has been improved. There are many needy people in the village, many needy people in the community. (But) you'll find that *Elevare* comes in to build this village and to help with these ones who are the needy of the needy...when you can't help yourself.

[*Loren Hill:*] Since the first day, **November 2007** (*superimposed date on video*) we hiked through the jungle down the little trail to this property, we've been able to do quite a few things for the village of Wakisi.

[*Video continues showing what has been done over the years, superimposed descriptors are shown in bold:*]:

- **2007-2008 path to property converted into road** [*before and after views from a narrow pathway through dense vegetation to a wide gravel-covered roadway*]
- **2007-2009 safety fence built to surround property** [*before and after views from an unimproved pasture land to a close-up view of the chain-link fence with flowering vines growing up through it*]
- **2007-2011 construction of building for training and missions** [*before and after views from dense vegetation near the river to a long, single-story building with wide, covered overhang/porch all along the front*]
- **2007-2011 property beautification & landscaping** [*before and after views from unimproved pastureland surrounded by dense vegetation to neatly landscaped grounds*]
- **2010 village water well repaired** [*running water shown coming from the pump-handle water spigot being operated by a joyful youth*]
- **2010-2011 medical clinics for village residents** [*showing medical personnel treating villagers under a large, open-air tent*]

[*Pastor Mathias:*] *Elevare Mission*, what we are doing is a process and it is sustainable and it is long-lasting. We change people's lives not for a moment, not for a second, but [for] as long as they are there. [*Video shows villagers tilling a garden, walking along the new roadway with a jerry can of water balanced on the head, babies playing in front of a dwelling, smiling children peering through the security fence into the property, other smiling children filling jerry cans*]

[*Pastor Sal:*] I'm standing on what will be the second floor of the building that will house people coming to Uganda to help us cultivate hope. Of all the things that we have shown you thus far, the most exciting is yet to come. In the distance you can see the outline of a house. That house has become a very, very special home.

Children's Home Opened October 2011: Welcome to *Masha Village*, the first of several planned communities for orphaned and abandoned children. Masha means to *draw out*. It comes from the biblical story of Moses, who was placed in a basket of reeds and abandoned down the Nile. The princess of Egypt rescued him; *drew him out* of the Nile. [*Exodus 2:1-10 (paraphrased)*] It's our desire

here at the *Masha Village* to draw abandoned and orphaned children out of danger and put them in a place of love, nurturing and hope.

[*Christopher Okumu:*] My name is Christopher Okumu. I am chairman of Local Counsel One (Wakisi Vilage). I thank you for everything you have done here, helping us.

- On the bore hole... [*video shows the repaired village water well*] water, because water is life.
- Even to see orphans, to bring them here. [*Video shows children outside one of the Masha Village houses.*]

We thank you for the good progress of this area. It makes the village go well

[*Loren Hill:*] We plan to create a community where these kids can grow up in the same environment they would have grown up in had they been able to stay with their mothers and fathers. Instead of taking children out of their village and into an institutionalized-type orphanage, we felt like we wanted something more intimate.

Currently we have one house that is 100 percent complete. You see behind me several other houses. These houses are in different stages of completion. We also have five slabs that have been poured for five more houses. Ultimately, on this property—in this village—we will have somewhere around 80 children. We're very excited about where we're at. We love the fact that we have one house with eight kids. As we grow, additional kids will come. Right now (already) in Wakisi alone, there're 40 children that are abandoned or orphaned. All they're waiting for is for us to complete another house so they will have a home.

[*Pastor Sal:*] A home [*sitting on the front steps of the completed home*]—

- It's the place that I come to at the end of the day.
- [It's] the place where I'm loved, accepted and nurtured.
- It's the place that I learned to...
 - Love people
 - Accept people
 - Nurture others

You know when I was younger, I probably didn't realize how much effort and sacrifice it really took to provide a home for me. Now that I'm older, I understand that. But if the effort and the sacrifice were not made, I wouldn't be the person that I am today.

Will you stand with us in making the effort and making the sacrifice to provide homes for these orphans? As we do, we will elevate the lives and cultivate the future hope of the village of Wakisi, Uganda.

[*Featured at end of video is the following credit and scripture quotation:*]

Masha Village
MET Church and Elevare International
Strategic Partnership

Religion that God our Father accepts
as pure and faultless is this: to look
after orphans and widows in their
distress and to keep oneself from
being polluted by the world.

James 1:27

[At video's end Pastor Sal shares the stage with Pastor Mathias Sserugo:]

[Pastor Sal:] I would like for you to welcome to The MET our good friend and the heart and drive behind our work there in Wakisi. This is Pastor Mathias Sserugo. Welcome him to The MET.

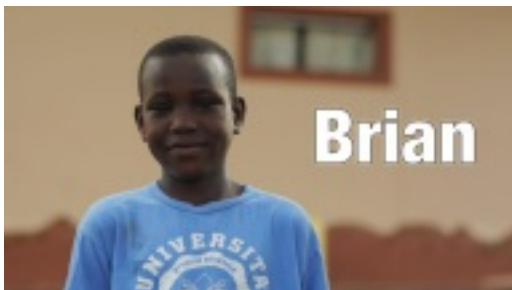
Mathias, tell us a little bit about yourself and how long you've been a pastor. Do you know what? (I know this is unscripted, but that's my gift.) Tell them how you came to Christ, as well.

[Pastor Mathias:] I came to Christ in 1981. I was a staunch Catholic, but I didn't know Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I'm married and I have four children. Three of them are grown up. I became a pastor in 1986. Since then I've been a pastor; that's about 25 years now. At the current location where I am, I've been there as a pastor for the past 10 years.

[Pastor Sal:] Yeah. How many of y'all remember Pastor Zachariah [Sserwadda, founder Evangel Church World Vision, Jinja, Uganda]—*The Ghost*? Do y'all remember him?—yeah. They were evangelistic buddies going way, way back. They would walk (literally) village to village, place to place, holding great big evangelistic meetings. Mathias was telling me that's where he really got his burden to see people disciplined and that's why he became a pastor. We could not find a better person that was able to nurture these children and oversee that project in Wakisi, Uganda, than Pastor Mathias. We're just so glad that you're here, brother.

[Pastor Mathias:] Thank you.

[Pastor Sal:] And I wanted him to introduce the kids to you and tell you a little bit about each one of them. So on the screens you will see them, and Pastor Mathias will let us know a little bit [about them].



[Pastor Mathias:] This is Brian. Brian is 10 years old. He's a very good young man. His father and mother have both died. He was left with his very old aging [grand]mother. He has had no opportunity to go to school like any other children.



Then next you see is Hadija—three years old.

[*Pastor Sal:*] She's a cutie.

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yeah. Hadija—[her] mother died. [Her] father died due to HIV/AIDS. She is just there in the village. Next year we are putting her through school.



And next is Jane. Jane is six years old. Her father and mother (the father died)—the mother is suffering with HIV/AIDS. She is also going to school. These are children that are in dire straight of need and that's how we come to pick them and help them.



Here you see Mother Mercy lifting baby Moses. I know you know Moses' story. She is taking care of baby Moses and these seven other children.

[*Pastor Sal:*] So, she lives in the house with them?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yes.

[*Pastor Sal:*] That's their mother?



[*Pastor Mathias:*] That's their mother now. She is so passionate. She loves children.

Next is Robina. Robina is also six years old. [Her] father [is] dead; mother is battling with HIV/AIDS. She is also at our village. She is a little girl that's good.



Next you see Ronald. Ronald has a very bad fate. No one probably will ever know his father. His mother is mentally disturbed, so men come and take advantage of her situation and produce children. That's how Ronald came about.



Here we have Swabura. Swabura, [at] the time they took this picture, had a swollen eye but she is cured; she is all right now. She is 4 years old [and was] abandoned at the age of 16 months—

[*Pastor Sal:*] I almost brought her home.

[*Pastor Mathias:*] —18, yeah, [at] about 18 months she was abandoned, left with an elder[ly] lady of about 82 years old.

[*Pastor Sal:*] They can't say my name—very few people can—correctly. So they call me *Pastor Sala*. I like that.

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yeah. Down there with every word there must be a vowel; you can't end with a consonant. So [for] Pastor Sal, they'll put it: Sala.

[*Pastor Sal:*] I kind of like that. So, what would happen to these children—the normal fate of an abandoned, neglected child or an orphan—what normally would happen with them?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] They would be totally abused, because [with] no father and no mother, and no one to take care of them, they would end up being abused. They are exploited for child labor and they end up having a very bad life. When we come in, it's like we are giving them hope where they would end up being hopeless.

[*Pastor Sal:*] You know, when we produced this video, the video said there are 40 identified in the village of Wakisi, but you have an update.

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yeah, by now there are 58. We have a total number of 58 within just one community: the Wakisi area.

[*Pastor Sal:*] And did you walk through the village to find that out, or how did that happen?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yeah, the village chairman (the one you saw taking), Christopher, was asked to look for these children in his area and to tell us those who are in need, not just in need, per se, but those who are in dire need—those that wouldn't have any hope if at all we didn't come in.

[*Pastor Sal:*] One of the things that I hear a lot when I go overseas: [when] you make a promise and (you know) you'd think they would be excited about it because we're going to come help you. It's like there is no emotion sometimes. After awhile I finally figured out that sometimes good people with good intentions make promises that they have never kept. In fact, the Village Chairman showed me a picture of when he was a child at one point in time some missionaries had come there and established some type of a small work that has since gone. But why are we different? What has given us the advantage in this community and the favor in this community more so than maybe others who have come in and said: *Hey, we want to help?*

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yeah, [from] 2007 and now it is 2011—[in] just four years—what you have promised us has come to pass. The children's village is now in place. The other facility also, which is going to be a pastor training center, is in place. [Whatever] you have promised, you have come to

fulfill. That makes a total difference. In four years—record time—of having a promise fulfilled. So that makes a difference.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Part of our strategy in long-term, sustainable missions like this one in Wakisi is that we wanted to build [a] reputation of: *We will do what we say we're going to do because we serve a God that does what He says He's going to do.*

So the next step is in starting a church, which Pastor Mathias and another of their colleagues, Pastor Joseph, is going to be doing this summer. We are going to go down as a church—those that can—and attend the groundbreaking for that and the evangelistic services.

So we're setting groundwork to be able to do a long-term work there. Our hope, in anything that we do—any compassion ministry—that ultimately: *We want to win people to Christ.* But sometimes...

- Understanding the culture
- Understanding:
 - What people have already been through
 - The promises made that weren't delivered

Helps us to establish a base of trustworthiness, because we want:

- People to trust God and
- The name of Jesus to be readily embraced in this case

So, as we think about the village of Wakisi and what we've been able to do there, how has that affected our reputation?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yeah. So far, word is spreading around that: *These particular people that have come this time have special love for us.* This has opened up doors for us with the government officials up to the district level. They know us, in this record period of four years, that we are good people reaching out and fulfilling what we promise.

So, doors are being opened in that we do not come in just to preach the Word, but we come in and reach out to the needs of the people, helping them with:

- The water
- Health (and now)
- The children
- The road
- Electricity

I mention it's opening up doors for us [so] that we can now share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people who are ready now to receive it because they see we are having a holistic coverage.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Mathias, when you think of the impact that this is having and the way that we're doing the orphanage—and I've been in some other orphanages in Africa and some other places where when I went in and I left, I thought: *Other than being with other orphans, sometimes I think they're really not that much better off. Conditions are squalor—at best.* What's the difference between what we're doing and maybe a normal institutionalized orphanage where you have a big house where there are hundreds of kids inside there?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Here we have eight children in one house. They have two rooms, four in each room. They have a lot of space. They have a mother who loves on them, unlike in institutionalized places

where these children have mothers that come and attend to them for a shift and another mother comes in. Here the difference is they have a mother who is:

- Staying with them
- Loving on them
- Sharing their day-to-day affairs
- Who can continually monitor them
- Put discipline and hope in them

That's the difference.

[*Pastor Sal:*] It's kind of off the subject (but that's the way my mind works): This is you're your second time in America. Right?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Yes.

[*Pastor Sal:*] The first time you were just at a conference or something and didn't get to get off the grounds where you were attending?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Uh huh, that was in Ashland, Virginia, in 1996.

[*Pastor Sal:*] So, what do you think of Texas?

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Ah [*laughing*] that's a tough one. Well, Texas is so welcoming. The people are so loving, so far, those I've met.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Just don't go north of Dallas.

[*Pastor Mathias:*] I don't know.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Yeah, I know. I'm putting you on the spot. I told him: *Texas—we're a whole 'nother country. If we secede, the whole nation goes down.* (You know) recently Pastor Scott, Pastor Zach and Loren Hill (one of our laypeople at the church) went over to Wakisi to check on the project and to bring Pastor Mathias here. And so I want them to come out and for them to (kind of) share their thoughts.

[Zach King, *Pastor of Ministries* and Loren Hill, *President of Elevare International*, enter, taking seats in line after Pastor Mathias.]

[*Pastor Sal addressing Pastor Zach King:*] Zachariah—Zachariah—your name's not Zachariah; your name's Zach.

[*Pastor Zach:*] That's a pastor in Africa.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Yes, I know. Tell us your initial thoughts. It's your first time over there. Right?

[*Pastor Zach:*] Yes.

[*Pastor Sal:*] First time you got to see what we've been doing for the last several years?

[*Pastor Zach:*] Yep.

[*Pastor Sal:*] What did you bring back—biggest take-away?

[*Pastor Zach:*] Ah, wow! I almost brought back one of the children—it was really close. Her name was Zitia. She's one of our new three children that you didn't see in the picture earlier. They've even—just in the last month—we've taken on three new kids in the village. It's just incredible how quickly you can fall in love with these kids. One of the biggest take-aways for me as we walked around the community, the chairman of the village, Christopher, walked [me] and Scott Rogers around the community through the jungle...

- Just meeting with people in their homes
- They were inviting us in[to] their homes
- Some of the women were even throwing themselves on the ground and thanking us.

It was just incredible the way that *Elevare* and The MET have (really) bridged a partnership with the community from the things that have been done there.

The road that was put in—that's a really huge deal there to get a road. They put a road in that went right down to the village. We're right on the Nile River there. So now they've built clothesline hangers and stick the laundry down there by the river. They've (really) bridged a part of the community through electricity, as well. So, it's a long-term investment and the community realizes that. They see that. They don't think it's just Americans coming in with a flash-in-the-pan mentality. It's really a long-term deal.

[*Pastor Sal:*] One of the reasons that Scott and Zach made the trip is they are exploring mission opportunities for us—as a church at both of our campuses—to be able to go over there so you can have feet-on-the-ground. You can experience firsthand what it's like to be used by God on a foreign field. But also further things we can do to improve the life of the community. (Kind of) update us on that, Zach.

[*Pastor Zach:*] Absolutely. Yeah, we met with a lot of great mission partners and including Pastor Mathias and Joseph, who is going to be leading the church there in Wakisi. Instead of coming in with *our* ideas of what *we* think should be done, we asked them:

- *What are your goals?*
- *What are your dreams?*
- *What do you see as the greatest needs for the community?*

...and letting them (kind of) share that with us so we can come back and say: *Okay, how can a team from the United States come and assist you in those dreams and those goals and the biggest needs that you may have?*

Through that, we've discussed some...

- Things about what the village has been doing
- Things with the kids
- Things on the property, as well (and) that we could do with the *Elevare* property.

We're (really) going to take a huge role in helping Pastor Joseph start the church by:

- Getting into some of the schools with him
- Helping in the schools

- Providing things for the schools
- Building a partnership with the schools that can go with (alongside) with the church.

It's really exciting to think about. We have a team that's going in March already.

Some of you guys have heard: We are raising \$6000 for a couple of playgrounds through our *Kids and Students Ministries* at both of our campuses [*Jones Road* and *Cypress*]. We're going to take that \$6000 and put a playground for the community right there on the property, then one for the kids in the kids' village as well. We got to pick that site this last week.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Zach, every time I go over there I am so impressed with the people. One of the greatest privileges is just rubbing shoulders with them and getting to know them. What was your experience with the folks there in Africa?

[*Pastor Zach:*] (Yeah.) It was incredible. Just so much joy, so much love—very similar to the States—they have goals and dreams and big things for their lives. Sometimes they lack the resources and opportunities to fulfill those dreams; [but] I feel like we can do that. [They are] just a happy group of people. You guys have seen that Mathias is always smiling. That's the same thing in the rest of the parts that we hung out with.

We were in Kampala [Capital of Uganda] which is a really busy area. Mathias was navigating us through there [addressing Pastor Mathias] because you're incredible with that. Just cars that were—and motorcycles—everywhere; you're almost hitting people.

[*Pastor Sal:*] You need to understand. Forget traffic lights, stop signs—just plasma moving constantly.

[*Pastor Zach:*] And traffic laws—forget those, too.

[*Pastor Sal:*] But no pedestrian crosswalks, just wherever you want to take your life in your own hands, you cross. Right?

[*Pastor Zach:*] Yes.

[*Pastor Sal:*] That's what this is like.

[*Pastor Zach:*] So picture all that fear wrapped up in one thing. All that's going on and no one is getting upset with each other. No one is opening a door to knock over a motorcycle like they would here in Texas, you know. They're just a happy group of people. It was just really impressive to see that.

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Thank you.

[*Pastor Sal:*] No road rage.

[*Pastor Zach:*] Nope, just from Loren and [me].

[*Pastor Sal:*] No roads—that I would call a road anyway—which is another big deal. When we put that road on that property, just for vehicles to be able to make it down there; and beyond vehicles, people walking. I've walked in those village paths. It rains a lot obviously in Uganda and there are a lot of mud holes, a lot of slippery slopes to fall on. Everything is very, very confined. This is a wide open road that's really safe to travel on for the people of that village.

And, we brought in electricity. I don't know if we mentioned that or not, but that was huge. That was the first time electricity has been in the entire village.

[*Pastor Zach:*] The chairman of the village didn't even have electricity until we brought electricity there, so he was really excited about that too.

[*Pastor Sal:*] A lot of people are tapping off that line right now, actually.

[*Pastor Mathias:*] Exactly. Exactly.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Which we're glad to do.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Zach, anything else you want to share? We'll give you your shot in Big Church right now.

[*Pastor Zach:*] Just don't tell my wife I was going to bring a child home without talking to her about it. Maybe next trip though. No, looking forward to leading some trips out there in the next year.

[*Pastor Sal:*] How does it make you feel about our church—beyond the walls of our church now? (I mean) you got to see something that most people just see on video.

[*Pastor Zach:*] Absolutely. Yeah, and even beyond our church. That's the great part about *Elevare*; is that now, what needs to be done there is so much bigger than our church. It's the Big-C Church. It's the Church of God's Kingdom. It's incredible just to see how far the money goes there and how far that investment goes to the community and surrounding communities as well.

[*Pastor Sal:*] In fact, that was a good point that you bring up. We had a Catalyst conference here (a couple of months ago?)

The leader of the Catalyst Conference came up and said: *Hey, I just wanted to meet you; my name is...*

And I said: *Man, it's real good to meet you.*

And he goes: *Man, your church's reputation* (among other churches in our country) *is the Big-C Church* (the big church, the big kingdom-minded church).

So just a reminder: The better we do here, the better we can do around the world. (You know what?) God sees the Kingdom. God sees the world. I believe He blesses the people and blesses the churches that see the world and people the way that He does. So just another *Thank you* for your generosity thus far that's allowed this to happen. (Okay?)

[*Pastor Sal:*] Now, this is Loren Hill. He is no stranger around here. He's served on our *Lay Leadership Team* for years, headed up our missions for us, and now is the President of the non-profit [*Elevare, International*] that helps manage and oversee some of our global interests. So, Loren, why don't you just give us an update as to what God is doing around the world and other places besides Africa.

[*Loren Hill:*] You bet. I'm honored to be here today. Sal, over the last ten years The MET has invested in many places just like you see in Wakisi. What was a dream three or four years ago, now is reality.

Also, in a place called North Korea we—four or five years ago—built a medicine factory. That medicine factory now is producing medicine for the children of North Korea.



This last year we installed an IV line [factory] that is actually making IVs for the hospitals there. The testimony and relationship that we have there is really something that is not done very often.

This last time we were there (a few weeks ago) we met with the director of our medicine factory and said: *What can we do now?* (You know, we've been investing in machinery, we've been investing in buildings—over 30,000 square feet of buildings—that have been built.) *What can we do now to really reach into the communities and help the kids?*

He told us about a project that he's been working on—the ability to make multivitamins for the children of North Korea. For the cost of \$2, they can produce a multivitamin every day of the year for one child. For \$2...

[*Pastor Sal:*] Wow! (Let me say something about that, because I have the gift if interruption.) Stop and think: \$2, a vitamin a day, all year long. Okay? They don't have the opportunity to eat properly there—especially the children. That is huge. What they can't get through nourishment they can get now through a supplement that we will give them which allows us to:

- Go to their schools
- Set up a little clinic
- Give them the medicine and
- Give them the vitamin

How many of you remember Charlie Ross? He's our partner over there (that we partner [with] through this). We need to bring him back then. because he's from Midland, Texas. All right? He lives [there] now. He has a permanent visa due to this ministry that we've developed over there—not a permanent visa; (what's that called?)—a green card (we know it as a green card) over there in North Korea, and he has a house there now.

He's done so effectively with this work that he's on (like) a United Nations committee (or something now?)

- Midland, Texas
- United Nations
- The MET Church

It's like three degrees of separation from—we have global impact now. We're going to have a seat on the United Nations. (Maybe we can finally get that thing straightened out. (All right? For heaven's sake. They waste a lot of money and we could do something good with that.) Anyway, go ahead.

[*Loren Hill:*] It really was incredible to sit and listen to this guy talk in Korea. As he would speak I would hear the word: The MET...The MET. I thought to myself...

[*Pastor Sal:*] This North Korean Communist official—

[Loren Hill:]—talking about The MET. It was just a neat reminder that (you know) God has opened up the door and placed us in places that most people don't have a chance to go to.

The impact that we're making there is with the children. You know, the people I love the most are the people who love my children. When we reach out and we help kids, some day we believe that we'll have the opportunity to have conversations with those parents and say: *Hey, we're the ones who helped your kids. You can trust us. You can believe us.*

[Pastor Sal:] Excellent. Tell us a little bit about what's happening with the camps.



[Loren Hill:] We began to get involved in Youth Camp ministries in the Philippines about seven or eight years ago. I think the first year they had 179 kids in their camp. Over those years we began to form a program that would reach the kids of Manila and the surrounding areas. This past year—just in the Philippines alone—125,000 kids were at this camp. The MET has sponsored the team that runs that camp. For the last five years we've paid their complete salaries. They've traveled all over the world, beginning to start these camps in places like Cambodia, Pakistan, Botswana, Tanzania—on and on and on.



[Pastor Sal:] Africa.

[Loren Hill:] Africa, this year.

[Pastor Sal:] Mexico.

[Loren Hill:] Yes, that's right. In Mexico we had over 18,000 kids at the camp in Mexico this year.

[Pastor Sal:] How many of those kids came to Christ of the 18,000?

[Loren Hill:] About 7,000 of those kids came to Christ.

[Pastor Sal:] How many globally have come to Christ because of...including Africa, K-Krew (that you'll say in a minute)...total number?

[Loren Hill:] This year, close to 400,000 kids attended the camps that we've sponsored.

[Pastor Sal:] Now, here's the cool thing about that. That's a strategic partnership that we have. That's the way that we do missions:

- We believed in them
- Thought: *We sensed the Spirit of God in that.*
- Invested in that

- The first camp was 179 kids

How many have been to (well, you probably don't know that) but how many have been to camp this year around the world?

[Loren Hill:] Oh, almost 400,000.

[Pastor Sal:] Almost, 400,000 people!

[Loren Hill:] And of that, the average is 35-40 percent of those kids receive Christ.

[Pastor Sal:] I think that's a good investment in the kingdom of God—a very good investment in the kingdom of God. (Don't let me interrupt.)

[Loren Hill:] That's okay. We also have...God's opened up a door for us in Mexico. [In] Saltillo, we were able to purchase 1,500 acres right on the main highway going from Monterrey to Saltillo. This week we'll be going to Cincinati to meet with a private investor, who has already given us a green light that they're going to build a camp for us on that property in Saltillo.

[Pastor Sal:] Now let me tell you how strategic that is. Mexico is in the news a lot, isn't it? They're also our border neighbor. There is a major, major, major drug problem in Mexico right now. The ones recruited in there are getting younger and younger and younger. We believe through our strategic partnership—how many of y'all remember Pastor Pepe? (Was it last year or year before last?) You need to go online and you need to stay up with these guys. If we reach the children, we'll stop drugs from coming into America. We'll stop cartels.

But it's going to take:

- A generation of reaching kids with the gospel of Jesus Christ
- So that they can raise their kids to do right
- So we can put an end to:
 - all of the murder
 - All of the sex traffic trade that's happening there
 - Everything that spills over into our homeland

These are our neighbors. These are the people that Jesus says that we need to be concerned about. These are some of the *least of these* that we talk about during this time of year. (Again, I apologize for interrupting.)

[Loren Hill:] Let's move to Africa. In Africa, we've just [in] this last quarter have begun supporting a group that we met there in Nairobi. This group is a group they call the *K-Krew*. There's about 40 of them. They reach the youth of Africa through:

- Music
- Dance
- Arts

And they have a television show that's been running for about six years on Sunday mornings. They have a seven-hour TV program.

Right now they say that that TV program goes into 50 million homes and every Sunday, 13 million viewers are watching this show. Everywhere you go, they're recognized. Everybody knows who they are. This last year when we started working with them, we helped purchase a van and sound

equipment. They started going into the local schools. In the last quarter they had 11,836 kids come to Christ.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Did y'all hear that? That's a lot of kids! Once again—aiming at the generation that can make a generational change over time.

[*Loren Hill:*] I met with him [DJ Moz, the frontman of *K-Krew*] when we were in Africa last week and he showed me his budget, he showed me the plan for this year. They're hoping to have three vans, three sound equipment systems. They hope to reach 290,000 kids in 2012.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Did you tell them about the original vans for them? They go to those schools now because of our mission offering.

[*Loren Hill:*] Right.

[*Pastor Sal:*] You told them that?

[*Loren Hill:*] Uh-huh.

[*Pastor Sal:*] All right, I was thinking of my next question—my bad. (I was doing to you what you do to me when I am preaching. I wasn't thinking about lunch.)

[*Loren Hill:*] We met DJ Moz and we were talking to him about doing a youth camp there in Nairobi. He said: *Loren, we don't need a youth camp, we have the ability to go into the schools. When we go to the schools—because of our popularity—every student, every teacher, every principal is in that congregation.*

- *We have the ability to pray.*
- *We have the ability to sing.*
- *We have the ability to preach.*
- *At the end we have the ability to have an altar call.*

We don't need a camp. So, we began immediately to take his advice and go directly into the schools.

[*Pastor Sal:*] Gosh! Isn't that amazing? To think we *used* to be able to do that in America (I'm not sure) Zach, the schools reminded me: You were telling me something about an opportunity we might have—mission-wise—in Africa with schools.

[*Pastor Zach:*] Yeah. Pastor Joseph who is there in Wakisi and will be starting a church there—and potentially starting that church on the *Elevare* property—[when] they get a building. He has made great partnerships with the schools in Wakisi. He wants us to come:

- Do some of the entertainment
- Some of those things, as well
- Provide them with some sports supplies
- Supply them with some syllabuses
- ...some books
- Things to help the schools, as well.

He's already (kind of) tilled the ground for us on that.

[*Pastor Sal:*] There is so much more that we could share. In fact, these guys are going to go out into the Atrium and Pastor Mathias has brought some very inexpensive Christmas gifts for you to purchase. Obviously that money is going to go to assist us in our ministries there.

There are some more beads and stuff, I bought the... (No, my wife may hear this. I can't tell her what I bought for her and my daughter for Christmas.) So run out there afterwards, say something to Mathias, ask him whatever questions you need to ask him. Just love on him a little bit.

So I'm going to let those guys go back and then we are going to finish up here and at our *Cypress Campus*. Thank you, guys.

When I walked on that property—I think it was in 2006—there on the Nile River, I felt the same I did as when I walked on that 100-acre property that we have down on Fry Road. I sensed the presence of God and God calling us to a vision to achieve a mission.

Watching that video should give all of us a great sense of satisfaction and great reason to praise God, because what God said He would do, He has done. We are seeing the fruit of our labors come true—literally—around the world.

Now Jesus said an interesting thing. At the end of the age when we all stand before God, those of us who know Christ as Savior—He's going to say a pretty awesome thing to us. In *Matthew's* gospel *chapter 25*, Jesus says:

³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry [and] you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty [and] you gave me something to drink... ³⁶ I [needed clothes] and you clothed me, I was sick [and] you [looked after] me. I was in prison, and you [came to] visit me.'

Matthew 25:34-36 (NIV, 1984 edition)

Do you know what we are going to say? *Well, when did we do that? When did we see You naked, Jesus? When did we see You orphaned, Jesus? Or when were You in prison, Lord?* [*Matthew 25:37-39* (paraphrased)] Here's what Jesus will say—and let these words sink in because they are very powerful words from our Master. This will come from His lips to us one day. He will say this to us:

...when you did [it] to [one of] the least of these my brothers [and sisters], you were doing it to me!

Matthew 25:40b (NLT)

What we do around the world, we do for Jesus. What we do goes so [far]—I believe in a lot of great organizations (and we partner with a lot of great organizations)—but when we as a church on a mission from God—we can do things that literally affect people's eternity.

When Jesus said: *I've come to preach the gospel to the poor.* [*Luke 4:18* (paraphrased)] Yes, it does mean temporarily fixing what somebody's need is—but remember, we look far beyond the temporary

to the eternal. Some of you are here this morning and you're just not rich toward God; you're poor. You are poor inside of yourselves.

All of us—the Bible says, when God looks at us, we are filthy rags. [*Isaiah 64:6* (paraphrased)] Rags! Like the children you see in some of these videos. But He who was rich became poor for our sakes, so that we might become rich. [*2 Corinthians 8:9* (paraphrased)]

You could be rich right now, with spiritual riches. You live in a country that is filled with material riches. Some of you need to give your life to Jesus today. Others of us who have been so blessed by God, are just poor toward God. We don't give what we need to give. None of this would have happened (that you heard about today) if it was not for the generosity of God's people.

For those of you who have been giving: *Thank you so much*. What you do has made a difference around the world. It's time for the rest of us to help out now. It's time for the rest of us to say: *All right, God, when I get to heaven I want [to be able to say to You]:*

- *I clothed You*
- *I fed You*
- *I gave You water when You were thirsty*
- *We visited You when You were [in prison]*
- *We healed You when You were sick*

We will be rewarded for that.

So here's what I want everybody to do as we close out. If you brought your *Big Give* envelope, this is the first Sunday in successive Sundays to the end of this month that we're giving to the *Big Give*. So if you don't have a *Big Give* envelope—everybody take an offering envelope out of the pew rack in front of you and when you get it hold it up real high. Hold it up real high on the *Cypress Campus*. If you are joining us via the Internet, hold your wallet up. (All right. Don't worry, I'm not going to take your money.) Hold it up. I just need to make sure everybody has it.

There's a powerful thing in your hand and I'm going to tell you what it is. Let me tell you what you have in your hand. You have in your hand: **the power to do for Jesus what nobody is doing for Jesus in places of the world where the most neglected and the needy of the needy are**. You are holding in your hand the power of eternal reward right now. (You can put it down.)

If you came prepared to give, this is when we want you to give to the *Big Give*. If you didn't and God's spoken to you, just take one of those regular envelopes and put *Big Give* on it and do what the *Big Give* says: Give big!

It matters. I'm going to tell you right now:

- *It matters to 11 orphans.*
- *It matters to little children in North Korea.*
- *It matters to people around the world that haven't heard the Gospel*
 - [Who] won't even know who you are (or)
 - What America is (but)
 - They will know Jesus one day.

You will be rewarded for what you do.

Again, this is our first Sunday. We have all the way to the end of the month. Then anytime that you want to give during the year, feel free to do so.

I'm going to lead us in prayer now—on both of our campuses: *Cypress*, here at *Jones*, and if you are joining us on the Internet, would you just pray with me for a moment? Let's just bow our heads together.

If you are here this morning or you're listening by Internet, if you're here on any one of our campuses, I'm going to ask you:

- *Have you received the riches of Jesus Christ?*
- *Do you realize...*
 - *How poor you are without God and His audacious richness?*
 - *That He would give you what He is?*
 - *[That He] would credit to your account what you could never buy and could never possibly earn; that is, His perfect righteousness for you to have forever and ever?*
- *Don't you want that?*
- *Aren't you tired of being poor toward God?*

You don't have to be. You could be a rich member of His family if you give your life to Christ. If you're here this morning and you've never given your life to Christ, you pray this prayer with me. And it goes like this:

Dear God, I'm poor. I'm in filthy rags. My soul has no food and the thirst that I have can never be taken care of with water. I ask You to make me Your child. Give me Your righteousness. Forgive me of my sins. Allow me to be in Your family.

And for the rest of us that are here that are believers, I challenge you now before I pray with you and for you: **Give generously so that the needs that represent the needs of Christ around this world are met.** No matter what language, no matter what country, the name Jesus is still Jesus.

So let's pray and ask God to speak to our hearts—just ask God right now. My church folks that are joining by Internet, that are at *Cypress* and at this campus right now—just ask God:

God, what do You want me to do?

- Is it one less gift?
- Is it equal to what I'm supposed to be spending on Christmas anyway, or
- Is it something more audacious than that?
- Is it something like what You did for me? You became poor so that I could be rich. Is it that awesome?
- Is it awesome like I need to quit my job and do what You're asking me to do like DeWayne has done?
- Do I need to keep doing my job and volunteer more like Loren has done?
- What is it Lord?

It's a *Big Give* time. God, speak to our hearts. Father, we can't thank You enough for the riches that You have allowed us to experience.

And as we take this offering, Lord, when this plate goes by, may what is represented in a check or in cash be representative of what's in our hearts. May we give big because You have made our hearts big. Thank You, Lord, that what we do has eternal effect around the world. Anoint our giving now. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lead Pastor: Dr. Sal Sberna

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¹⁹ ...I couldn't just walk away from a vision like that! I became an obedient believer on the spot. ²⁰ I started preaching this life-change—this radical turn to God and everything it meant in everyday life—right there...and from there to the whole world.

Acts 26:19b-20 (The Message)

Legend:

(words in parentheses) = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

[words in square brackets] = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

{words in curly brackets within indented quote} = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*