

“All Things to All Men”

By Chris Ulrich

Sunday, June 26th, 2016

Good morning everybody. I'd like to have Mike come. He's going to lead us in a word of prayer as we begin the message this morning.

Mike: Dear Lord Jesus, we just praise Your holy name, Lord, God, and we're thankful for the men who stood up for Pastor Davis, who was nothing when he was a kid. People didn't think he would amount to anything, God. He just humbled himself before You, and he was a human being. I think that was the legacy that's his life. Yeah, he had mistakes, everybody does. King David, a man after God's own heart, committed murder and adultery. Everybody does. But, I never met a man like Pastor Davis. The Spirit of God, the anointing on his life. Pastor Paine has got his own anointing. And the same with Pastor Thomas. But, I never met anybody like Pastor Davis. Lord God, I just thank You for all the blessings and letting me a part of this ministry, and help continue this legacy. I just pray this in Your name, and, Jesus I ask that You would bless this service. Bless Brother Chris. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Amen. Thank you, Mike. Good to see everybody this morning. We want to welcome back Bob Heitzler from Maine. Bob's mom passed away recently and he went there along with Pastor Paine and Debbie. Pastor Paine did the eulogy, and our hearts go out to you, Bob. I know you're still in a time of grieving, and it's difficult. My parents are both alive, but I know that those whose parents have gone on. People set an example. They set an example, for those of us who know it's inevitable. I don't really know what other way to put it, but, like what you shared, Ken, this is the whole purpose of God: Fear God and keep His commandments, for God will bring everything into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Earlier this month, we were at Grandwood—and I'm kind of going on to another point, here, as far as—and Pastor Ulysse was up here—he's our associate general pastor, for those of you who don't know—and we had a study, and he asked us a simple question: “What does it mean to be a man?” That's right in line with what's been our theme of the month. I would venture to say that, if you're a man today, you really need to know yourself. That's going to be one of the main points.

- Know Yourself
- Get to Know Others
- Find Common Ground

1st Point – Know Yourself

I'm not talking about just your name, rank, and serial number, to borrow a line from the military. I think a lot of us have heard that before. I'm not talking about your likes and dislikes, but, where you're from, what your testimony is, what some of your favorite verses are. Even, we're going to talk about some other things: Movies that you like, TV shows, and I'm not talking about getting worldly; this has nothing to do with that, but I'm talking about you have to know yourself. And, I know that, in a lot of ways, the same is true with women—I'm not just speaking to the men, today. I believe that, in a lot of ways, a lot of this message is going to be for both. It's not just about, this is isolated, or this is about separating us. And I'm not talking about this from an analytical standpoint, like, so, “Okay, Why do I like this?” or “Why did I choose to do that?” or, “Why did I color in this color?” That has nothing to do with

it. Those are something—let the psychiatrist and the psychologists deal with that. As far as, from a standpoint of being led of God, and having an understanding that we have a walk with God, and why we might do certain things that confound the world—which it does. But, really, what it comes down to is, let them be confounded. Like in that skit, that man, Cat—whom I've never met; that was quite a bit before my time—he had his agenda, but, when he was challenged by the man of God, he backed off. And, when he understood that his life was in the balance, he called out for the man of God, and that's a very powerful point. Or that young child, that act of kindness that stayed with him for many years; probably his whole lifetime. God doesn't want us to fake what we've done, where we're from, what we stand for, what we believe in. He's not looking for the most far-fetched story, or where we're going to end up with our own reality show. It's about coming clean with God and being honest with ourselves, and understanding that we—like you shared, Andy, about looking up at the stars, and as far as the eyes could see, and just seeing the universe, that we could think of ourselves as insignificant, but then we also look at it like Jesus died on the cross for our sins; He died for us individually. And that's something that does give us confidence. That is something that does get us through day to day.

Romans 13:11-14 *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

So what do you know about yourself? Where are you from? Where is your family? What places do you like to travel to? What got you seeking God? What Bible verses really encourage you? What examples of faith in the Bible—I know, like you mentioned, Ken, about being solid; like Arman shared about Jacob. I know all of us—I know, personally, one person that stands out to me is Apostle John. I just like how he kept living. I like how—there is an example, it's not Biblical, but it's in the *Foe's Book of Martyrs*, as far the attempt to eliminate him, was that he was boiled in oil. And he survived, so he was exiled to the island of Patmos. That's where he spent his remaining days, and that's where he wrote the Book of Revelation. So, how old was he when he eventually went to be with God? Probably his nineties. Does anybody really know? I mean, you're going back now a couple of thousand years. And, again, I know I could be talking to the women, here, as far as answering those same questions...

But how many's ever heard the expression, "I got so far away from what I knew was right that I didn't even know myself anymore." How many's heard that expression? That's a pretty ugly place to be. And I believe that, in a lot of ways, maybe, we ourselves were the ones asking ourselves that. I know that—and this was in 1987, this was just before going in the military—and I'm just going to be honest, I'm just going to share exactly this particular one night that this friend of mine and myself, we had taken a pretty strong hallucinogen, LSD, for those of you that have heard of it, and, it's kind of an all-night event. I mean, it's the kind of thing where it just goes on and on, and it does have a pretty severe, long-lasting effect. But, I remember, the next morning, I had come home, and I remember looking in the mirror, and, I remember, just kind of evaluating myself, and, just, not liking what I saw. And it had nothing to do with appearance; it had nothing to do with, "Oh, now I'm getting some grey hair." I was nineteen. Or, "Oh, I've got acne," you know, it had nothing to do with those kind of things that you'd think a nineteen-year-old might be looking at and finding flaw. It had to do with, "I see darkness. I see darkness in my own life." And it's something that, "I feel like I'm out of control." But I know that God was dealing with me, and I know it was the kind of thing where it was like, I believe there's a truth out there to find. And it is real, but it took changing some behaviors. It took praying, which I certainly wasn't accustomed to, at least, not at that point, not very much at all. But, sometimes we do lose control, but, more so before we have the power of God in our life to keep us on the straight and narrow path.

Matthew 10:29-31 *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.*

So what's my point in reading that passage? What's my point in sharing that story? It's about knowing ourselves; knowing what we're really made of, knowing our own pratfalls, and knowing that, without Christ—it would be easy to say, "Oh, I'd never do that. I'd never go down that road. I'd never become a mass-murderer, or a serial killer, or a rapist," or any of those other things that we look at in society with scorn, or look at, maybe even contemptuously. But, we've heard this expression before, "Except for the Grace of God, there go I." And it's a matter of looking at it like, "You know what? Except for the Grace of God, there go I."

2nd Point – Get To Know Others

That's part of the Gospel. That's part of our decree from the Lord. Where are you from? That's probably the question I ask people more than anything else. And I know there's a lot of people here from all over the country. Like, Rich, we were talking: Canajoharie, New York, and I remember when you first told me that, that's upstate, and it's maybe a few hours' drive from where I'm from, originally, but it's kind of a funny name. It's like, there's a guy down in Norfolk, John H.—how many knows John? Does anybody know the town John's actually from? Skaneateles. It's a small town at the base of one of the bigger lakes in upstate New York, but I thought—I'd never even heard of that. And I'm not saying we've got to remember every single, solitary thing about everybody, and we're going to get into that a little more. But, you know, most people like to talk a little bit, if given the opportunity. And, I'm talking about, from our standpoint, asking people about themselves. Asking them where they're from. Asking them what they like to do. We're the ministers; there is an expectation from God for our lives, and, it's more than just a testimony, because, a lot of times, it is about listening. And I get that there is a balance, I mean, there has to be fellowship, there has to be conversation, there has to be things shared both ways. I'm not saying it's a one size fits all, but it's usually a good ice-breaker. I've also found that I get asked that a lot, myself, "Well, where are you from? How did you end up here?" I'd venture to say that, in twenty-seven years, I've probably told people, "Well, I moved up here because of the ministry I'm involved in." And some say, "Oh, really? What church is that?" and some just, you know, so they may not say anything about it. So, it's not trying to force open doors, but, a lot of times—I'm proud of that fact. And, I'm not looking at it like, "Oh, well, you know, I just ended up here, just, randomly, like, the wind blew this way, and I just landed here," or you could use, "Well, I was in the military," and that's fine, and I get that there's a lot of people who are from this area, too; not everybody is from elsewhere in the United States. And we don't always have to be the one to initiate conversation, ourselves, but we have to remember that God gives us power to be able to function in society, to be able to interact, and not be intimidated but not be condescending.

I'm going to ask if you could turn with me to the Book of Proverbs. It's a common verse, it's a simple verse; it's what they call a one-liner

Proverbs 18:24 *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

So, I'm going to ask everybody, do you see yourself as a friendly person? And, I mean, you don't have to say, "Yes!" or "No!" That's not the point. Maybe you do and maybe you don't or maybe you're

somewhere in the middle—and I think that's where most people really live). Looking at it from the standpoint, it's not a competition, like, trying to out-do each other. But, I think that people have to generally understand that, can they trust us? Can they confide in us with certain things? I'm not talking about they're always going to tell us their complete life story. But, I believe we could all do a little better. But it makes me think of the song, "I have a long way to go to be like the Lord." I say that more, pointing it at myself, but, truthfully, that's not a bad perspective to have, because you have to look at it like, okay, there's always room for improvement. And, whether it's in business, or whether it's in family relations, as far as our walk with God, it is an on-going thing.

I know this isn't a main point, but it's sort of a point within the bigger picture of getting to know others. It never hurts to highlight the good in people. Oh, I'm not referring to mass murderers, or armed robbers, but, you know, looking at it, when we're functioning day-to-day, when we're at the mall, when we're on a plane ride, when we're on a train ride, when we're at a restaurant... How often do you think that the person sitting next to you really fits into one of those categories? I'm not saying absolutely never, but I would have to say, maybe a few times? But, if our guard is up so much that we're so protective, and so ready to just fight against everybody, and I see that sometimes in myself, like, just the trying to think, "Well, you know what? What if I get attacked out here; I'm out mowing the lawn. Somebody drives by, and just goes on a rampage..." You know, you have to deal with that when the time comes. There's a slogan that the Red Cross has, and they tie in with our company, and it has to do with, like, whenever there's natural disasters, it's called, "Ready when the time comes," but, it's something like, you can prepare, and I believe that we have to prepare, but what if that time doesn't come? Well, it's good to still be prepared, but if we're just ready to wall ourselves off completely from anybody and everybody, then what do you end up with? Not really preaching the Gospel very much. Not getting out into society, or even taking some chances, or meeting some new people... We're going to get into that a little bit more. And it doesn't hurt to applaud someone for a job well done, or congratulating them for becoming a father or mother for the first time, or being happy that their team won the championship (as long as they didn't beat my team!). Maria, you're here, right? I've got something for you. And, I know we're in church, but, Maria's from Pittsburgh, and when she told me, "Oh, yeah, I really like the Penguins." Ah, you know, I don't hate them, but... I got something for you; I'm going to bring it out to you. There you go. Like pastor Paine used to say, "Is it okay to have fun in church?" I appreciate that, because you've got to have some ice-breakers, you've got to have a little—I'm not talking about getting crazy and I'm not talking about being ungodly at all. But I know that—I know Mike H. isn't here this morning, but, for those of you that know Mike, especially during football season, the guy wears a hat for just about every other team, other than my team. He doesn't wear the Ravens, either, Parrish. But he'll wear the Saints, or the Chiefs or the Seahawks, or the---"Mike, come on! What?" And he'll say, "Anybody but the Patriots." So, I'm like, okay. So, I've got to just show it to you. And, I know it's a little far up here to see, but, I'm just going to show you something. Mike, he's like, "I hate the Patriots." He buys me this Patriots mug. This was a couple of years ago. And he bought me this scarf, I mean, this nice winter scarf, and I'm like, "Jeez, Mike, you really had to pray to God to do that." I appreciate that, and, if you see him, mention it to him. But, I appreciate that, you know, different things like that that will minister to people, and you get to know other people. And, you know, it's not—there's times, like, Bob, what you and I have talked, and I know many others have talked to you the last couple of months about what you're going through. There's nothing wrong with offering our condolences in the wake of sadness or tragedy or loss. It's more than what God wants.

Romans 12:15-16 *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*

This is going to be our main text for today, but, as we go through life, and we do experience heartache, it pays to know what's going on. And, again, we don't know every single, solitary detail about everybody else's life, but, what you do, as far as being a minister of the Gospel, as far as being a man, it's something that we need to do.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 *For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

3rd Point – Find Common Ground

This is our main text for the sermon today, and the title of the sermon is derived from that passage; it's, "All Things to All Men." A few weeks ago, I had put together some things, and—I'll just back it up by saying, a couple of years ago I did a message which was titled, "Jesus Is Not Glamorous, But He Will Save our souls." And, the thought that came earlier in the month was, we're not a prestigious ministry. I mean, look around, I mean, even those of us that are going down to Virginia, it's not prestigious. And Jesus is not prestigious, but He will save our souls. But, we're not striving for that, either, those of us who are seeking God. And the reason I want to juxtapose those two points is because, really, when you think about it, and this is not meant to sound too gender-slanted, but glamour is probably more associated with women. I mean, think about Glamour magazine, and, okay, we got it. Prestige is probably something here it's a little bit more, "Oh, that's a prestigious school," "That's a prestigious place to live," "That's a prestigious business," and it's probably something that—women can, too—but, probably a little bit more on the men's side. But God talked about, just talk about all things to all men. And I just wanted to highlight that a little bit, because it's important to know where we're at, too, and to not get our head out in front of our skis, as the expression goes. To get too far in thinking that we've just really got it going on. God does. And we've had some ups and downs as a ministry, too, but, ultimately, we've got to have a plan to stay. A plan to endure to the end (Matthew 24:13). A plan to stay in the faith. Like the expression goes, "Come Hell or high water." And that's not big talk, that's not just like, "I'm going to do it all!" because it's not about doing it all ourselves, it's about trusting in God. Even in John, it talks about, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30) Is that easy to do? no. I mean, that's as hard as it could possibly get. That doesn't mean that we don't know ourselves; that doesn't mean that we don't get to know others; that only means that the presence of God increases in our lives.

I'm going to share this: Some of the biggest hurdles we face in society are racial, ethnic, and language barriers. I don't think that's a profound statement, and I also don't think it comes as any secret and if you know history it's an on-going thing. Especially as far as being in America, being as integrated as it is, demographically. I'm not going to try and recap the entire history of this ministry, either, in ten minutes, but a lot of what our ministry was founded on was based on having a welcoming to everyone, regardless of who they were, where they were from, what they did, and that is a big difference-maker. Now I get that most of us came from a church or background or whatever where it wasn't integrated, and, you know, there's certain parts of the country where it's quite of a certain nationality. You know what? So what? I mean, are we supposed to go in there like gangbusters, and, like, tell them off, or tell them how bad they are? no. It has nothing to do with that. But, when people are seeking God, the Word of

God says, in Revelation, “I stand at the door and I knock. If any man will listen, I will come in and sup with him.” (Revelation 3:20)

So what does that little editorial have to do with finding common ground? Well, think about what we talked about earlier and what we like to do, what we like to eat, what kind of movies, and so on and so forth. That might sound a little bit carnal for some, but if we already have the truth and are trying to reach people in the world with the Gospel, don’t you think we need to use the world a little bit for the benefit of the Gospel? So, this is a verse here that—probably not a real common verse:

1 Corinthians 7:31 *And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

I’m not talking about, again, ungodliness or lewd behavior. I’m talking about relating to people. So, if I say I like Mexican, Filipino, or German food, don’t you think that people from those ethnicities are going to be glad to hear that? Or perk up a little bit? The same is true in other areas of society. Personally, there’s an author by the name of John Steinbeck; he’s--wrote in the early nineteen hundreds. He’s a pretty famous American author, wrote a book called, “The Grapes of Wrath,” about the Great Depression. Probably one of the more iconic novels of American history, but if I’m talking with someone that’s Jewish and the topic comes up, I would think that they’d be appreciative of that. I know there’s some TV shows that I’ve liked, and maybe some people go, “Oh no! You—you actually have a preference?” Yes, I do, actually. I liked the show, “Martin,”—it was a little older--“Bernie Mac,” “Sanford and Son...” I always liked Bernie Mac talking into the camera, like, “You know what, America?” How many doesn’t know the show? How many does not know that show? Okay, Kirk, he used to talk into the camera, and say, “You know what, America?” But, it was the kind of thing where it was like, I like that, because, up here, I feel like I’m talking to America. This is it. I mean, this is something where it’s like we’ve got people from this country or that country or this age group or that background, and it’s a pleasure to see. I know that there’s a couple of film producers: Sergio Leone, Francis Coppola, Martin Scorsese, these guys produced some of the greatest movies in the history of American cinema, I believe. You know, again, “Oh, these are worldly things!” We’re talking about finding common ground. We’re talking about you dealing with people in the world. We’re talking about, if we’re like, “No, I don’t know any movies; I don’t watch TV. Nope, no, no.” I’m just going to share something because I think I feel led, but, we were talking about Pastor Davis, earlier, and he came out of the United Pentecostal Church. This is not aimed at them, because it’s more about one statement that he made one time that I got a lot out of it; he said, “You know, I came out of a church that labelled everything sin. Coffee drinking, short sleeves, facial hair...” So, what do think they label, like, “You watch TV? Oh my God! We’re going to have to get a committee and flog you!” I mean, where it’s like... You know, and there’s other things, where—I’ve always liked American Indian artwork. I’ve been to several pow-wows with Tony Mattia, when he was alive, and even afterwards. I remember growing up, and watching the Olympics, and there’s a lot of different events that I liked. I liked the down-hill skiing, you know? I’m going to mention this to Elmira and Aleks, there was a couple from Russia by the names of Irina Rodnina and Alexander Zaitsev; they were so spectacularly good. How many remembers that? Okay, Kirk, you were the only one who raised your hand. They were like-I’ve never seen a pair of figure-skaters like this couple, this man and woman. They were phenomenal. They won gold medals and championships every single, solitary year. And they were from Russia. And our American propaganda machine went, “Oh! Russians!” And it’s like, you know what? It’s ridiculous. Now, I’ve got a trivia question: How many here know who the founders of Google (you know, Google the search engine)? Nancy, who are they? Come on, you raised your hand! Mike? “I don’t know their names, but two Chinese brothers, right?” No, they’re not. Mike F.? “Sergey Brin and Larry Page.” That’s right. And Sergey Brin is the Russian. He was born in Moscow; one of the founders of Google. Yeah, that Google. You know, the biggest search engine in the world. From Russia. I mean, you’d think, “Wow!” I mean, that shows

industriousness. That shows entrepreneurialship. And, again, we're still in church, this is the Gospel, but we're talking about appreciating other ethnicities or what other people bring to the table, and getting something from it, and it's about knowing ourselves, knowing others, and appreciating our differences.

It's not all about ethnic cultures, either. We can talk about experiences as well (good and bad). I remember the first time I ever broke a bone; this was, probably, thirteen years ago. I remember taking a job, and losing it very unexpectedly and being on unemployment for a few months. That stung a little bit, I'd say. I remember my roof repair last fall that cost about \$5000, and, Kirk, while we're on you, \$9000 for that repair of your downstairs, right? \$8000. That's the kind of thing—you get hit with a ton of bricks like that... But, you know, I also remember getting an honorable discharge from the Navy. I remember getting hired at the company I work at now eighteen years ago. I remember the first time ever teaching a Bible study. Like I said, it's a combination of good and bad.

What common ground do we find? What ways are we looking for to relate to people? And it's not about patronizing, or putting on a show, or, "Well, I just want them to think I'm a good guy." Whether they do or they don't, it's about the gospel. It's about, eventually, hearing the Gospel. And, it's not about forcing it on people; we'll make friends that will never come to church. That's just a fact. But, there was a guy, years and years ago, by the name of Jim Allsop, that, him and his wife, Martha—now she came, got baptized, and she was pretty faithful for a good number of years, but he never—he'd come out, but he'd sort of sit in the background, but he wouldn't take communion. Then he took communion. Then he made a profession of faith. He got baptized in Jesus' name; passed away, maybe a couple of years later. But that guy had been an atheist for a period of time. It was just a matter of, like, that guy was a friend. It was, you know, not to harp on him, or, like, beat him over the head with a stick, that kind of thing.

You know, we think about hobbies, we think about hiking, or camping, or fishing, or boating. I remember a sermon, a couple of years ago, Jesse, that you had done, about don't focus on what we don't have, but using what we do have. Because it's easy to say, "I don't have this. I don't have that. I'm not super wealthy. I don't have this college degree," or whatever it is that sort of holds us up, sometimes. But focus on what you do have. I mean, to me, I got a lot out of that. It was, like, sometimes those things that sink in and resurface two years later, five years later, ten years later. And I'm going to be closing, here. But God doesn't want us to fake it, or embellish our life's story. He wants us to be honest and true.

I know this isn't a sermon about evangelism, but, in a lot of ways, it is. Sometimes we manage relationships. Now, I know that sounds like business terminology, but, we can't always be the only one to, say, visit somebody in the hospital, or, have your mom come from upstate New York, Pastor Brand. And it's times like that where it's like, it shows the power of God, and how God works through other people. We see that. Like, as far as Malcolm being the narrator this morning. I mean, that's something where it's like, I thought you did a good job. And I look at something like that, like, I wasn't the one doing it, and, I think, sometimes, just being able to just thank God when other things get done, not to exempt ourselves, or to try to take less and less responsibility, but just be glad when something good does happen that benefits preaching of the Gospel. So, take some chances with people. Sit with some strangers every now and then. Make some acquaintances along the way. Find some common ground and who knows? You might make yourself a friend for life or even better, you might win someone to the Lord.

Thank you for your time, and God bless.