

This week, Paul and I went out to Hopkins Grove on Tuesday night. And we are invited to this seminar event kind of thing. And when Pastor Craig invited me, he told me who the speaker was going to be that we would be watching. It was a video from an event that he went to this summer, and when he told me the speaker's name, I thought I heard him incorrectly because the speaker is a southern Baptist. The Southern Baptist preacher, he does a lot of church planning, and his views are very far the opposite direction of Pastor Craig, Hopkins Grove, and ours.

So, I thought it was interesting that he would want to talk about this thing. So we went, and I'm listening to this preacher talk, and the first thing he says is that an inward facing church focuses primarily on global missions and an outward facing church focuses primarily on local missions. And I thought that was interesting. That's something I've been struggling with a lot lately is how much do we focus on globally? How much do we focus on locally? And when he said it like that, it seemed backwards. It seemed like inward facing churches would be looking at local because you want to keep it small within the community and outward.

I'm like, what do you think about this? He's, like, I had a problem with it, too, right at the beginning, and we talked about it and we talked. And while we're talking, I realized outward or inward looking churches are just check writing. They love the idea of helping and doing ministry. They love the idea of supporting people, but they're just writing checks.

It's easy. It's easy to write a check and say I gave 500 to feed the kids. No kids hungry. I might start that sentence over again. It's easy to write a check for 500 to No Kids Hungry, because that's a global group that gives a lot of money out to help kids everywhere. But of that 500 that you write that check for, only 300 of it actually gets out into ministry work. The rest of it goes to administration. The rest of it goes to advertising. It goes to all kinds of things. It doesn't actually go to where we think it's supposed to go. And we get the comfort of thinking that we did good for something.

And we did. I don't want to take that away. Just writing a check is still doing good work, and it's still doing good ministry. And I've been arguing about that at the conferences. At the conference level because I'm tired of just writing checks, and I'm tired of sending checks out, and it not going to where it's supposed to be going.

What I'm glad about, is the community outreach that we're doing. This week, Friday alone, I took four truckloads of toys to Greater Love, and when I say, truckload, I mean, the bed was filled, and the entire cab was filled. It was just enough room for me to look over to make sure I wasn't hitting anybody when I was turning.

That is community local mission work. It's great being part of a group that isn't just writing checks but doing the work, too. That brings me great joy, and that's what today's about, remembering the joy of doing the mission work like Jesus did.

We're anticipating his arrival soon. We're anticipating that all of our sins will be forgiven. And so much, we forget about the actual work. What he did wasn't just die for our sins. He taught us how to be. He taught us. He taught us that we can find joy and being a part of something better, something bigger than who we are. By doing this work, helping those who need help: those who are sick, those who are hungry, those who are cold.

I never realized how much joy I take in that until I stopped doing it. I started focusing on the global opportunities because bigger's always better, right? We always think, oh, I'm helping this cause, and it's a wonderful thing, and it is a wonderful thing. But I didn't get joy in helping

those big causes because I didn't feel like I was directly helping anybody. I wasn't doing what Jesus put me on this Earth to do. But then I started helping more at Greater Love. And I started helping more in different groups, Lions Club, Feeding the kids Feeding the Kids is a wonderful local community that you really feel the ministry on those Tuesdays.

If you come, and you haven't come yet, you're going to fall in line with what normally happens in a church. When you show up on Sunday and you haven't been around for a while, you're going to be standing at somebody's spot, and they're going to let you know you're standing in their spot. But it's still a wonderful thing, because it's that great moment that we share that joy together. We recognize that we are not alone.

So many times, we feel that we are alone, and we really aren't. There's so many people like us out there that live and celebrate God's joy. There's so many other things that take us down, like when we were talking this morning in the prayer concerns. The mass shootings that happened this weekend, it's really hard to see joy in that.

We are reminded In Isaiah. We're reminded in Jeremiah. We're reminded in today's reading, David's song that he wrote, sharing that God is here with us in those quiet moments in our hearts in the work that we do. God is always there to be with us and to share in our joy. We know there's a lot of sorrow. We don't understand why, but what we do know is that here and today, and now we get to celebrate, enjoy together. We get to anticipate the coming of Christ to show us and remind us of that happiness.

They were so longing for and that we know that one day it will all make sense. But today, we just need to worry about us. Let us pray.