

15 years!!

Wow!! I can hardly believe it! Denise and I remember the first Sunday here at Proclaimers. Some of you here were there then and remember too!

I was excited to be the new pastor – I had dreams and visions. I believed God for a stand out church! I wanted to lead a great church where many people came and received Christ. I believed that this assignment from God would be the most significant thing I would do.

This assignment was not without its frustration and challenges. There was a group of people who were none too happy with my leadership as it was wresting control from them. But God's will prevailed and though we had troubles we made some powerful and important decisions. God blessed us and we became a significant church in this city.

15 years on and I still have dreams and visions – God's not finished with me or you yet – I thank God we have a future and a hope before us. I was amazed last Sunday when Luke Rogers got us to think about what Proclaimers will be in a 100 years from now. Wow!! Your children's children will be leading our church and you and I will most likely be dead and almost forgotten.

15 years. Like Frank Sinatra – Regrets I've had few. Many of us battle with regrets. We feel like we haven't done enough, achieved enough, made our make or have stood out as we had hoped. We've fallen for that trap of the enemy to compare ourselves with others and inevitably we feel like we come of second best or worse.

Mistakes are part of life. Regrets can paralyse us from moving forward. Regret can sabotage our confidence and destroy our self-esteem. Regret can cripple your future. Rip out your dreams – regret can be a cruel task master.

Johnny Cash once said, "You build on failure. You use it as a stepping stone. Close the door on the past. You don't try to forget the mistakes, but you don't dwell on it. You don't let it have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space."

Mary Tyler Moore once said, "Take chances, make mistakes. That's how you grow. Pain nourishes your courage. You have to fail in order to practice being brave."

John C. Maxwell once said, "A man must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them."

Mistakes and regret are part of being human. It's what causes us to stand out as being humans. Yeah I have had a few regrets over the last 15 years. They have made me sad, I've experienced grief and shame because of them. But I suppose I'm still here and addressing you tonight. But even if I had failed miserably I know this one thing – Jesus will never fail. He'll never fail me no matter how dark it is – He'll never leave me or forsake me.

John 8:12 Jesus says this, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

When Jesus came to earth – He declared to us all that He was the light of the world. He was the stand out person – God from Heaven in flesh – the Son of God, Messiah, the promised one, the Lamb of God – Jesus was the most stand out person the world has ever seen.

Believe in Him or not. Jesus remains the most potent historical figure to ever live on our little planet. Listen to the words of **Napoleon Bonaparte**, “The nature of Christ’s existence is mysterious, I admit; but this mystery meets the wants of man. Reject it and the world is an inexplicable riddle; believe it, and the history of our race is satisfactorily explained.” Again he says, “I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His Empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for him.”

Jesus came into the world with grace and truth – He came to reveal who God was – in this He is the light of the World. His is the ultimate picture of God. There is no further need to explain beyond Jesus Christ. He is the truth, He is grace, He is Love, and He is eternal life. Walk with Him and you’ll never walk in darkness. His light dispels the darkness where ever He goes.

Jesus also said to His disciples, in **Matthew 5:14**, “You are the light of the world.” This is a powerful declaration we can claim 2,000 years later. Jesus says to each and every one of us – If I am the light of the world and I live in you then you become the light of the world as well.

Amazing!! I am the light of the world – you are the light of the world. Jesus intended us to a light to our world, a light in our communities, a light in our universities and a light in our everyday work world. We shine – we lustre, we gleam, we sparkle – hey!! We stand out.

Jesus went on to say about us. **Matthew 5:14 – 16** says, “A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

So after He told us that we are meant to light to the world He explains it this way.

1. You’re like a town built on a hill – it cannot be hidden
2. You’re like a lamp that give light no one would put it under a bowl would they?
3. You’re like a lamp on a stand and it give light to everyone in the house.
4. In the same way – let your light shine before others so that they can see your good deeds and give God the glory.

Being this kind of light is a powerful comment. In the **Message translation** it put’s this way. “Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.”

Hear it in the **Passion Translation**, “Your lives light up the world. Let others see your light from a distance, for how can you hide a city that stands on a hilltop? And who would light a lamp and then hide it in an obscure place? Instead, it’s placed where everyone in the house can benefit from its light. So don’t hide your light! Let it shine brightly before others, so that the commendable things you do will shine as light upon them, and then they will give their praise to your Father in heaven.”

God has called each of us to be stand outs in a bland world. He’s called us to stand out like bold primary colours on a beige back ground. He’s called us to stand out in the midst of darkness. God called us to stand out and bring out God’s colours all around us.

God has called us to stand out to draw others attention to us. God has called us to stand out because of our good deeds so others would see our good deeds and be pointed towards God our gracious heavenly Father.

We're called to stand out not blend in – were called to stand out not hid – were called to stand out not to fit in. We've been called to stand out not to be concealed. God has called us to stand out not to become a secret club. Were called to stand up not sit down, were called to speak out not be silent, were called to become a riot of colour in a monochrome world.

Were called to stand out to be the face of God in a world who doesn't know or understand Him. We've been called to stand out and show God's love, His justice, His kindness and His grace in a world so caught up with hate, discrimination, judgement and violence.

We are the light of the world. You are the light of the world and together we become His body, His feet, His hands and His mouth.

We are part of His family welcoming the furthest heart, the worst of sinners and the best of saints. We are His family that welcome the lonely, the hurt, the sick, the rejected, the depressed, the oppressed and the stranger. We are His family who welcomes the orphans, the fatherless and those without families. As a family we welcome the "who-so-ever" of the world who would dare to believe on Jesus. We care very little from where you've come – broke or broken, rich or poor, black or white, Hindu or Muslim, red, yellow or brown. Gay or straight, healthy or sick, married or single. Who so ever believes on the name of Jesus shall be saved – God is not a God who has favourites.

Ladies and Gentlemen we are the church of the living God! The Bride of Christ! The House of God the place of God's dwelling on Earth. This church stands out like no other organisation on the planet. This church is beautiful and potent, divergent and diverse. Within her walls is a people redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus a people whose sins have been washed away – a people who have been forgiven, transformed and made whole.

This is the church Jesus said he would build and the gates of Hell would not be able to stop its forward movement. This church moves with a sense of harmony and accord. This church remains throughout the centuries an indomitable light that refuses to be extinguished, to be quenched or to be obscured.

As the Light of the world she stand out! She has lit the way for over 2,000 years and through the intense darkness of the ages she preserves relentlessly! This church I speak of stands out with her radiance and beauty her persistence has triumphed, defeating dictators, conquering kingdoms, and piercing the darkness of injustice, hate and violence.

This church I speak of stands out as a body of people committed to move in tenderness and grace to touch the broken lives of millions. She stands out as an example of love to bring healing to the troubled souls of this world. She stands out because she loves, she heals, she delivers, she brings relief and transforms those who come to her.

She is a glorious church and her determination and resolve is relentless and resolute, She cannot be stopped she cannot be silenced and she will not be dismissed. She is unrelenting, unyielding and unstoppable and she will never give up. She will never quit and she will never relinquish her holy mandate and mission.

She remains the light of the world.