

Series: Friends Indeed

Week 2: Divine Appointments

Luke 10:25-37

July 21, 2002 • Sunday 9:15 AM • Dr. David McKinley

[Praise and worship led by Chris Machen]

[Mike Fechner, Offertory Prayer]

[Offertory Duet: Jennifer Machen/Jarrold Monk – *Remember Me*]

[Dr. McKinley, message *Divine Appointments*]

Would you pray with me one more time?

Father we do remember in this moment that apart from the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in this hour and our lives that this hour will be lost for the sake of Christ and so Holy Spirit of God we simply pray that you would move and work and that in this moment we would remember that it is not by our might nor our, by our power but by Your Spirit that work is done in the lives and the hearts of the people who are here. Lord I do not know all of the needs that are here but You know every one and I pray that you would make this moment a *Divine Appointment* in the life of each hearer that we might not just be hearers of the word but doers also, for I do pray it in Jesus name. Amen

What a magnificent season of worship this has been this morning and ah, how wonderful to have Jennifer and Jerrod lead us in that beautiful song together. I'm so thankful for them, for the Monks and the Machen families and for the way that God has used them as they've traveled to Europe this summer as an extension of the body of Christ known as Prestonwood and then just to share of their own personal faith and testimony in Christ. We do have something to share with this world and I'm so thankful for each and every believer who has made that a part of the intentional commitment of their daily walk with Christ.

Last Sunday morning we began a new series of messages that we've simply entitled, *Friends Indeed* and we talked about how that God invites us into a relationship of friendship with Himself in order that that relationship with God might provide a bridge for our friends to come to know Christ through us and so we're going to continue that series of messages today. If you have a Bible I would invite you to take it and open it to the 10th chapter of the gospel of Luke and in just a few moments we will go to the text and zero in on one of the most familiar and yet one of the most ah, important passages of Scripture relative to how God works through relationships in life to prove the reality of His work in us and through us in the world with which we encounter people every single day.

While you're turning there let me just share with you that this past week on Thursday Mike Buster and I had the opportunity of going to the city of Chicago and being involved in a meeting, a forum with a group of churches, churches like minded, like hearted, like sized to Prestonwood and a it was a wonderful experience. But as we arrived on Wednesday evening at Midway Airport my mind suddenly flashed back to an experience that occurred in Midway Airport about 12 years ago.

I'd moved to Dallas in 1989 and in the spring of '90 I was invited by our Pastor to join him on a trip as he was going to speak at the Moody Bible Institute there in the city of Chicago. I'd never been to Chicago at that point in my life and his plans and travel were all arranged for him and he was going into O'Hara Airport which is on the north-west side of Chicago and I made my own plan and planned late and I was flying into Midway Airport which is on the south-west side of Chicago. When I left I did not have any other information but this, "Meet me at O'Hara Airport. You get in 2 hours before me. Just get to O'Hara and I'll take care of you from there." Well, I didn't know what hotel we were staying in, I didn't have any contact numbers, I just knew that my mission was to meet the Pastor at O'Hara Airport at his gate when he arrived. Of course, that's when you could go to the gate. You can't do that today. Well when I arrived in Midway Airport, I got there at 3:30 in the afternoon and told them that I needed to get to O'Hara Airport by 5:00 o'clock. Everyone that I asked simply laughed and looked at me and said there's no way you're gonna get there at this time of day in the traffic here in Chicago area. But as I was dealing with what I needed to do to gain personal access to transportation I suddenly hear a man behind me who said he needed to go to O'Hara Airport and he said, "Why don't you go with me and we'll grab a cab and I know a way for us to get there." And so we jumped in a cab together and as we began to make our way through that south-side of Chicago we went to a busy intersection and the cab driver simply looked at a set of descending stairs into the ground and he said, "Just go down those stairs and get on the train." And it was only then as I got out in my suit with my suitcase with this gentleman with whom I'd been traveling that I suddenly realized that they meant we were getting on the subway on the south-side of Chicago and I don't mind telling you I was a bit apprehensive. In fact as the sun light began to fall off of my shoulders, as the darkness began to envelope me I can specifically remember praying, "Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, [laughs] [congregation laughs] I will fear no evil." [pause for congregation laughter] And I did in that moment say, "Lord, protect me, help me, what am I doing?" We went into that subway platform area there and it was just a mass of humanity as people were coming and going and moving and about that time the train pulled in and people began to pour off of the train like a, like a fountain and we began to make our way in but suddenly we were blocked in the doorway and I noticed that someone had knelt down in front of the man that I was following sort of trying to get to O'Hara with and as all of this was happening it was as though everything in that moment went into slow motion. I was looking at the people around us, I was waiting to get into the subway and suddenly I noticed that as there was

someone kneeling in front of him that someone standing beside me was reaching and taking the wallet out of this man's pocket in front of me and suddenly just clip... clip...clip... I had to decide what to do. I felt my fist clenching on this side and my first thought was, just hit him! [pause for congregation laughter] I'm sorry I'm not more sanctified than that, but that was the first though that came to my mind. [pause for congregation laughter] And then I thought, are you crazy? [pause for congregation laughter] And then I just set there thinking should I say something, should I do something? We were moving into the subway at this point, the person who had been kneeling in front of him had moved and we were pushed into the subway and I did the only thing that I know how to do and that's to use my voice and I simply as those doors were closing on that subway looked outside and saw that young man running and I put my finger and with the best preacher voice that I've got I saw, "Hey, you stole his wallet!" and with that, that young man came running back to the door of that subway. My heart was just, [fist on pulpit thump, thump, thump, thump] [pause for slight congregation laughter] and in the mean time the man in front of me realized that his wallet was gone and I don't mind telling you he didn't exactly begin to praise the Lord in that moment in his life. [pause for slight congregation laughter] And so here I am standing between the man and the young man whose running at me, I'm in a subway in Chicago and I am scared to death. Well, I'll come back to that in just a few minutes and tell you what happened. [pause for congregation laughter] Because what happened was very significant in my life that day.

In fact I believe that in the course of every life in this building there are days where we're going through the motions of doing things that we planned to do, that we're supposed to do, that we ought to do and then suddenly we find our lives having an alteration of course and of direction. Suddenly we find ourselves either through the course of casual acquaintances or maybe even through some contacts with very close associates enrolled and embroiled in experiences in life that God has used and shaped and designed in order to allow us to see His hand, His work and His movement in our lives. I like to think of these moments and of these times in life as being *Divine Appointments*. *Divine Appointments* that are established by God in order for Him to work and to move in our lives and through our lives. In fact I'd like this morning to define a divine appointment in this way, it is a, a divine appointment is a contact that God brings into the pathway of my life to fulfill His loving purpose in the life of the person that I meet and every day if we have eyes to see it, the fact of life is, is that God shapes and arranges the schedule of life, the events of life, the experiences of life in such a way that He is moving and working through our lives to accomplish His purposes.

Now, just such an event occurred in the life of a man whose story is told in the 10th chapter of the gospel of Luke. This story was actually told in response to a question that was asked and so I want to take enough time this morning to read the critical verses of this text and while they will be familiar and while this story is an inspiring story it is clearly intended to be an instructive story to teach us how to respond to the divine appointments of life. Let's begin reading in Luke chapter 10 and

verse 25.

And behold a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" And so he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.'" And He, [that is Jesus] said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, [that is the lawyer] wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" and Jesus answered and said: "A certain man, [a certain man] went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road and when he saw him he [What?] passed by on the other side. And likewise the Levite when he arrived at the place, came and looked and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he [turned tape] was, and when he saw him, he had [Everybody say the next word together.] [congregation response] compassion on him. [He had compassion on him.] And so he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring out oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii,... [to] and said to him; 'Take care of this man and whatever more you spend I will give you again, I will repay you.' So which of these do you think was the neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, [Would you say it out loud with me?] [congregation response] "Go and do likewise."

Jesus made it very clear that the intent of this story, the story, the parable known as *The Good Samaritan* was an instructive story to teach us how to respond in relationship to those in need that we find in the course of life's journey. In fact we said last night, last week that is, in a very simple definition that a friend in need is a friend indeed and is we are proving what friendship is by talking about those who meet the needs of others Jesus made it very clear to this lawyer who was probing Him on that day, that the friend in this picture was the man, the most unlikely of men, the Samaritan who responded to this man who had been plundered on the road. That's what real friendship looks like, that's what real love looks like and Jesus intent was to provide instruction for everyone of us to know what it means to live for Him and to live with Him day by day. Now, just in quick summary you realize that this story that I've read to you is just like something we would read in the Dallas Morning News. It's a story of crime. It's a story of discrimination. It's a story of hatred and of violence. It's a story that involves abuse and a victim and all over today's newspaper you can read stories of people who have been plundered because we live in a bloodthirsty world, a world that is filled with thievery, with covetousness, with greed, with anger and with hatred and all of these things emerge together to put the pieces of this story in place. But at the same time in this same account in Scripture we also find that there are people, people who see and witness and who either respond or fail to respond and it is through this whole dynamic of all of the

players, all of the, ah, all of the roles that are cast in this story that we begin to learn and to see something of how God wants to work in and through our lives to teach us how to be friends indeed.

Now I want to simply suggest to you this morning that there are four basic concepts about how you and I are to see and are to respond to the divine appointments that God brings into our lives everyday. If we're going to be friends in need and therefore friends indeed then we need to know how to perceive the divine appointments that come our way and how therefore to respond to them.

So, if you have some notepaper and a pencil I would encourage you to just jot these **four concepts** down this morning and to think over them in the course of this week in your life and to see that maybe God has something more for you than what you have planned in the week ahead.

Number One, if I'm going to meet God in the divine appointments of my life I must: **Request to view the daily encounters of my life with eyes of compassion.** Request to view the daily encounters of my life with eyes of compassion. It's very evident this morning that a number of people saw the need of the man on the side of the road and yet while they saw the man they did not see it with the eyes of the heart and the thing that is so distinctive in this whole story is there in Luke 10, verse 33 when it says that, *"...a certain Samaritan,..."* coming down the road saw the man *"And when he saw him he had compassion on him."* Now that word compassion is one of the most important and one of the most strategic that you find in all of the gospel accounts. I want you to keep your hand there in the book of Luke chapter 10 and I want you to look back with me to the book of Matthew chapter 9 and together I want us to look at Matthew 9 and verse 36, you might even want to mark this passage in your Bible because it is a corollary passage to what is being said and what is being expressed here in Luke 10. In Matthew 9, Matthew chapter 9 in verse 36 the Scripture says

But when He [that is Jesus] saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd.

The Bible says that Jesus saw the multitudes of people and that He was moved with compassion and so this word of compassion is used to describe the heart of Christ when He saw the needs of people around Him. We find it in another place here in the gospel of Luke if you go on the other side of Luke chapter 10 to Luke chapter 15 you come to another series of parables, *The Parable of The Lost Coin* and *The Parable of The Lost Sheep* but ultimately *The Parable of The Lost Son*. And one of the most vivid reminders of what this word compassion means is found there in Luke chapter 15 and verse 20 and the Bible tells us that there came a day when this lost son, this prodigal son who had rebelled against his father, who had wasted his life and had gone away decided that maybe he needed to try to go home and he'd rehearsed a speech that he was gonna go in and say to his dad, "I'm not worthy to be your son and I've done all these things and Father let me just be a servant in your household." But the Bible tells us

in Luke 15 and verse 20 that when the father saw this young man coming back home: *"He arose and came to his father. And when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had [What's the word, say it out loud?] [had] [congregation response] compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."* The father was overwhelmed with compassion for his son, a spirit of mercy, a spirit of grace, a spirit of care and every single one of us in this room need to begin every single day of our lives with a simple specific prayer that says, "God let me view the daily encounters of my life with the eyes of compassion." What is compassion? Let me give you a simple definition. Compassion is that quality in the heart of a Christian that expresses the heart of God's mercy to a person in need. Compassion is that quality in the heart of a Christian that expresses the heart of God's mercy to a person in need. That may be a, a sudden acquaintance, a casual acquaintance that you have in life where you intersect with them and, and in that moment you hear something of their heart, of their hurt, of their need and you respond to it. It may be someone whom you're very close with, a work associate, a family member but instead of just simply playing roles in the course of the day you've ask God to make you sensitive and the result is that you begin to respond with compassion and to connect with the deep need of their heart. So what's the first thing that every one of us must do to face the divine appointments of life? We must request of You daily encounters with the eyes of compassion. Lord give us compassionate eyes.

But there's a second thing that we must do and that is not only to request to view daily encounters with the eyes of compassion but we must: **Refuse to excuse ourselves from contact with people in need**, refuse to excuse ourselves from contact with people in need. Now I want you to know I believe it's possible to see need and to perceive need but to avoid that need in life. Indeed it was the fact of compassion that changed the response of the Samaritan but there were two other men who saw the same need. Indeed they did not have compassion but even more they failed to do anything about this man and his plight and his condition. I'm convinced in many of our lives that whether they are written or unwritten that in the course of the day we are so caught up with what we are doing that we have become accustomed to making excuses for not meeting people in their hour of need and not being used of God as instruments for His glory. Excuse me! Excuse me! Excuse me! Excuse me! And I fear that all day long God hears His children as He puts them at the point of a crossroad, a divine appointment and we simply say, "Excuse me God, not today, not me, not this!" That's exactly what happened here in this passage of Scripture because interestingly enough there were two other travelers on that road that day and they were both religious people. They were very serious about their religion. One was a priest. The other was a Levite, he was a descendant of Aaron, he was one of the helpers of the temple. And a priest went that way, someone who was to represent men to God and God to men and a Levite went that way. But as these men went by they excused themselves from involvement with the man. They were serious about their religion. But listen to me! Their religion was not transforming their lives into godly, god like qualities and the result was instead of being God like through their religion they were hard, they were shallow, they were edgy and they

simply used their religion as an excuse for not doing the will of God. Of course the first person that we meet is the priest. The priest was caught up in his own holiness. What I mean by that is a priest knew that if he were to get close, on his way to the temple, to someone who had shed blood or ultimately someone who would die he would be defiled and would not be able to fulfill his priestly duties and so this priest rather than using his representative role of God to minister to a man in need simply excused himself based on his holiness, his fear was contamination. I wonder if in our lives we have allowed our own boundary markers to become means by which we excuse ourselves from being contaminated with people in need around us. Now I'm the first one to tell you that I believe with all of my heart that to be a Christian means to be different, to be distinctive and to live separate from this world in terms of our conduct and behavior. But separation does not mean isolation from the world. In fact Jesus Himself prayed in John chapter 17 in verse 15: *"Father I do not ask that You would take them out of the world but that you would keep them from the evil one."* And yet tragically so many of us have adopted an idea of holiness that's established our own little religious boundaries and instead of stepping beyond those boundaries to connect with people in need we're constantly saying I'm too holy; excuse me, excuse me, I can't help. What a tragedy. What an awful thing it is when our own boundaries become barriers to friendship with God to people who are in need. What an important time it is for us day by day to examine the activities and the agendas of our lives and to say, "God is my life being transformed according to God like qualities or am I simply rehearsing the performance of my religious practice?"

The other man on that road that day was the Levite. The Levite was consumed with his busyness, he was in a hurry to get to the temple. For him it was an issue of busyness and to see the man was ultimately an issue of an interruption and I'm convinced that that's the other ditch that we fall into. Sometimes it's that we want to be so holy and so uncontaminated that we just have set up false boundaries but other times we're just so busy we're just so active that we just don't want any interruptions in our lives and so instead of seeing and therefore committing ourselves to people in need we simply excuse ourselves based on our busyness. We're saved. We can answer the ultimate question. We know we're going to heaven when we die but we're self-centered, we're self-consumed, we're living on our agenda instead of living for God's agenda and the result is that there are a whole generation of people today who are me first Christians. They're Christians, they're saved but they're living their lives with a me first mindset and instead of letting anyone or anything interrupt our pattern we're just doing it our way, seriously, zealously but leaving God out of the picture. The Bible makes it clear, *"The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."* and I don't care what you are doing or what I am doing in my life if I am not intentionally seeking to engage relationship with people who are without Christ that through that relationship I have with Christ they might come to Christ I am simply too busy for God and what a vital thing it is to let God move and work in my life and in my heart to use me.

Well, we continue here and we see that not only was the busyness of the Levite and the holiness of the priest but we see that there was the responsiveness of the Samaritan. What did the Samaritan do? He was responsive and he took action. He didn't fear contamination and he was committed not to let this be an interruption. Instead he actively engaged the need of this man's life and determined that he would do something in the moment of need and that he would prove that a friend in need was a friend indeed. I guess what I'm saying ladies and gentlemen is that this message is a call to action. It is a call to action to see the divine appointments that God puts in life and to say God I'm gonna surrender my agenda to Your agenda, I'm going to shape my will to Your will, Father I'm going to let you take my life and use my life however You want to do it. Sometimes it will be serendipitous, something you don't expect, something you suddenly find yourself coming upon and you respond to but other times it's simply a moment in life where you say Father I don't feel like I'm greatly gifted, I don't feel like I'm greatly confident but Father I give myself to You and I want You to use me.

I was thinking about the appeal that has been put out through our church, that this fall we're gonna offer 80 new Bible study departments for little boys and little girls. When we were here in Dallas 12 years ago my wife Connie got involved in the children's ministry of the church here at Prestonwood and every church that I've served as Pastor she has made it her number one priority to go get involved in the children's ministry and to teach Sunday School and Vacation Bible School and events and to help and to support children and I was thinking the other day I don't think there has been a year in her life since she left Prestonwood that she hasn't led at least one boy or one little girl to Jesus since that time and you know what thrills me about that? It thrills me that she simply in her heart had a heart to be used of God, to say, "God I'm gonna take action, I'm gonna get myself involved, I'm gonna put myself on the road and I'm gonna believe that You will use me." And whether it be through the pathway of an existing opportunity like that within the life of this church and by the way following the service this morning there's an invitation at the back door, there's a table set up, you can go sign-up today. But whether it's here in this pathway or in the main pathway of your life God is moving and working and God wants to use you and God wants to use me if we'll just quit making excuses. Refuse to excuse yourself from service.

There's a third thing that I want you to see this morning about *Divine Appointments* and that is not only to request that you would see with the eyes of compassion and refuse to excuse yourself from getting involved in the needs of people but number three: **Remember that small investments pay big dividends.** Remember that small investments pay big dividends. When you and I begin to become responsive to the people's need around us it's amazing how a little bit of grace, a little bit of mercy, a little bit of generosity can go a long way in completely transforming the direction of someone's life. On this particular day it was this man, this Samaritan who took the man, who took him to an inn, who paid some money for an overnight stay, that changed that man's life and it's amazing how many times when

you and I extend ourselves in mercy and grace God gives us favor and through that favor we make a difference in a man or a woman's life for eternity.

I heard about a farmer, this old farmer had been involved in a community where there was an election scandal and so they sent an attorney in to do a deposition and to find out some information about people who had been involved in this scandal and so the attorney sat down with the farmer and he said, "I want to ask you a question," he said "I want to know did you sell your vote?" The farmer looked at that attorney and simply said to her, said to him, "No sir, not me, I voted for that fellow because I like him." Well, the attorney took a piece of paper, leaned across the table and said, "Well, I've got evidence that he gave you \$50 to vote for him." That old farmer just sat back and smiled and said, "Well, let me ask you a question if somebody gave you \$50 wouldn't you like them too?" [pause for slight congregation laughter] Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! You see it's amazing how a touch of generosity, a touch of grace, a touch of kindness can touch and impact the life of another man, another woman, another person and what we need to see and to understand is that when we invest even small investments that the impact and the dividend is great. The Bible says in Matthew 5:7 "*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*" And if you want to experience the mercy of God and the grace of your, God in your life you simply begin to make small investments across the road of life day by day and you will be amazed how God will use the divine appointment to become an open door and a pathway for you to be a friend in need and therefore a friend indeed to share Christ with people all around you.

There's a fourth and a final thing that I want you to see this morning and that is that we are to: **Rely on God's purpose being fulfilled in our lives.** You are to rely on God's purpose being fulfilled in your life. On this particular day Jesus used this illustration to talk about who is our neighbor and of course the focus of the entire parable is on the man who is down-and-out, the man who is on the roadside. But Jesus' intent in this whole message was not to so much amplify the down-and-out man, it was to respond to an up-and-out guy. You see the up-and-out guy was the attorney, the lawyer who was asking the question what do I have to do to, to receive eternal life? And as a result Jesus told a story of a down-and-out guy to impact the life of an up-and-out guy to help each of us to realize that the greatest need that we have is to know Christ, His love and His grace in our lives. And one of the greatest things that you and I can ever do is to simply go through the course of life, to believe that God brings *Divine Appointments* and that God uses the appointment, not only where you may believe that it's gonna be used but in the lives of many others, that you've never begun to believe or to perceive, may be used. That's the wonder of how God works. That's the wonder of being a Christian. You talk about an incredibly, dynamic, exciting way to live your life, it is to live every day seeing Christ direct you and the course of your life and the path of your life and in the process make *Divine Appointments* for you. It is the ultimate rush. It is the ultimate thrill to believe that God engineers my day to accomplish His purpose. [Pause]

Standing in that subway door [fist on pulpit thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump] heart pounding, profanity from the guy who's behind me whose wallets out of his pocket. [pause] The guy ran to the subway door and grabbed the door and started pulling it and I thought, "Oh my goodness!" But you know what he did? He pushed the man's wallet back through the door and put it in my hand. As he did the subway train started pulling out of the station and I turned around and tapped the guy behind me on the shoulder, I said, "Sir, I've got your wallet." And just like that he turned around and did not know what to say. The gang of guys who had been pilfering out of the pockets were just standing there on the subway platform as we were pulling away and everyone else in the subway just went to silence and looked at me as I stood there and said, "See, here's your wallet?" And in that moment I said, "Sir, I want you to know that I'm a Christian and my faith is very important in my life. When I came to this city today, I came and got in this experience and I have to tell you I was a little anxious, I'd never been on a subway in the city of Chicago and I prayed for God's protection over me and therefore you as you were traveling with me." And I said, "Sir, here I want to give you your wallet." I went on to learn that this gentleman was a airline pilot. He was making the connection between Midway Airport and O'Hara Airport because late that evening he was making an international flight out of the country. His passport was in his wallet along with every other piece of personal identification and his money. Needless to say it was a very important little thing in his life and for the next 20 to 30 minutes I sat in that subway and I shared with that man about how Jesus Christ had changed my life and how Christ had made a difference for me. As we began to approach O'Hara Airport suddenly people fell on their knees all over that subway and lifted their hand wanting to receive Christ, one even looked out the window and saw a pond and said, "See there is much water what hinders me from being baptized?" Now you don't really believe that do you? [pause for slight congregation laughter] You're taking me so seriously. [pause for congregation laughter] Nobody said that. In fact nobody fell on their knees in that subway. In fact not even the man. He just thanked me [pause] and he got out of the subway and we parted ways. I tell you that because, [pause] one, it ruins what would have been an incredible story for a preacher to be able to tell if he could just tell [pause for slight congregation laughter] what happened, "Revival on Subway," you know? But it reminded me that for whatever God's purpose was in it, whether it was in the life of that man or someone else who witnessed that God was fulfilling his purpose in it through my life that day because as soon as I stepped out of that subway I stepped on to an escalator and began the second half of my journey and that was finding Jack Graham at O'Hara Airport. [pause for slight congregation laughter] And I went up the escalator and when the escalator got to the top floor I looked up at the first monitor and I looked down and guess who was standing right there? Dr. Jack Graham standing right there at that monitor. He was trying to find where his baggage was going, I was trying to figure out where he was and just like that God put us together and I said, "Pastor, [Ha] let me tell you what happened to me on the way to O'Hara Airport today!" [pause for congregation laughter] It was an

incredible experience. But I share that experience with you to say that in every one of our lives, whether in an exaggerated dramatic fashion or just in a small simple fashion, every day God places us in *Divine Appointments* and to be a friend in need is to be a friend indeed and God places the *Divine Appointments* in your life and mine so that as we walk with Him, as we follow Him that we can experience the power of His love and of His work through our lives day by day.

I want you to be, to know that I want to be so bold this morning as to suggest that this may be a divine appointment for you. It's great for you to hear a story, for me to tell you something that happened 12 years ago in my life or it's great to talk about a divine appointment in the New Testament 2000 years ago but I want you to know that I believe the Spirit of God moves and works and that some of you are here today because this day, this moment, this hour is a divine appointment that God has brought into your life. It's not an accident that you're here today. It may be the middle of the summer, people may be scattered and we may all be going a lot of different directions but I want you to know I believe God brought many of you to this place, in this journey this morning so that this could be a moment where you could come to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This is the gospel, Christ died for our sins, He was buried and raised again in order that we might receive the gift of eternal life and if you've never received Christ and never received the gift of eternal in just a moment after we pray we're gonna stand and sing together a hymn of invitation, of decision and I'm gonna invite you to come and to speak with one of the pastors who'll be here or there in the balcony at the banners and simply say, "Today I want to begin a relationship with Jesus Christ." Maybe you have questions about it? You'd like to talk with someone? We would be glad to talk with you, to help you to investigate, to know Christ in your life. Others of you have come here today and God has brought you here with an appointment that this would be a place of commitment for your life, for your service for Christ and beginning today life is gonna change because you're gonna get engaged as a Christian, you're gonna live out the compassion of Christ through service and faithfulness in a local church and God today is gonna help you to become friends with the Prestonwood family. I don't know what it may be that God is speaking to your heart, to your life but I know this, that this moment is God's moment of appointment and I am trusting Him to give you the confidence and to work in your life according to His promise if only you will believe and respond.

Father, I pray that we would see this moment as a call to action, that we would hear the bottom line of the story, not simply to inspire us but O God to instruct and to change us and I pray that right now in this moment of decision and commitment that You would call men, women, boys and girls, students, young adults and older adults alike into relationship with Christ and into fellowship in this church ministry. [soft music starts] Thank you for what you're going to do. We commit it to Your hand in Jesus name. Amen

Would you look up and as you look up would you stand up? I do now see that pastors are at each of the banners there in the balcony so if you're there

and you want to make a decision for Christ today if you'll just make your way to one of those banners the pastor will meet you there. Pastors are here to assist me at the front and we're not going to embarrass you or point you out we're just going to encourage you. We're going to give you some materials. We'll give you a Bible if you need a Bible and help you to begin the greatest adventure in the world, that of living with Christ and fulfilling His plan for your life. So let me invite you right now, right this moment. Just be the very first to step out and come as we begin to sing. Chris lead us!