

The Road Less Traveled – March 2, 2018

Just outside Paraguay's capital city of Asuncion, sits the Cateura Landfill. Since 1984 it has been one of the main sites for solid waste disposal for the city of 2 million people. But it's not just a landfill. Some 2,500 families live, mostly in abject poverty, atop the mountains of buried trash. It sounds pretty dismal, and it is.

But there is something else about Cateura you should know. It is also home to one of the most amazing orchestras you will ever hear. Since 2006, the recyclers who comb the landfill's trash every day have collected that which others have thrown away, and those leftovers are fashioned into instruments. And not the kind of crude instruments you might think, but violins, violas, cellos, horns and percussion. Along the way a music school was born. In 2011, the youth recycled orchestra of Cateura was reborn as the Landfill Harmonic, and the group has since toured all over the world. They have played with the likes of Stevie Wonder and Metallica and have been featured by NPR, the New York Times, People Magazine and 60 Minutes. They have even had their own TED Talk and a feature length film that was released in 2015.

But the story, as incredible as it is, isn't about the music, which is amazing. It's about the vision. It's about the fact that people living in squalor were able to look around and see not what was reality, but what was possible. As the orchestra director Favio Chavez says, "The world sends us garbage; we send back music."

It's an amazing story, and you can check it out [here](#).

I was going to share this story with you in my sermon a couple of weeks ago, but the school shooting happened in Parkland, FL, and we needed to talk about that instead. But this is a story that is worth sharing. It's worth it because it speaks to the power of vision and how little things can make a huge difference. How that which would appear to be insignificant – even garbage – can be altogether holy, if only we have the eyes to see what is possible.

That's kind of where we are in implementing the vision that we have articulated for our church. Nine months ago we came together and proclaimed that we exist to cultivate a passion for Christ. It sounds like a simple statement, but indeed it is not. It represents a dramatic change in culture for our church family. It means that Christ is at the core of everything we do. It means that we -- as individuals and as a church -- live for Christ. It means that we -- as individuals and as a church -- exist first and foremost to serve Christ. And that our reason for being is to equip, encourage and empower each other in our journey of discipleship.

Gradually that vision is becoming a reality. I hope you can feel it. I hope you sense the buzz, the excitement, the *change* in our church family. And I hope you are excited, because I am. This transformation doesn't involve dramatic changes in our worship schedule or the breaking of ground for a new building. Instead it involves a systematic change in everything

we do. It involves stopping to ask specific questions of everything we do – Are we doing this for Christ? Are we serving Christ? Does this decision help cultivate a passion for Jesus among our church family?

It means a systematic change in everything, from how we plan our programming to how we greet and welcome visitors to how we care for our current members. And it also means telling our story. Not just marketing a church that is vibrant and growing, but telling the story of a church where Jesus is alive and moving in the lives and ministries of the people who call it home and among the people we serve.

Just since the beginning of the year six families have joined our church. They are young families with children. They are retirees looking for a place to grow and serve. And they are all the stages in between. I have been blessed to visit with all of them. And I believe they made the decision to join because they sense something special happening here, and they want to be a part of it. And that is wonderful, because it will take all of us – every single person who God calls to this place – to ultimately bring this vision to fruition.

It's a slow process. It's a deliberate process. And yes, it can be a painful, awkward process at times. There are growing pains to be sure, and some days it seems like it's working better than others. But, friends, I am committed. I am completely committed to this journey to which we as a family determined God is calling us. And I pray that you are completely committed as well.

I'm not sure of too many things. But of this I am sure. If a group of people are faithful to answering God's call and walking with Jesus, God will bless that faithfulness.

See you Sunday.