Step into It Series – Part 1
November 5th, 2023
"The Devil's Agenda"

Intro:

- What's Up NLC? It's great to be Home / Welcome Locations

- Today we are Launching a Brand New Series called, "Step Into It!"
  - STEPPING INTO DOG POO IN THE FRONT YARD ILL.
    - Nothing Worse!!! haha

- Church - Do you realize we are Exactly 1 Year from the 2024 Election! Tuesday, Nov. 5th, 2024! Yea! Woohoo! Ugh, right?!?
  - 3 years ago, in 2020, it was Pretty Awful, wasn't it?!?
    - Even in the Church - I remember saying to the Team: "I don't ever want to do *THAT* again!!!
    - The Division / The Polarization / The Anger / The Misunderstanding / Honestly, *the Lack of Love & Looking like Jesus* that came from the "Christians" & the American Church was Heartbreaking!
  - Church Family – We, as Followers of Jesus, have a part to play in our Nation's Direction & it has Everything to do w/ Lost People being Found & Found Peo. Being Set Free!!!
    - We have the Hope & His Name is Jesus!

- Around here at NLC, you hear us say Often, that we believe the Bible is the Inspired Word of God relevant to our everyday lives.
  - So for the next 3 wks, 1 year out from the elections, & away from all of the hype & emotion that is about to hit our nation (Its already starting!)
    - We want to Help each of us who say that we are "Followers of Jesus," (not just Believers in Jesus) understand how we keep our Eyes on the Right thing & how we keep our Faith in the right place!

- WARNING: You may not like everything that I say.
  - That's okay with me! I'm not here to please people, but to please God, as you're going to see next week, we, as Leaders in the Church, have a

responsibility as shepherds of your souls, & teach you how to Live in such a way that Jesus is glorified in every area of your life!

- I hope you'll make it a priority to be in God's House for these 3 weeks.
- **I believe the concepts we talk about can Radically Change how we all walk through all this!**
- **I hope you won't "Cancel" me, even if you don't agree with me!**
    - **Which is what the Devil wants to do, btw!**

- In 2020, there were 1,000's of Bible "Believing" Christians who left churches b/c their pastor didn't line up or wouldn't be as Loud or Overt as they wanted about their particular issue of choice during the election!
- **I think we ALL probably lost friends & family over that!**

<u>- Here's the Beauty of the BOC:</u> We don't have to agree on every issue to stay in Covenant relationship.
- **MATT & SARAH ILL – We see a lot of things very, very differently.**
    - **Our L-ship strategy & approach to most things is very different.**
    - **But we don't see that as a "Bad" thing, or as something that makes us want to Cancel our Relationship or make us Not want to be in Relationship w/ each other,**
        - **We see it as a GOOD thing b/c we need varying opinions & approaches to have a more well-rounded perspective.**

- Once Upon a Time in America, Respectful Disagreement & Discourse were welcomed & actually made us better, however, at some point, we lost our way,
- **Until now, disagreeing or seeing an issue differently means you're not only wrong, but you are my enemy & you must be silenced.**
    - **This. Is. Not. The Way of Jesus.**
        - **It's the American Political Way now.**
            - **It is the American News Way Now.**
                - **It is the American Social Media Way Now.**
- **But, it is NOT the Way of Jesus.**

- Church Family – We can do better!

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (ESV)

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

- That is our Call. That is our Assignment on this Earth. That is what we must Step into.

- So Church Family, I'm going to do my best to teach the Word of God and make it relevant to what we are going through. I won't say it all perfectly, but please trust that my heart is to help us grow in Christ Together!

PRAY

- Where we're going in this series:

- **Today – What the Devil is Up to in the Next 12 Months.**
- **Next Wk – What is our Responsibility & Calling as Followers of Jesus.**
- **Week 3 – What's Social Media got to do w/ it?**

- Start w/ This: We are Not Living in a Spiritually Neutral Environment.

2 Corinthians 2:11 "…lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." (NKJV)

- **The Devil has an agenda for the Next Year & it is NOT what we think.**
  - **It is NOT: The "other party" winning & taking control of the House / Senate / White House & State House!**
    - **It's WAY bigger than that!**

<u>The Devil's Agenda:</u>

"For us to have…"

1. Misplaced Faith in the Wrong Things.

A. The Devil wants People & specifically Followers of Jesus to put their Faith in any System OTHER than God's System!

- Anytime he can get us focused on & consumed w/ the systems & "kingdoms" of this world, instead of God's kingdom, he's got us!

B. I love America. I am thankful for the Political & Economic System that we live in in this country.

- But America cannot Save my soul or the souls of people!

- & the American Political & Economic System is NOT greater than God's Word.

C. When we get our eyes on the Systems of Man over God's Word, then we compromise how we live!

- PASTORS SAYING WE WERE GOING TO LOSE OUR TAX EXEMPT STATUS AS CHURCHES ILL.

- I remember thinking, "Oh man, that would be really bad & really hard!"

- And then I remember Sarah & I saying, "Well, if that happens, then God's got us & He's gonna see us through!"

- He owns it all!!!

D. Church – This is what the Devil wants – to get us to Put our Faith & Trust in the Systems of this world or on Man or a Political Party over God's Word & to trust in those things more than in God!

2 Corinthians 4:18 "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

"For us to have…"

2. Disproportional Fear in our Hearts.

A. One of the Oldest Tactics of War is to Elevate your Opponent's Strategy to a "Catastrophic Degree" & then convince those who believe as you believe that if the "other side wins" it will mean imminent demise for "our side."

- That makes sense in a World War, but we are not at "War" Politically, it's actually the opposite of War, we are trying to "Form a More Perfect Union!" (to quote the Constitution!)

B. But this is often how it can be in American Politics.

- 4 YRS AGO – I'm listening to the rhetoric & I'm thinking "This is exactly what the politicians & corresponding pundits are doing!"

- If they can convince us that if "the other guys win," the world as we know it, (or our nation, or community or lifestyle) will be utterly destroyed, then we MUST win!

- This Strategy Raises $, wins elections, gains viewers & sells clicks

C. We must remember that the news outlets we watch are not in the TRUTH business, they are in the Eyeballs & Attention-Getting Business!

- They have an agenda & that is to sell advertising!

- They are a FOR-PROFIT Corp w/ Shareholders to keep happy!

D. And it is a Psychologically Proven Fact that FEAR is the #1 Driver of Attention, Eyeballs & Loyalty!

- And #2 is HATE of "the Opposition."

- That's why we have been reduced to the Extremes!

- Extreme Language/ Extreme Consequences / Extreme Outcomes

E. SITTING & LISTENING TO SOMETHING & THINKING, "WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO MY KIDS & GRANDKIDS???"

- Before we know it, a spirit of Fear has come upon us!!!

2 Timothy 1:7 "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." (NLT)

E. Church - We MUST not fall into Fear in the next 12 mo's but instead pray for God to open our eyes to see when the News or someone on Social Media are just trying to Put Fear on Us!!!

- Remember that Respect / Logic & Honorable Discourse doesn't sell eyeballs / Clicks / Ads… Fear does!

- AND… it can ruin a Family Holiday Dinner too, can't it?!

F. AND… Remember: we are not living in a Spiritually Neutral World!!!

- Satan loves to Capitalize on FEAR & UNCERTAINTY & use the EXTREME Voices to get us caught up on that instead of Fixing our Eyes on the One who Holds the Whole World together… Jesus!!!

(Repeat)

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (ESV)

"For us to have a…"

3. Misunderstood Enemy.

A. The 3rd Agenda of the Devil in this time is to get us to take our eyes off of him as our Enemy & make literally Anyone Else the Enemy!

1 John 3:8 "The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

2 Corinthians 11:3 "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

John 8:44 "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

B. See, the Devil is a Liar / Manipulator / Deceiver & his whole goal is to Hide so he can do his work in a Hidden or Unseen way.

- So… if he can get us, as Christians, to start to believe that someone other than him, is our Enemy, then he's got us!

- That's why he works so hard to get us to believe that people who don't vote like we vote or believe what we believe are the Enemy & must be defeated & silenced, then we will miss what he is actually up to!

C. Those who don't believe as we believe or vote as we vote are not our Enemy, they are our Mission Field!

- If we isolate them b/c they don't believe like us or vote like we vote, then we will lose the right to influence them for Jesus!

D. WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY ILL John 8 – The most ideologically opposed person to the Belief System of Jesus was the woman caught in adultery, & yet he didn't stone her & make her His enemy, He loved her & showed grace to her & won her over!

- WOMAN AT THE WELL John 4 – 6 Husbands / Samaritan – In our Day, we would say she was Jesus' Enemy, but Jesus won her over w/ Love & changed her whole city!

"The Devil's Agenda is…"

4. Forgotten Purpose. (For us to Forget our Purpose)

Acts 1:6 "Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

- They asked a Political Question / Jesus answered w/ an Evangelistic Response!

v. 7-8 "He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

A. The Devil wants us as Christians to Forget that our Primary Goal on this earth is NOT to win elections & pass laws & "Have America become whatever we think & want it to be…"

- Our Whole Reason we exist is to Spread the Love of God through Jesus to the WHOLE WORLD!!!

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

2 Corinthians 5:20 "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."

B. Church – Eternity is REAL! We truly believe the Bible makes it clear that everyone will spend eternity somewhere… in Heaven w/ God or in Hell separated from God.

Hebrews 9:27 "Just as man is appointed to die once, and after that to face judgment…" (BSB)

- That Message ALONE is our Primary Message!!!

- What the Devil wants to do this year is get us, as Christians, focused on a Political Agenda more than on THAT agenda!

- Come Back Next Week!

D. Yeah but Pastor Matt, if the right Government Leaders get in office, they can help keep America a "Christian Nation."

- Well… we've got to be very careful about calling America a "Christian Nation."

- Can political leaders create an Env. that is more conducive for us, as Christians, to communicate & teach our Biblical Values, for sure, but let's don't fall into the trap of thinking that the right elected official makes our nation More or Less "Christian."

- So yes, we need to pray & Research & Vote but we also need to Stand in Faith no matter what b/c God has us & our nation in HIS Hands!!!

E. What makes America more "Christian" is when More People in America ARE Actually Following Jesus!

- And Church – That's OUR AGENDA!!!

- But see, Satan wants us to get distracted from our Agenda & misplace who we think are the "Enemies" so we miss him!!!

What is Jesus's Agenda for the next year?

1. Unity around the Purpose of Preaching of the Gospel.

2. His Followers being Light in Darkness that points people to HIM!

3. Love that Captivates an Unbelieving World & turns them toward HIM not a Political Party or Ballot Sheet.

So… will we "Step into it?" The Way of Jesus! The Mission of Jesus!

- The Agenda, not of a Political Party, this year, but the Agenda of our God who so loved the world that He sent His one & only Son, Jesus, that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life?

It's not going to be easy to "Step into it" this year, but if we'll keep His Agenda as OUR Agenda, then we can do it!!!

TIME OF PRAYER – God I commit to YOUR Agenda this year!

SALVATION