

A Message of Hope to the People of Kokomo

*by Mark Malin, lead pastor
Oakbrook Church*

Last Sunday night we gathered to pray and worship and it was one of the most powerful nights of prayer and worship we have ever had as a church...it was awesome. And we sang a song that we are going to sing together later on... it's called God of this City.

Listen to the words of this great song...and see if you agree with the statements in this song. This is Verse One:

***You're the God of this City
You're the King of these people
You're the Lord of this nation
You are***

Do you agree with Verse One? Some of you might say, "I'm not sure if God is the God of Kokomo – and the King of these people or the Lord of our nation." Let me clear this one up you guys – God **is** the God of our City, He **is** the King of these people and He **is** the Lord of this Nation.

Now, people may not realize that He is all that and more, but God is supreme over everyone and everything even if they don't acknowledge Him to be. He is.

When God told Moses to tell Pharaoh..."I Am That I Am" sent you, He didn't tell Moses to check and see if Pharaoh **believed** he was the "Great I Am" and if Pharaoh agreed then he was! Ok...so now on to Verse Two:

***You're the Light in this darkness
You're the Hope to the hopeless
You're the Peace to the restless
You are***

Can I get an amen on that? God is all that. The next lines...

***There is no one like our God
There is no one like our God***

You agree with that-yes? Now the chorus...

***For greater things have yet to come
And greater things are still to be done in this City***

Now I think this is where it gets shaky. This is where we are all wondering...this is where we are uncertain...we don't know if *greater things are still to be done in **this** city*. If we were singing about Noblesville or Fishers or Indy

we might sing with some conviction, but when we sing those words about Kokomo – lets just say what everybody is thinking: *We don't really know if greater things are yet to come in this city.* **USA Today** told us are best days are behind us...and **Forbes** is planning our funeral...**CNN/Money** is too. And you can just feel the vibe of uncertainty and insecurity in our community. People are scared and uncertain and negative and basically living in a malaise of uncertainty. We don't really know if greater things are still to be done in this city. ***And this is not really a new thought for our town.***

I have a friend who is on a team of people who are looking long term at our town and trying to figure out ways to create economic growth and opportunity in our town. And in this process they brought in a consultant who has help other towns reinvent themselves and the consultant after spending some time here said Kokomo is a town that suffers from ***low self-esteem***...I had never heard it put that way but when he said I thought that is so true. And what happens when you have low self-esteem – you don't believe in yourself – you don't dream about what could be – because you don't believe you have the potential to achieve that dream – so you just settle for the way things are. And then when someone comes along with dreams of what could be and what should be, people look at you and think – who do you think you are – have you forgotten where we live? But greater things are still to be done in this city – ***really.***

Call me a pie in the sky optimist but I say yes – really – ***yes.*** Why can't our town be one of the great mid-size towns in America? Some of you think I have lost it – but hang with me. Our town has a lot of great things already...great schools, great affordable housing, great small business, no traffic, low crimes rate. Sure the malls and shopping are sad – wouldn't it be cool if we could replace them and build a "Clay Terrace-type" environment with shopping and restaurants? And we could use a few more local restaurants – but *The Brick* is making some noise.

But you know the greatest thing we have in our town? Well actually two things...we have great people! Some of the finest people you will ever know live in our town. And the other great thing we have in our town is...we have great churches. And listen...when ***great people*** in ***great churches*** start to understand Gods calling on their life to influence and impact the town they live – greater things are yet to be done. I really believe the future of our town lies in the hands of churches.

Now before you really think I have lost it, let me show you what I base my optimism on; It is based on a verse of scripture that I have banked by whole life on, friends: Eph. 2:10.

“For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

This verse is so encouraging to me. It tells me I am this unbelievable creation of God – that's good to know. It tells me that I/we were created with

purpose and plans and a future – God has a future for us all. He created us – look at what it says – so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago? OK. So get this – God **long ago...lined up all of these good things that we are to do**...good things like acts of compassion and influence, divine appointments, and sharing the Gospel.

And I don't think a recession stops those good things! Eph. 2:10 should not be put on hold because of a recession. We can't let that happen. **Friends if you believe Eph. 2:10 then the song is really true.** Greater things **are** yet to come...because as long as you are breathing you've got some greater things to do – good works that God planed long ago for you to get done! So greater things are still to be done in this city...because friends we are still here! Now when are greater things going to happen in our city – **as soon as we do them.** I believe that has us all in this town for such a time as this...don't you think God knew we would be here in this recession when he laid out those good works for us to do? Sure he did.

A few weeks ago I said something in the talk Holy Spirit talk that seemed to stick with people – it was actually something I heard someone else say...but it is so true, **“You are the leader that you have been waiting for.” Say that to the person next to you. You are the leader that you have been waiting for.** Oakbrook started in a moment when I realized if my circumstances were going to change by Gods grace I was going to change them...I realized one day, “Mark you are the leader you have been waiting for”...and I believe God gives all of us those moments when we realize we are the change we have been waiting on.

Greater things are yet to come when you and I in our own circles of influence start getting up each day and saying,

*“God thank you for a new day. Thank you that I am alive.
Thank you for the good works that you have already lined up for me to do,
and this day I invite you to use me to influence this town for Christ,
to love others with my heart, speak with my lips, think with my mind...
to do anything you wish in and through me this day.”*

And then you head into your day **like you're charging hell with a water pistol!**

Some of you remember a while back I spoke about the idea of Bold Moves...and I'm telling you friends our town needs Bold Moves more now than ever:

Bold Perspective: What if you walk into the work place with a positive hope-filled perspective-people would ask what's got into you and you could say-God.

Bold Prayers: What if we prayed for our town and its leaders like never before-what if when one of your co-workers was feeling uncertain and insecure-you said hey can I pray for you-right now

Bold Invitations: Friends I think one of the most hope-filled environments in the world today is the church and more people should be in them on Sundays!

Bold Compassion: Hard economic times should be the churches finest hour as we compassionately meet the needs of the less fortunate around us! And share with them what ultimate hope is – Jesus Christ!

Why start this church?

Greater things are yet to come in this city!

Why give a book to someone far from Christ?

Greater things are yet to come in this city!

Why take Kidstuf into the public schools?

Greater things for the next generation in this city!

Why try to meet the needs of the poor?

Greater things are yet to come in this city!

Our town needs us bad, friends. Lets take some hope to those around us.