JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

HISTORY AND HOPE

Here We Grow, Part 2

> You need a history with God, and you need hope in what He will still do. The future glory of this house is greater than its former glory, so we refuse to glorify the past and fear the future.

MAIN TEXT
Jeremiah 16:14-15

SERIES
Here We Grow, Week 2 of 3

FIRST PREACHED
August 9, 2026

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. This is week two of a church-wide staff meeting: teaching last week, direction this week, the ask next week.
2. A timeline of Israel and Judah, from the Exodus to the rebuilt temple and wall, makes the prophetic books readable.
3. Jeremiah 16:14-15 promises a coming deliverance so fresh that it replaces the old exodus testimony.
4. Believers need both a history with God and hope for what God will still do.
5. People and churches glorify the past and fear the future, and a church can stay tied to a season that is decades behind it.
6. The future glory of this house is greater than its former glory, including the church's peak in the 1990s.
7. Vision Sunday follow-up: the auditorium, baptismal, kids spaces, Legacy Builders, missions scholarship, and facility repairs, plus Wednesday nights, Neighbor Boxes, Spanish translation, and coming capital projects.
8. In January 2027 the church officially changes its name while remaining Assemblies of God, with the name unveiled in October.
9. The American church faces a senior pastor crisis: retirements rising, the under-40 pastor pool halved, and most churches unable to afford both a building and a pastor.
10. The three common solutions, closing churches, training new pastors, and hiring consultants, do not solve the crisis that is here now.
11. A fourth path: this church takes on struggling congregations as satellite locations so pastors retire with dignity and the gospel keeps going out.
12. The church has always had a regional mandate, not just a Saraland one, and the name needs to match the mission.
13. The reason to take on a heavier load is that the gospel must be preached and people without it are lost.

WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/r7RYHcPUf5Y

READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/here-we-grow-part-2

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is week two of a three-week series called Here We Grow, framed as a church-wide staff meeting. In a staff meeting the pastor does three things: teach, tell the team where we are going, and tell them what he needs from them. Last week was the teaching week. This week is about where we are going. Next week is the ask.

The message has two halves. The first is a short Bible lesson: a whiteboard timeline of Israel and Judah that lands on Jeremiah 16:14-15 and the call to have both history with God and hope for the future. The second is a vision update: what the church has done since Vision Sunday, what is still coming, and a big change, a new name for the church, explained by the senior pastor crisis facing the American church.

The second half is specific to this church's season. Its dates, numbers and plans are kept here as preached. Adapt them to your own church, or replace the update with your own.

Bring a whiteboard and write the timeline as you go. Round numbers are fine; say so.

Introduction

Turn to Jeremiah 16. We are in a series called Here We Grow, and I am treating it like a church-wide staff meeting. Everybody is on staff for these weeks.

In a staff meeting, I do three things:

- I teach.
- I tell you where we are going.
- I tell you what I need from you.

Last week I taught. This week I am going to tell you where we are going, and we will do a little Vision Sunday follow-up. Next week I will tell you what I need from you, and it is not about serving in ministry. (We need you to serve, as much as I need a plate of spaghetti by 1:00 today. But that is not next week's message. You will want to be here.)

The schools went back this week, so let me take you back to school for a few minutes. History class. I may give you more information than you need, but I want to come back around and encourage you from Jeremiah 16.

1. Know the Timeline

In the Old Testament we are watching God's chosen people, Israel and Judah. Understanding their timeline makes the Bible make a lot more sense. Every date here is BC, and these are round numbers. The further back you go, the less certain the dates.

- **1500 to 1200 BC: the Exodus.** Moses leads God's people out of slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness, toward the Promised Land. (Genesis and Job come before this.)
- **About 1050 to 1000 BC: Israel becomes a nation-state.** Saul is crowned king (1 Samuel). By about 930 BC the kingdom splits in two: Israel in the north, Judah in the south.
- **722 BC: Assyria conquers Israel** (2 Kings 17:6).
- **612 to 609 BC: Babylon conquers Assyria.**
- **587/586 BC: Babylon conquers Judah.** For years Judah had lived under Babylon's thumb. Then Babylon comes in, deports everyone but the poorest of the land, who are left to tend the vineyards and fields, and destroys the temple (2 Kings 25:8-12).
- **539 BC: Persia conquers Babylon.** Persia's policy was to send conquered peoples back to their own lands, and the Jews begin going home (Ezra 1:1-4).
- **About 440 BC: the temple and the wall of Jerusalem have been rebuilt** (Nehemiah 6:15).

Most of the prophetic books were written in this stretch of time, from the conquest of Israel to the return. When you read the prophets, you are usually reading about this era.

It is a long period that is fragile, stressful and fractured. And all through it, especially early on, God's people draw strength from the testimony of the Exodus.

2. You Need History with God

Jeremiah prophesies in Judah, in Jerusalem. He has seen Assyria take Israel, and now he watches Babylon gain ground. Things are bad, but they are not yet as bad as they are going to get. And right in the middle of the timeline, he gives this word:

> **JEREMIAH 16:14-15 ESV**
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> 14 "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' 15 but 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers.

The north country is Assyria and Babylon: the kingdom that overthrew Israel, and the kingdom about to overthrow it.

All through the law of Moses, the first five books of the Bible, God's people are reminded, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 20:2). Do this because of who I am, and be

encouraged because of what I have done. That is a good thing. It is a Bible practice to mark and remember the moments when God came through.

Now Jeremiah says a day is coming when that will no longer be the testimony. You have a present, pressing problem. And a day is coming when you will not say, "Let me tell you about a testimony once or twice removed," but, "Let me tell you how the Lord brought me through something about five weeks ago."

So here is the first thing the prophet says, in essence: **you need history with God.** Build a history with the Lord. You need moments in your life where you can say, "God came through for me here."

OPTIONAL: REMEMBER THE YEARS

This material is in the original notes but was not preached on August 9, 2026. Use it if time allows.

The psalmist, in a dark season, said, "I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High" (Psalm 77:10). He went on, "I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old" (Psalm 77:11). We draw strength and encouragement from those moments to get through "the sufferings of this present time" (Romans 8:18).

3. You Also Need Hope

Not only do you need history, you also need hope. You need to be able to look forward and say, "God is not done with me. He has not just brought me out once. There is more He is going to bring me out of." Hope that God is about to do something. Hope that the hand of God is still moving. Hope that there is more to come.

Jeremiah is telling Israel and Judah, "A day is coming when your breakthrough is going to exceed your current testimony."

When you have hope and get faith around something, God can do a great work. That is why we keep telling you: you need to get a word from God. Get something burning in your spirit so you can say, "God can do that in my life, and I believe He will."

We lean a little too much on what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said at the furnace: "But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods" (Daniel 3:18). That is a great word. But why not stand a little more on, "I believe God is going to deliver me"? And if He does not deliver me from this, He is setting me up to deliver me from something else that will serve me better.

4. Don't Glorify the Past and Fear the Future

We have a tendency as humans to **glorify the past and fear the future.** You can hear it in our language.

About the past:

- "The good old days."

- “They don’t make ‘em like they used to.”
- “The glory days.”

About the future:

- “Tomorrow’s not promised.”
- “I don’t know what this world is coming to.”
- “It’s only getting worse.”

But Hebrews says we have come to Jesus and “to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (Hebrews 12:24). Your best word does not have to be about what is behind you. Believe a better word for your life, your family and your future.

Especially in the church, people struggle to step into the future because they are infatuated with the past. Every church has a time rubber band attached to it. Some churches are in tension with what God did 10 years ago. Some are in tension with what God did 100 years ago: all they talk about is Azusa Street, and nobody there knew anybody at Azusa Street.

This church has a vibrant history. In the 1990s, which I have heard young people call “the late 1900s,” this was *the* Assemblies of God church in Mobile. It was hopping. The youth group was huge. All over the area I meet people who say, “I worked there.” (In 2026, it is the church to be in too.)

But those days are not just behind us. They are far behind us. Some people in our church were not alive when this church was the place to be. **The trap a church like ours can fall into is always looking back to when it was better and never looking forward to what God actually intends for this house.**

So I declare to you, as Jeremiah 16 says: a day is coming when you will no longer say the Lord brought you up out of Egypt, but that He brought you out of the north country.

I am holding onto a better word. **The future glory of this house is greater than the former glory of this house.** It is the word God gave the people who came home from Babylon and rebuilt the temple: “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former” (Haggai 2:9).

I have sat at our district council and heard about the years when this church was at its peak under a previous pastor, a legend in this church. I am believing for the day when people say this house has gone beyond even those days. We are stepping into a fresh season, one that eclipses what we have called the best days of this church.

5. Where We’re Going: Vision Sunday Follow-Up

Church-specific. These updates are kept as preached on August 9, 2026. Replace them with your own church’s progress report.

In February we laid out what we wanted to accomplish. Many people have come since then and think this is just how it has always been. Here is where things stand. (Go at lightning speed.)

What we've gotten done:

- **The auditorium.** Everything you are looking at is new: excellent sound, new lights, a new screen, new drums, a new keyboard and a stage that comes out further. Before Palm Sunday the projection screen was so dim we were about to put TVs in. This is a world-class worship space.
- **A revival service** with Pastor Tyler Harris.
- **A new baptismal,** unveiled in April. The next baptism is Sunday, September 13.
- **Missions:** we are providing a full-ride scholarship for David Wikumba at the Kilimanjaro School of Missions. You will reap from his ministry for the rest of his life.
- **Facility repairs:** a lot of air conditioner, room and roof repairs. About $7,000 of roof repairs remain. Urgency moves funds around: if the nursery air conditioner goes down, that gets fixed first. We are mindful of how money is given and of what we have to do operationally.
- **Kids ministry areas,** completely transformed. New furniture and toys downstairs in the next couple of weeks. The Loft, the upstairs elementary area, has an open house next week.
- **Legacy Builders,** relaunched with Pastor John and Miss Sheila teaching, and it grew too much. In September they move to the Event Center, and their current room becomes a nursing mothers room with the service audio piped in.
- **Wednesday nights launch August 26.** Kids will be in their spaces, and youth will meet in the Event Center. The Event Center needs a deep clean: **church work day, Saturday, August 22, 10 AM.**

What to expect on Wednesday nights (adults): a few minutes of worship, a teaching, then tables to discuss, ask questions and pray together. You will not see a lot of me on Wednesdays. I will teach on video and I will be in the building, but there is a lot that rests on me right now, and Sunday requires so much. We have been able to do what we have done because we stepped away from Wednesday nights early enough.

What's still coming:

- **More musicians on the stage.** I cannot formalize this yet, but it is in my spirit: around January, I need not to be up here for the first 20 minutes of the service.
- **Neighbor Boxes,** our benevolence ministry: still on schedule, launching right before Thanksgiving. It may get a new name.
- **Spanish translation of our services,** hopefully within the next couple of weeks.
- **Major capital projects** (the front of the building, the parking lot) will happen as capital is available. We only need $1.5 million. In the next couple of months, a light refresh of the foyer.

The power of vision. When we announced these things, we did not know how we would do many of them. Vision creates a road, and two of those roads have names: Jeff and Kenny. (Have the church stand and thank the volunteers who made the work happen.)

6. A Big Change Is Coming

Have the church say it to a neighbor: “There’s a big change coming.”

In October we will have a Sunday where I share specific vision for 2027. Some of it starts early: in about three weeks I begin teaching through the Lord’s Prayer, likely for more than 30 weeks.

I do not usually announce something this far ahead. But some of you had your diapers changed in this church, and you have a deep attachment not just to the church but to the organization, so I want to give you time. I think there is a measure of trust between us now. I do not do things just to do them. This is a decision made in the Spirit, and it is also a good tactical decision.

In January 2027, we are going to officially change the name of the church. We will still be an Assemblies of God church. The mission and vision are not changing. The new name will be revealed in October. Only the external board and two people in this room know it, so nobody spends the next months guessing.

WHY: THE SENIOR PASTOR CRISIS

The church at large, mostly in America, is entering a major leadership crisis. Leaders are calling it a senior pastor crisis. The high points:

- About a quarter of pastors plan to retire in the next three years.
- The number of pastors under 40 has dropped by half over the last 30 years.
- About 70% of churches will struggle to afford both a building and a pastor. Most churches in America have fewer than 100 people.

We do not have ministers coming up to replace the pastors who are leaving. Ten years ago, a church job posting drew hundreds of résumés. Today a church may post for a children’s, music or youth pastor and hear from no one. Now it is reaching senior leadership. We are asking a potential senior pastor to give up his livelihood, take over a dying church, make little money and fight to pay the bills.

THREE SOLUTIONS THAT DON’T SOLVE IT

1. **Close churches.** Thousands of churches close in America every year. 2. **Train new pastors.** I support this. Chris Hodges and Church of the Highlands have made it a personal mission to train the next generation of preachers. Meanwhile, Christian universities, including our own, have made ministry training very expensive for graduates whose first jobs often pay very little. Training is right, but it will work in 20 years, and the problem is here now. 3. **Hire a consultant to find the next senior pastor.** The consultant is paid by the church, but placement only works if there are more pastors than churches. Otherwise churches pay for nobody behind the curtain. When we were looking to return to senior pastor ministry, placement consultants would not even take a phone call.

A FOURTH PATH

Last week we talked about an apostolic and prophetic foundation. There is a fourth path: **some senior pastors step into an apostolic mandate to oversee multiple churches across a region,** through mergers,

campuses and expansion. Rather than watching a church and its pastor's legacy deteriorate because no successor can be found, a church like ours can say, "Let's partner. You can become a location of our church."

We have unusual capacity for this. With a few thousand dollars and about four weeks, we could set up a satellite location in an existing church building.

This church was never meant to be just a Saraland church. First Assembly of God was never a Saraland church. There is a decades-old mandate on this house to be a regional church. We are in Saraland, but we serve the greater Mobile area: Satsuma, Creola, West Mobile. We need a name that matches a regional church movement. (And "Saraland Church Bayou La Batre" has a weird ring to it.)

Be clear: **there is nothing on the table.** We are not talking to anyone.

Then speak to pastors watching online: "Pastor, if you are in our region and you are struggling, you know you need to think about transition, and you don't know who the next senior pastor could be, reach out to me. I want a conversation about you retiring with dignity, your legacy staying intact, and a divine partnership that brings the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel that proclaims 'liberty to the captives' (Luke 4:18), and a Pentecostal movement to your area."

Conclusion: Why We Take On a Heavier Load

(Have a keyboard player come up.)

This is an exciting season. Change can be scary, and when you do not know what is going on, it is easy to assign motives. So let me paint a clear picture.

We gave up a lot to come here. Pastoring has not been kind to our personal finances or our businesses. This is a church of 100 to 120 on a Sunday. Monday through Friday I am in the office by myself. I talk to FedEx and UPS, I call Alabama Power, I do the music and the preaching, and everything you see on the screen, I put on the screen. Taking on another church would fall on me like a ton of bricks. It is more than we can do.

So why take on a heavier load? Why work more hours?

Because the gospel must be preached. Jesus said, "this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations" (Matthew 24:14). Because He is worthy. Because people's lives are at risk. If a community does not get the gospel, it has no other way.

Do not assume that in the Bible Belt people have the gospel. Many have a lot of church teaching and have never heard about the cross. A spiritual mentor of mine came to the Lord around 40. She grew up in church, and one day the pastor talked about being born again, the new birth Jesus says we must have to "see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). She said, "I was 40 years old, and I had never heard about being born again."

So we have a choice in this season. We will either watch churches shut down, or we will step in and say, "We will bring you on, and you will be part of the movement God has started here, throughout this region. We will reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ." That is why we do it.

Pray (hands lifted): thank God that this is not a status quo season; it is not "repeat, reheat, redo and reuse." Thank Him for a fresh wind on the church. Ask Him to strengthen those who have been here for years and decades through change. And ask Him to put it in the spirit of everyone who has come in recent months that they are not here just to come to church, but to make a difference in the greater Mobile region and to see a Pentecostal movement across South Alabama.



ABOUT

PASTOR JASON MAYFIELD

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

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