INTRODUCTION:

Good morning and welcome to City Church! We're so glad that you all have joined us this morning. My name is Pate and I have the honor and privilege of serving as our College minister here at City and I am excited to dive into the word with you this morning. Before we start, let's take a moment of silence to prepare to hear from the Lord this morning.

SILENCE → PRAY

(I) In December of 1914, World War One stopped on the Western Front. On Christmas Eve, British soldiers heard German soldiers screaming jokes and singing Christmas Carols and Hymns. They weren't really sure what to do as the interaction between both sides was beginning to break specific commands against fraternization. This demonstration continued as German soldiers placed candle lit Christmas Trees outside of their trenches.

Eventually, a German soldier screamed out, "Tomorrow, you no shoot, we no shoot."

At this moment, the only Christmas Day Truce of WWI was born.

Soldiers crawled out of their trenches exchanging gifts of Cigarettes, Beer, Canned Beef, and Champagne. They sang songs, played soccer matches, and gave each other haircuts. In some cases, both sides mourned the deaths of fallen soldiers by holding joint funerals and burials.

The next day, a British Captain fired three shots and planted a flag saying "Merry Christmas" in the ground. The German Captain planted one saying "Thank You" and with two shots fired into the air, the war resumed.

To me, this story pictures what happens when two completely different groups of people find themselves joined together by one cause. In this case: a celebration of Jesus' birth.

While I am 100% certain that not every soldier that climbed out of the trenches that day were believers, they were all willing to embrace the hope and joy that Jesus' birth offered them. For over 1500 days of the war this area on the Western Front was known as No Man's Land, but on that day in 1914, that thin strip of mud was transformed into One Man's Land.

[SLIDE] TITLE: Keep It Between The Trenches: Living As A Witness In One Man's Land

Over the last several weeks we have been in the book of Titus looking at how we have been called to live on mission. Today, we will be wrapping up with a look at Titus 3. By looking at the Trenches that the culture in Crete has drawn. Trenches of the Irreligious and the Religious.

We'll see how the Gospel has equipped the Church to navigate No Man's Land, this area that exists between the two. And see how the gospel becomes the bridge that unifies No Man's Land into One Man's Land.

If you have a copy of God's word, you can go ahead and turn with me to Titus 3. If you don't have a copy of God's word please feel free to take one with you off of the table in the back. That's a gift from us to you. The scripture will also be on the screen behind me.

Titus 3v1-11

1 Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for
every good work, 2 to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind,
always showing gentleness to all people. 3 For we too were once foolish,
disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in
malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another.

[4] But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind
appeared, [5] he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done,
but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and
renewal by the Holy Spirit. [6] He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly
through Jesus Christ our Savior [7] so that, having been justified by his grace,
we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. [8] This saying is
trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have
believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These
are good and profitable for everyone. [9] But avoid foolish debates,
genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are
unprofitable and worthless. [10] Reject a divisive person after a first and
second warning. [11] For you know that such a person has gone astray and is
sinning; he is self-condemned.

This is the word of the Lord from Titus 3.

I'm gonna have two points for us this morning. The first is the Trenches we live in.

[SLIDE] POINT ONE: The Trenches We Live In

Throughout the book of Titus there have been three main groups of people that we follow. The first the Irreligious, the Cretans. The second, the Religious, the false teachers from the Circumcision Party. The third, the Church in Crete. Two of these groups live in separate trenches. ***The first trench is the trench of the Irreligious.***

[SLIDE] Trench of the Irreligious

Paul gives a vision for what it looks like to live among the Irreligious. To live with and among the Cretans. He describes a culture shaped by irreligion (empty talk, deception, quarrels), and then gives the church a counter-formation shaped by the gospel.

Do you remember who the Cretans are? They value dishonesty and thievery. **(I)** They're the people who treat Jack Sparrow like he is George Washington.

We got Mt. Rushmore, they got, Mt. Steal, Lie, and Cheat More.

Polybius, an ancient historian, said this about Crete, "almost impossible to find…public policy more unjust than in Crete."

The Cretans are irreligious. They live however they want with little to no regard for its effect on themselves or others. Like a bull in a chinashop, the cretans run around doing what is pleasing and right in their own eyes. And they actively encourage it!

These are the people Paul commands the church to actively step in and live their life among.

[SLIDE, Titus 3v1] Look at v1 he says,, "Remind them to submit to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work"

Paul is not encouraging them to "lie, cheat, and steal," but he does encourage them to live among the Cretans. Why? Because the church can offer the Cretans a picture of the Good Life. Because the gospel is meant to be seen and gospel life among irreligious people becomes an incredible witness.

The church is looking at Jesus, steeping in the hope of the gospel. The Cretans are looking at Jack Sparrow singing "For he's a jolly good fellow." What is jolly and good about dishonesty, theft, and drunkenness? Absolutely nothing. The challenge is to give them a better vision of the Good Life by helping them see the gospel.

[SLIDE, Titus 3v2] In v2, Paul gives some examples of how the church is to live among the Irreligious, "to slander no one, to avoid fighting, and to be kind, always showing gentleness to all people."

He starts with **two negative commands** about what this looks like: don't slander and don't fight.

This is the trap the Religious in Crete, the Circumcision Party, had fallen into: they had become dishonest and they had become divisive. They had absorbed the values of the Cretans.

Look with me at Titus 1v10, "For there are many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception, especially those from the circumcision party."

Paul would continue to say in v16, "They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work

What's the danger of living like the irreligious? It will damage your witness.

The religious had become just like the irreligious: dishonest and thieves.

You remember Jack Sparrows commentary on the "Honest", "It's the honest ones you want to watch out for, because you can never predict when they're going to do something incredibly... stupid.""

You want to know the quickest way to damage your ability to point your neighbors, your coworkers, and your family to Jesus? Start to be dishonest and start to fight.

Paul also gives **two positive commands:** "Be Kind" and "Be Gentle."

He is getting at the idea of becoming a person who displays patient humility and graciousness to those around them.

Paul's command is to live opposite of the Religious who live like the irreligious, not as a slanderer or as someone who starts fights, but as people who are patient, humble, gracious, and considerate of others.

You want to know what this looks like?

(I) Have you ever been driving in traffic, and someone cuts you off? You honk at them, chase them down, get out of the car and yell. Maybe you don't get that heated, but you tell 'em to read between the lines. That's the

irreligious reaction. // Then there's the other option, you don't react, you let it go, and you keep on driving. That's the kind and gentle reaction.

The latter reaction is the one that is like Christ.

[SLIDE, 2 Cor 10v1a]This is how Paul describes Jesus in 2 Corinthians 10v1a, "Now I, Paul, myself, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"

What's at the root of Paul's command? In everything you do, display the attitude and love of Christ to those around you.

We're not called to live like the irreligious among the irreligious, we're called live like Jesus among the irreligious.

If the church in Crete wants the Cretans to know Jesus, then they have to live a life worthy of the gospel among them.

The same is true for us. If we want it to be in Murfreesboro as it is in Heaven. To see Jesus worshipped in our workplaces, our schools, at MTSU, then we gotta live in a way that displays the gospel through word and deed.

Paul's command to us is to ***Live among the Irreligious, not like the Irreligious.***

The danger we have to avoid, the question we have to always ask ourselves is: how do I look more irreligious than like Christ?

What are the ways we look more like the Culture than Like Christ?

- **"Looking holy" for status:** posting, dressing up, or performing spiritual words/actions to impress people, gain approval, or get influence.
- **"Consume, don't serve":** Watching sermons or liking theology, but not showing up, helping others, serving faithfully, or loving your neighbor with real time.

- **“Sarcasm as a personality”:** Turning mean or cutting remarks into “jokes,” and refusing to admit the harm.
- **“Passive-aggressive zingers”:** “Bless your heart”-style backhanded comments, subtle digs, or wordy messages that communicate hostility instead of peace.

None of these look like Christ, but they all put on aspects of the culture around us. The same culture that the irreligious celebrate for its wickedness. What would it look like if we took these things and prioritized the gospel?

- **Instead of “Looking holy” for status, we begin to engage the lost around us with the gospel.** Becoming less worried about our personal brand of holiness and our community's relationship with Jesus.
- **Instead of Consuming and not serving, we become Cultivators.** We look for opportunities to serve on Sunday mornings, in our groups, and in our community. At Bradley Academy, Daniel-McKee, or Journey Home?
- **Rather than getting sarcastic, snappy, and passive-aggressive,** we become gentle and gracious like Paul commanded and we respond with I love you, I’m Proud of You, I’m Sorry, I Forgive You, Thank You, and What do you think?

When we make the decision to glorify God by living among the Irreligious but not like the Irreligious, we continue living on the offensive as cities on a hill. Our focus is no longer about arguing or bickering, but winning people to Jesus through word and deed.

In a culture where the Religious have regularly proved themselves to be hypocrites by living like the irreligious, our lifestyle becomes an opportunity to show the difference between what the gospel is and what the gospel is not. That leads us to our second trench we often live in: the trench of the religious.

[SLIDE] Trench of the Religious

In v9-11, Paul returns to his warning against the Circumcision Party, the religious, and he gives a clear command to not live like them.

What were the religious doing? Look at v9, "But avoid foolish debates, genealogies, quarrels, and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and worthless."

The religious were followers of Jesus that got distracted from their mission because they were fighting over things that were useless and foolish.

What makes a useless and foolish argument? I'll tell you: (1) Does this matter and does it ever end?

(1) When I was in college, my friends and I had the never-ending argument of what was the best coffee shop in town. Every semester, every other week, we would just yap on and on and on about where you could get the best cup of coffee in Tuscaloosa. And it just didn't matter! I mean we get red in the face and start foaming from the mouth because someone disagreed with us. What a useless waste of time.

It's like arguing about who should've been nominated for the Grammy's or the Academy Awards. Or what twists do or do not make Survivor better. It just does not matter at all.

It's a problem that we waste time arguing about things that are utterly useless. And it's a problem that we waste time by having the same conversation over and over and over.

Have you turned on ESPN the last three Tuesday Nights and just been like we are still having the same conversation about the SEC's strength of schedule? It's so unimportant AND it just never ends.

The second way we can know if an argument is useless and foolish is to ask the question: (2) are there mature believers that land on both sides?

Bible Translations: are they reading the Bible? Are they understanding the Bible? Great, read the NKJV, the ESV, the CSB, or the Message. That's a useless argument because there are mature believers on every side!

Worship Preferences: Contemporary or Traditional? Again, the scripture says make a joyful noise it doesn't say how. There are mature believers in our church planting collaborative leading the body of Christ this morning in Hymn Books and in drum cages.

Theological Arguments: When it comes to facts like did Jesus resurrect from the grave. There are mature believers on one side of that argument. But when it comes to your interpretation of the end times. There are mature believers all over the world with vastly different interpretations. We should be okay with there being reasonable disagreement AND we shouldn't spend all of our free time consistently coming back to it.

This is what the Religious are doing in Titus. They are wasting their breath arguing about things that are useless, have circular conversations that never end, and trying to draw other believers into disputes that aren't worth fighting over. So what does Paul say to do? Reject them!

V10-11, "[0] Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning. [11] For you know that such a person has gone astray and is sinning; he is self-condemned."

(I) This is like a game of baseball, three strikes and you're out.

The first time, okay. Let's talk about it. The second time, okay, let's talk one more time but let them know we aren't doing this again. By the third time,

get out of that argument. It is a fruitless waste of your time. You hit them with a “No, baby” and you hit the road.

Too many people in the church are condemning themselves by having repetitive and useless conversation. We’re more worried about being keyboard warriors than caring for their neighbors needs. Bickering over something Forrest Frank said instead of going to their community starving to hear the name of Jesus. The great commission doesn’t say “Go and make sure that everyone knows and agrees with all of your opinions.” No, the Great Commission says, Matthew 28v19-20, “19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

We’re not called to make debate clubs, we’re called to make disciples. We don’t need another street-corner evangelist holding up a picket sign. We need believers who are willing to step out of their spiritual poverty and into spiritual wealth, willing to stop becoming consumers and begin becoming cultivators.

The Trench of the Religious forces us to ask the question: do I care more about being right or about helping people see how the power and mercy of God can help them experience life-everlasting.

(I) This Thursday, families across the country are going to gather to share a meal. I imagine that there are probably few people in this room who are dreading that reality. Your mind is immediately returning to years past.

You can think about your mom or your dad, your brother or your sister, your aunt and uncle, or even your in-laws, and you can just remember meals decorated with the promise of thanksgiving devolving and diving into hateful comments and arguments.

Maybe you've spent the last few weeks watching the news cycle, preparing yourself for all of the political debates that are going to be brought up. Maybe you're dreading the conversation that happens every year, where your lifestyle and your relationships get attacked.

In that moment, when your being dared to engage in an argument that you know will drag you away from the feet of Jesus. Get up, go to the kitchen, and display the love of God to your family by doing the dishes.

There is no good that can come from sitting at the table and engaging in an argument over politics. No matter the side of the aisle, both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are full of corrupt and evil practices and ideas that run opposite of the gospel and the truth of scripture. Don't let yourself be dragged into a place where you're having to defend the religious or the irreligious.

Instead, get up and move yourself into the position of a servant. When there is little room or care for your words to share the mercy of God. Let your actions speak for you. Become a servant by doing the dishes. Go and sit at the kids table. Show them your love and attention. Because at the end of the day, we're all living in One Man's Land.

[SLIDE] POINT TWO: One Man's Land…The Call To Live As A Witness

Think back to the Christmas Day Truce. Men passed out cigarettes and champagne, played soccer matches, and even gave each other haircuts and shaves. Can you imagine how vulnerable it must feel to know that a man firing bullets at you yesterday is giving you a shave and holding a razor to your throat?

There was a oneness that this moment communicated, an identity that moved beyond borders. On that day, they saw men just like them. No Man's

Land became One Man's Land. Their perception of other men wasn't defined by war but by the gospel.

This is what Paul wants the church to see in the Irreligious. The gospel makes it so that the Irreligious and Religious aren't defined by a culture war, but by a spiritual war already won by Jesus on the cross.

Paul wants us to see we can sympathize with the world around us, because we were just like them.

[SLIDE, Titus 3v3] V3, [3] For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another.

The church in Crete should look at the Cretans with understanding, and with a sense of camaraderie. They aren't the enemies sitting in the trench across from us, they're like us, we were once like them.

There was a moment when you could look at the irreligious and see no difference with the church. They were at one point foolish, desiring what they knew was not good for them. Enslaved by Passions (something we long for) and Pleasure (something we're fond of doing). Just like the Irreligious, they were living full of hatred and envy.

What's the lesson? The church is finding the Irreligious just how God found them: broken, seeking their own desires, in need of a new vision for their life. And the church has hope to offer them.

When we remember our lostness, it creates gentleness and humility that eats away at our spiritual pride. We don't disengage with the world around us, but we engage them with the same kindness that moved towards us.

[SLIDE, Titus 3v4-5] V4-5, "[4] But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, [5] he saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy—through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit"

You remember how Paul defines kindness earlier in v3. There's this patient humility, gentleness, meekness, and graciousness. What he is saying now is that you can show that to others because you've been shown that yourself.

(I) How do you not react and lose your mind when you get cut off in traffic? You remember the time that you needed to cut someone else off or you risked missing your exit or running off the road. And you remember that person, who slowed, flashed their lights at you, and made room for you to merge back on the road. They were kind to you then, so you become kind to them now.

How can you show the world around you Kindness? You've been a recipient of a greater kindness. When you were dead in your trespasses, when your sin had left you for dead in the trench the mercy of God was offered to you through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. You became a recipient of GRACE (God's riches at Christ's Expense).

But it wasn't just mercy, look at the end of v5, "through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit." What does this mean?

(I) Have you ever seen the original animated How the Grinch Stole Christmas? The Grinch has stolen all of the presents. He's atop the mountain when he hears the Whovillians begin to sing. He'd convinced himself that once they lost their ribbons, their tags, their packages, boxes, and bags, that they'd lose their joy and their hope. But that wasn't the case. The Grinch realizes this truth, and his heart transforms, it regenerates, it grows three sizes. His goal is no longer to continue to steal their Christmas,

but to give it back to them. He's no longer focused on his own pain and suffering, but on how he can serve the Whovillians, so much so that he even serves roast beef at Christmas Dinner.

When Paul talks about the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, he's not talking about your heart growing three sizes. But he is talking about the transformation that the mercy of God brings in us, in our lives, and in our desires.

The gospel makes your heart new. Instead of desiring your own passions and pleasures, you begin to desire God's passions and pleasures. Instead of a heart overflowing with pride and hatred, your heart overflows with mercy for others and a willingness to love others no matter the personal cost.

Renewal of the heart is where your spiritual poverty becomes your spiritual wealth. Where you move from consuming to cultivating. This is what empowers you to remove yourself from the arguments of the Thanksgiving table and move to the kitchen and do the dishes. You're no longer controlled by your spiritual poverty, your empowered by your spiritual wealth.

[SLIDE, Titus 3v8] Look at what Paul says, **"8** This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed God might be careful to devote themselves to good works. These are good and profitable for everyone."

What's the catch here, this transformation isn't just beneficial for you, it's beneficial for everyone around you. Once we become spiritually wealthy, then we become spiritually generous.

This is what the entire letter of Titus has been working towards, to remind and encourage the church that we have been empowered by the gospel to overflow to the lost around us.

The gospel should empower us to move towards the world around us. Why?

[SLIDE, Titus 3v6-7]" 6 He poured out his Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life."

We are heirs! Not just heirs, but heirs with hope. We don't have to be held back by our fear of judgement. We don't have to be held back by the shame of our sin. We don't have to be held back by our fear of death.

The gospel empowers us to say, "Sin and death don't scare me because my heart has been transformed and my identity has been changed by the God of the universe, the King of Kings, my savior Jesus Christ. And because I know Jesus deeply, I have been released from my chains and sent out to make Jesus known widely."

Going back to v8, we can insist on all of these things. What things? You insist on avoiding fighting, being kind, and showing gentleness. This is how the world around us will know our conduct.

The Irreligious aren't going to see the beauty of Jesus and hope of the gospel because the religious are endlessly bickering over foolish arguments. They will know the gospel because each of us make a conscientious decision to avoid fighting, be kind, show gentleness, and do every good work.

ERIC CLARITY CHURCH MOMENT

[SLIDE, Titus 3v14] This is what Paul says will make your life fruitful, "[14] Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works for pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful."

Paul's reminder to each of us is that we are called to live as a witness among the lost around us. In a world desperately in need of the gospel. His final encouragement to us is keep the main thing the main thing. Remember the gospel, remember your identity, and remember what you've been called to do. And while you do it avoid the trenches on either side. When the Irreligious and Religious get back in their trenches. When they begin to live a life that they are comfortable with. Stay in One Man's Land.

While we're convinced that this world belongs to us. We know that there is a day coming where the New Heavens and the New Earth will come and the things of this world will pass away. And on that day you don't want to be staring at the soccer matches, haircuts, and champagne and cigarette parties from the trenches. You want to be in the middle, experiencing the joy that comes from a life with Christ.

****Lord's Supper****

At the Last Supper, Jesus takes the bread, breaks it and says, "This is my body, broken for you." He takes the cup and says, "This cup poured out for you is the new covenant of my blood." And he tells us that he will not partake of the cup again until he is with us in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Today, we partake in the Lord's supper to remember the gospel. We have two tables at the front and three in the back. I'll pray, and then you can make your way to grab the elements and return to your seat. There you'll gather in groups of 5-6 and a covenant member will lead you in a time of prayer. There will also be a slide with instructions if you need it.

If you aren’t a believer, we ask that you not partake in the Lord’s supper today. We invite you to jump into these circles and use this time to reflect on the gospel. To consider if God is asking you to surrender your life to him.

Prayer counselors will be in the front and the back of the room after the Lord’s supper and the altar will be open.

Close in Prayer