

Testimonies of changed lives highlight The Gathering in Waco

April 10, 2017

WACO—Thousands joined to worship on Palm Sunday at The Gathering in Waco, where former NFL player/recovered cocaine addict Miles McPherson urged them to do what the Apostle Peter did when he stepped from a boat into deep churning waves to walk toward Jesus.

✘ Miles McPherson challenges listeners to “get out of the boat” at The Gathering. (Photo/Matthew Minard/Baylor Marketing & Communications)“Maybe you’re in your own boat, in your own little world. ... But I’m telling you, your boat is going to sink” without Jesus, said McPherson, pastor of Rock Church in San Diego and a former player for the San Diego Chargers.

Lives dedicated to Christ

Worshippers also heard a videotaped testimony from Jason Ramos, a former drug addict/dealer who leads a ministry to ex-convicts, and a live testimony from Baylor men’s basketball coach Scott Drew.

The event at Baylor University’s McLane Stadium, live-streamed internationally, included a 1,000-voice choir, musicians and a canned-food drive for people in need.

Ramos recounted how he became involved in Bible study. Someone asked whether he had a church in mind to attend after serving his sentence. He didn’t—but he remembered being invited to one while he was high on meth and taking his son trick-or-treating.

He went to the church, joined a life group and urged loved ones to get involved.

“I’ve seen 17 family members give their lives to Jesus,” he said.

Drew: ‘That’s winning’

Drew told the crowd he was born into a Christian family, made his profession of faith in Christ, attended church camp and occasionally read his Bible. But he still did not understand that he could not work his way into heaven.

 Scott Drew, Baylor men’s basketball coach, delivers his Christian testimony at The Gathering. (Photo/Matthew Minard/Baylor Marketing & Communications) It wasn’t until much later, when he was coaching an Athletes in Action team and traveling overseas, the concept of being saved by grace through faith came alive for him, he said.

“At that point, I started to realize, ‘God really loves me,’” he said.

In his time at Baylor, he has witnessed athletes develop not only athletically, emotionally and socially, but also spiritually, he said.

“We had six players baptized one year,” he said. “That’s winning.”

‘Step out of your boat’

In McPherson’s sermon from the Gospel of Matthew, he recounted Jesus’ miracles of healing a blind man, raising a girl from the dead and feeding a crowd of 5,000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish.

After feeding the thousands, Jesus went to be alone to pray, sending his disciples away in the boat to travel ahead of him. Later, they were

frightened when they saw him walking on the water toward them, but he reassured them and urged Peter to come to him.

As Peter began walking toward Jesus on the water, “he started to focus on his circumstances—and he started to sink,” McPherson said. “Some of you have trusted Jesus, but because things didn’t go the way you wanted, you took back control of your lives.

“What storms are you fighting? What boat are you trusting to save you?” McPherson asked. “You’ll never, never, never fix it on your own. ... My challenge to you is to let go; step out of your boat.”

During the altar call at the service’s end, hundreds filed to the football field to make professions of faith, rededicate their lives or seek help.

Ramiro Peña, executive director of The Gathering and pastor of Christ the King Church in Waco, urged worshipers to heed Jesus’ words in John 17:21: “Father, make them one as you and I are one, so that the world would believe that you sent me.”

“Together, we have united across all the things that divide us,” Peña said.