



Exalta Health 5th Annual Luncheon
Wednesday, October 16, 2019 @ The Prince Conference Center
Bill Paxton, Exalta Health President Remarks

God's Business Model: A Legacy

I can't do it. No, I can't talk about what I am supposed to talk about today.

It seemed like a good idea three months ago when we discussed the theme for the luncheon. Many of you know I'm planning on retiring in a few months and we thought the idea of looking back, moving forward at this time made sense. Moving ahead by building on the past is both the challenge and power of legacy. Doing something now that invests in the future has a powerful appeal – it is something we all want.

But for the last few weeks I've been struggling about what to say today because talking about legacy for this organization right now doesn't seem appropriate. Right now talking about legacy seems too easy.

You see I work for an organization where it isn't always easy. And recently it has been one of those times.

Exalta Health provides labor-intensive life-saving services to people who have no money and are uninsured, underinsured, and underserved. It is a highly valued service for which we do not get paid. Every patient we treat costs us money. It may be a great mission model but it is a bad business model.

I work for an organization where at staff meeting last month I was overwhelmed with tears looking at a really dedicated staff of 28 and thinking "I don't know where the money for your next paycheck is coming."

The experts in fund raising tell me I should not be telling you this. In a few minutes you will all be asked to financially support us. And people want to know that they are investing in a stable organization, one that will be there for the future.

I wish I could guarantee future sustainability. I wish the God this organization follows taught us how to pray for our annual bread, or quarterly bread or even monthly bread. But Jesus didn't. He wants us on our knees every day not knowing what tomorrow will bring. He taught us to pray for just what we need for today. And living day by day is not easy.

Neither is life for the people we serve.

You see I work for an organization that is choosing to serve the poor, sick, and disenfranchised of our society. I work for an organization that serves people to whom society just gives labels as if one of their characteristics defines them as a person. Labels like diabetic, mentally ill, alcoholic, disabled,



homosexual, immigrant, or illegals. They are people who are treated differently because of their country of origin, skin color, language, or religion.

I work with an amazing staff and over 200 volunteers who see our patients as people, people who are in pain, scared, and anxious. People like Jose. We've been praying for Jose the last few weeks because he's been losing his sight. We were able to connect him with a specialist that agreed to perform the sight saving surgery. However, the day Jose went to the surgery center for the surgery he was told after being led to the operating room that there had been a mistake. Because they would not accept his Medicaid he could only have the surgery if he paid cash. So we are struggling with Jose as he confronts the grief and worry of pending blindness.

I work for an organization that sees Amy who has diabetes. Amy lives not in what is sometimes called a food desert where there are no food sources but rather in a food swamp where you can't take a step without drowning in unhealthy food choices. And Amy has to make a choice between buying cheap unhealthy food or paying for her \$600 per month medication.

This organization sees Sally who at age 42 had her first ever teeth cleaning and spent four agonizing hours in the dental chair. That pain was less severe than Guillermo's tooth pain where the only solution was to pull all his teeth and try to get rid of the life threatening infection.

This organization is committed to Alberto's family. As we walked with Alberto through the death of his wife, he wasn't worried about family legacy; he was worried about family survival.

No, it's not easy. In fact it can be scary, worrisome, and discouraging.

Discouragement happens when you don't get what you expect. So did I expect it would be easy?

What was I thinking? We follow a man who healed the sick, visited those in prison, and embraced every disenfranchised member of his society. A man who was despised, rejected, nailed to a cross, and died. Following that man isn't easy, it's impossible.

Except for one thing. We follow a God who specializes in impossible. He comes back from death, rises from the grave, and makes life happen.

Exalta Health is now in the business of the impossible made possible. Our business model is not bad. How can it be? It's God's business. It's his model.

So at God's organization as we walk with grief, pain, discrimination, and fear, we find joy as we exalt God's name.

Jose, thanks to our staff's advocacy, is now scheduled for three vision saving surgeries at the University of Michigan. Amy is getting access to less expensive medication and learning to manage her diabetes



through our education and nutrition programs. Sally comes for annual prevention cleaning. Guillermo has new dentures that fit. And Alberto's family now sees hope for the future.

In the middle of my struggles with what to talk about today, my pastor preached this great sermon about Moses. You remember Moses the leader God called dramatically through a burning bush to lead a stubborn people out of slavery and to the Promised Land. At the border God allowed Moses to see where the Israelites were going but not enter it.

I was wondering what was Moses' legacy? How do we remember him? One who couldn't quite finish the job? Someone who got to the finish line but couldn't quite cross it? As a failure?

The answer to Moses' legacy lies in the New Testament where he appears with Elijah and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. It was such a wondrous sight that Peter suggests a legacy – to stay in shelters on that mountain. But God had different ideas.

His voice came out of a cloud and said

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”⁷

Peter, James, and John's response was to fall to the ground terrified.

Jesus came to them, touched them, and told them to get up. Matthew tells us that “When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.”

At Exalta Health when we look up from our worry and fear, we see no one but Jesus. That's our legacy.

And that's a legacy that is sustainable. That's a legacy worth your investment.