

Message Transcript

WHY YOU'RE EXHAUSTED EVEN WHEN YOU'RE DOING EVERYTHING RIGHT | THE URGENT KINGDOM | CARL KUHL | JULY 25 & 26, 2026

Well, Traders it is great to be back. If we haven't met my name is Carl. I was here last week and earlier this year. I realize if you've only been coming a couple of months you are like, "Man, this place loves guest preachers. Where's our lead pastor?"

His name is Aaron Brockett. And several months ago the leaders of this church said, "Hey, we want Aaron to be not just here but thriving as the best he can be for years to come. So, let's give him an extended break for rest and replenishment, just to focus on his own heart, soul, mind, and strength so that he can then come pour into our heart, soul, mind, and strength."

And that's called sabbatical. He's getting this extended break to do just that. And he's enjoying that, doing all kinds of things to help him be the leader we want to continue to follow.

And we've had multiple guest preachers from churches we're connected with here at Traders. The next several weeks you're going to hear from pastors on the Traders staff. And then Pastor Aaron will be back here the last week of August and on this stage.

Really quickly, before we jump into today's Scripture, I want to kind of hit on what each campus pastor just talked about, about a new campus, Saturday nights, and service times and all of that. I'm not here every week, but I am part of the greater Traders Point family. And if you've only been here a handful of times, here's what I want you to know. God is on the move for this place.

We believe heaven is real, we believe hell is real, and we believe hope is real. So, we've decided, as a community, we will stop at nothing to make sure everyone knows that hope because we believe it changes lives, families, relationships, and eternity.

And we stand on the shoulders of people who call themselves Christians who for centuries have done whatever it takes to reach one more. They laid down their lives, they sacrificed their reputation, they said goodbye to their families and moved across continents. They give their time, money, energy—everything it takes—so people can know endless second chances are available through Jesus.



So, one of the things our pastor says is, "We are not okay with a no-vacancy sign." Which means, as staff, as volunteers, as givers, as inviters we are never going to become complacent. The mission will not end until Jesus returns, like we just sang about.

Which means many of us are going to continue to give more, we're going to serve more, we're going to switch a service time. And that will continue to happen forever until Jesus comes back because God is good and we want people to know that. Which means we do need to serve more, we need to invite like crazy with kindness because we will do whatever it takes in the name of Jesus Christ so people know there is hope found in His name.

Now, let's get into the second sermon of the day. My wife and I have a sleep problem. And it kind of goes like this. I snore. She's a light sleeper. There's the problem. So, we have tried all of the things. We've tried this nose spray. I've done a sleep study to test for sleep apnea. Don't have it.

We keep our house cool. We've done the heavy blankets, the expensive noise cancelling headphones, the noise maker. I got nose surgery for a deviated septum. We do darkening shades and get up the same time, and no screens in the bedroom, and no caffeine after lunch.

The latest thing is several months ago my wife came to me and said, "Hey, I got you some mouth tape." I said, "It sounds like you want to tape my mouth shut." She said, "That's exactly what that is." I said, "It sounds like you want to suffocate me." She didn't answer. So for the last several months when I go to sleep at night, I take this little black tape, put it on my whiskers, and the first thing I do when I wake up in the morning is peel that off. Because I love my wife. We'll do anything for sleep. Right?

I saw a survey that a mattress company did recently of what people would give up for one year of perfect sleep. I want to recreate it. But here's kind of the set up. I want you to imagine, first, the last time you got a full night of perfect sleep. Like, you woke up the next morning thinking, "I can conquer the world today because I got enough sleep. Bring it on." Think of that first. You go, "It's many years ago." I know. Just think of it.

Now, I'm going to ask a series of questions and if you would give up this thing for a year of that kind of sleep I want you to raise your hand. Okay. First question: How many of you would give up podcasts for one year for perfect sleep? I'm raising my hand. Nationally, 52 percent. How many of you would give up watching your favorite sports team, including all highlights, for an entire year of perfect sleep. Yes. Raise your hand. I hate sports. Okay, got it.



How many of you would give up all chocolate for one year for perfect sleep? No candy, no ice cream, nothing? Isn't this fun? You get to judge the people sitting next to you. This is great.

Here's another one. How many of you would give up travel. You cannot leave your town for any reason for one year of perfect sleep. Raise your hand. Okay, a handful. Nationally I think it was 11 percent.

Here's the last one. How many of you would give up your phone for one year of perfect sleep? Raise your hand. Hey, guys. I need you to raise them nice and high. Keep them up nice and high because you're the psychos. Everybody be aware of these people. Watch out.

I did a little reading to confirm our need for sleep. I read that 100 years ago less than one in 50 Americans got only six hours of sleep a night. Today it's one in three. After being awake for 19 hours your cognitive impairment is the same as if you were legally drunk. And if you spend one week getting less than five hours of sleep every single night, it affects your blood sugar regulation so much that you would test as pre-diabetic.

Now, we know sleep is key to a healthy life. Here's what those of us Christians know. There is a greater rest that our soul longs for. Psalm 62 says, "My soul finds rest in God alone." Try the book of Hebrews in the Bible. It says the promise of entering His rest still stands. That's what Augustine said centuries ago, "The soul will not find rest until it finds rest in God."

And my favorite Scripture where Jesus talks about rest is Matthew 11:

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

That sounds good, doesn't it? You can really argue that the thing God offers is rest. We're going to look at Scriptures today as we continue through the gospel of Mark that warn us of traps we can fall into that steal our rest, that prevent our rest.

I want to give you two caveats though before we jump into Mark, chapter 7. First caveat: This Scripture is intense. For much of this message it's not going to sound like rest. It's going to sound like Jesus is beating us down a little bit. In fact, He gets frustrated with everybody in this Scripture. Verse 6:



"You hypocrites."

Verse 14:

"All of you listen...try to understand."

Verse 18:

"Don't you understand either?...Can't you see..."

So, more than you know, part of this is going to feel like you came to church just to get beat up.

Now, I know what this feels like because the first time I was able to speak here at Traders was back in February. If you were here you may remember that we were in Mark, chapter 1 back then. I preached on this passage where Jesus healed somebody miraculously. He tells that man, "Don't tell anybody." And the guy goes and tells everybody.

And maybe you can relate, we all do this. Right? Like, if you find a comedian you love, you tell everybody. If you find a new restaurant with great food, you tell everybody. And then just to poke fun, if you have a senior pastor who loves jiu jitsu then you tell everybody. You'll have a good laugh about it.

After service Aaron said, "Hey, a bunch of guys from my gym are at church today. They said, 'Bring Carl over to the gym. Have him roll with us today.'" Now, I said, "Okay." Because I'm an idiot. I'd never done this before. I did not know what jiu jitsu was. I go to his gym. I get on the floor. He gets on top of me. Aaron is already my friend, my pastor. That day he became my second daddy.

The Scripture today may feel the same way. You may feel like Jesus is putting you on a matt. So, I just want to warn you. We're going to end on rest. Hang in there.

The second caveat is this Scripture is about the Pharisees. And the caveat is: Don't write them off. Here's what I mean. Verse 1 He says this:

"One day some Pharisees and teachers of religious law arrived from Jerusalem to see Jesus."



Pharisees were really good at keeping the rules. I mean, these were genuinely good people. The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee. But Jesus often uses them as the bad guy in a story. For example, in Luke 18 he says, "Hey one day two people go to the Temple to pray. One of them was a Pharisee. And the Pharisee's prayer went like this. He stood up, prayed out loud. Other people heard it.

He said, "God, thank You that two days a week I fast. I give up all eating just so I can pray. Thank You that I give 10 percent of everything I make to You. I tithe. God, thank You that I don't cheat people. Thank You that I've never committed adultery. Amen."

He was a good guy. He followed what you should do. But Jesus flips it in that story and says, "No, no, no. The guy who came in humiliated and humbled by his own brokenness is the one who went home justified before God." And He twists it so that the one who followed the rules wasn't.

And there is a tendency to buy the caveat. For us to read the Pharisees and say, "Oh, God, He says 'Thank You that I am not like them.'" And for us to say, "Thank you that I'm not like him." And in doing so we become him.

So, when you read what the Pharisees are saying and doing, if you are familiar with the Bible, if you've been a Christian for a while, to just write them off... I want us to approach this with humility and say, "God, will You convict us through what happens."

Verse 2:

"They noticed," the Pharisees noticed, "that some of his disciples failed to follow the Jewish ritual of hand washing before eating. (The Jews, especially the Pharisees, do not eat until they have poured water over their cupped hands, as required by their ancient traditions."

Now, for us that seems normal. But remember it wasn't until 1847 that Doctor Ignaz Semmelweis at Vienna General Hospital discovered that washing hands prevented the spread of disease, it prevented the spread of germs. He didn't even know what germs were.

If our waiter doesn't wash his hands, we're grossed out. Back then, it was an empty ritual. They didn't know that stuff. Similarly,

Verse 4:



"...they don't eat anything from the market until they immerse their hands in water. This is but one of many traditions they have clung to—such as their ceremonial washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles."

So, remember. They are not doing this to be clean. They are doing this to obey a rule. The Pharisees were really good at meticulously obeying God's Law. They would make rules around God's rules.

This week I was researching: What extra rules did they make? And I found one that I hadn't heard before. In the time of Jesus... There was a big debate among the Pharisees in Jesus' day about if you could eat eggs that a hen had laid on the Sabbath. God had said, "Don't work on the Sabbath."

So one camp said, "Well, the hen was working by laying an egg." The other camp said, "No, the work was producing the egg. Laying it was just kind of a natural by-product." And there were groups who would argue whether you could eat eggs laid on the Sabbath. Big debate.

In our story, the pouring water as a tradition, and I want you to note this, is something everyone can see. This is the first trap we fall into that steals our rest:

Rest Killers

Performance (7:1-4)

They were doing things without knowing why they were doing them. This is why, by the way, Jesus taught so often about the importance of doing things in secret. He knows the anecdote to performance is secrecy.

So, Jesus comes on and says, "Hey, when you pray for people, don't tell them." We know in Scripture there are examples of people praying together in groups. Pray with your small group. Pray with people. And pray for people and never tell them. Just like Jesus says, "Give." Help somebody in need and don't let them know that it was you.

This is why Jesus says, "Fast at certain times. Go without food for a time and when you are dying with hunger it just causes you to pray. And don't make a big deal about it to others."

You should be scared if the depth of your spiritual life in public exceeds the depth of your spiritual life in private.



I have a buddy who just like to perform for people. I mean it's just his personality. He likes to be funny. He likes to be deep. He likes to engage. And if he has an audience he's having a good time. He's like, "It's my Enneagram number." And it's just to you in a healthy way. But he knows that could be like a drug to his soul.

So, he just, this week, completed a yearly thing that he does where he flies out west and he goes to a Monastery and he spends three days on a silent retreat where he doesn't speak a word because he knows, "If I don't do secret things to kill my desire to perform, my desire to perform will kill me." He doesn't want the depth of his spiritual life in public to exceed the depth of his spiritual life in private.

The next verse, 5:

"So the Pharisees and teachers of religious law asked him, 'Why don't your disciples follow our age-old tradition? They eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony.'"

So, it moves beyond, "We need to wash our hands," to "You need to wash your hands." The second trap:

Comparison (7:5)

Now, really quickly, there is a difference between comparing and being discerning. Sometimes Christians and definitely non-believers will manipulate and abuse Jesus' statement, "Don't judge or you will be judged." That doesn't mean that you don't practice discernment.

I am certain that at multiple of our campuses this week this conversation took place. A parent of a teenager said, "Hey, I don't think you should hang out with that person." And the teenager responds, "You're being judgmental. Jesus says, 'Don't judge.'" And the parent knows even if they can't express it, "No, I'm being discerning."

And in this case Scripture backs up the parent. 1 Corinthians 2:

"Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things..." 1 Corinthians 2:15 (NLT)

Galatians 6:



"...if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself." Galatians 6:1 (NLT)

So, it's discernment to know, "Oh, that person needs help." And it's discernment to know, "In this case I shouldn't help them because I know I'll fall."

John 7, Jesus says:

"Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly." John 7:24 (NLT)

Jesus tells us to judge.

We pray Psalm 119, God,

"give me the discerning mind you promised." Psalm 119:169 (NLT)

Discernment is good. But we fall in comparison—you versus me.

I'm going to talk on the pod this week about how I'm a Ravens fan. And I'm not a Colt hater. My first NFL game ever was a Colts game. We're good. We're friends. Okay? But I think one thing we can agree on as Colts and Ravens fans is that none of us like someone who, whenever a team loses, blames the refs all of the time. You know this NFL fans. Anytime a team loses it's never their fault; it's always the refs got in the way somehow.

Like for me in my life, I don't know what it is. It's Bills fans whining about the refs helping the Chiefs. Right? So, they'll send me these memes to get me on their side. They say, "Hey, I don't know if you saw the Coldplay concert meme where they caught two people on a secret date. And then they'll say, "Here's the jersey swap after the big game." And then they'll say, "Here's Patrick Mahomes' just bring your kid to work day."

And I'm just over my Bills fan friends whining about the Chiefs getting special treatment. I think the Chiefs are just better in the field. If you don't turn the ball over, you might win. Stop complaining about the refs.

Yes. Amen. Thank you, whoever said that. I agree.

I do need to let you know the NFL never does this but a couple of months ago they released an official statement saying the refs had messed up the Ravens. And it was the first Ravens/Steelers game. They messed up a call that would have kept the Ravens drive going and a call that would have been a turnover and a call that resulted in a touchdown for the Steelers. And we lost that game by three points and missed the playoffs by one game.



So, I'm not complaining about the refs. I'm saying the NFL acknowledged the refs cost us the playoffs. So, I'm not a Bills fan. It's not okay for them to complain about the refs, but it's okay for me to complain about the refs. See, we compare. We compare.

And the problem with the Pharisees is we go beyond discerning to comparing. We compare the resume of our sexual sin with somebody who committed adultery because we're good on that one. But we conveniently leave pornography off of the list.

We compare extravagant spending to somebody who loves to spend all of their money on clothes and we don't do that so we compare against them, but we ignore our financed truck in our garage.

We compare our work ethic with the person who is always late to work. It burns us up every time because we are never late. But we ignore how much time we spend on YouTube between emails. We compare our public reputation to a politician whose secret text messages came out but we're ignoring what would happen if someone read every text we've ever sent. We compare.

Verse 6:

"Jesus replied, 'You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, "These people honor me with your lips but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach manmade ideas as commands from God," for you ignore God's law and substitute your own traditions.'" Mark 7:6-9 (NLT)

"Then Jesus called the crowd to come and hear..." Mark 7:14 (NLT)

So, he was just talking to the Pharisees. He's saying, "Hey, everybody come here. All of you listen. Try to understand.

"It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart." Mark 7:15 (NLT)

Remember they are Jewish. So, they have a Kosher diet. No pork. No bacon or sausage. No mixing meat and cheese. He says, "Hey, it's not a food issue."

Verse 17:



"Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowd, and his disciples asked him what he meant by the parable he had just used. 'Don't you understand either?' he asked. 'Can't you see that the food you put into your body cannot defile you? Food doesn't go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer.'" Mark 7: 17-19 (NLT)

Now, I've got to say the middle schooler in me has to make a Taco Bell joke right now. You know that this virus going around, I think it was named by a middle schooler. It's called the explosive diarrhea virus. That's what they named it. So, I love this guy who actually tweeted, "How do I know if I have regular Taco Bell diarrhea or parasite Taco Bell diarrhea?" Middle school boy, that's me.

But they were so meticulous about what they ate that the trap that they and we fall into that prevents us from getting rest is:

Rules

We make up rules.

Now, caveat: guardrails are good. The wise Christian will have personal guardrails, "That keep me from sin." So, for example, someone will say, "I can't do social media because I've proven that I will look at things I shouldn't if I do that." They are not saying that social media should be illegal, they are just saying, "I can't." It's a guardrail.

Someone will say, "I can't have credit cards for the rest of my life. Every time I have one I overspend money I don't have. I'm paying late fees. It's a disaster." They are not saying credit cards should be illegal. They are saying, "I can't have a card."

You know people who have said, "I can never drink again. I do stupid things when I drink even just a little bit of alcohol." Not saying you shouldn't. Just saying they shouldn't. Guardrails.

1 Corinthians 6 says:

"You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'" okay, "—but not everything is good for you. And even though 'I am allowed to do anything,' I must not become a slave to anything." 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NLT)

Translation: I have freedom in Christ and I need guardrails.



Here's what I feel like a Pharisee does though. It's taking a guardrail for me and turning it into a rule for you. So, maybe you know that if you're binge watching a show you're being sinfully lazy. But going to create a rule to say that you can't binge watch those either...

Or, you know what you did when you went to concerts as a kid so you tell your kid, "Hey, you can't go to a concert."

Or, Jesus is calling you to fast from something for a long time, to just live without it and depend on Him. So, you tell your small group, "Hey, we all need to fast from this."

Or, God convinced you that you need to do something and you say, "Well, the entire church needs to do this. And if our leader doesn't, it means that it's a bad church." No. It was a guardrail that you made into a rule.

We all fall into this. And just to drive the point home, Jesus goes on to say:

"It is what comes from inside that defiles you."

And then in the next two verses He gives us this list:

"For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you." Mark 7:20-23 (NLT)

So the Pharisees start by pointing fingers. And Jesus' point is:

We are all evil (7:20-23)

So, look at this list. Sexual immorality is any kind of sex outside of God's plan. Theft is taking anything, ever, in any situation that doesn't belong to you, that you didn't earn. Murder is clear but Jesus says that if you hate somebody, it's murder in your heart. Adultery is bad enough, but Jesus says that if you lust after someone it's adultery in your heart.

Deceit is not being one hundred percent honest all of the time. Even when someone asks, "Hey, how are you doing?" Or when you are supposed to be at work until 6. Or when your parents say, "Is your homework done?"

Envy is wanting something you didn't earn that someone else has. We all use the word jealous because it tones it down a little bit. Jealousy is almost a healthy thing because it's over relationships. I want to be connected to you. I'm jealous of that relationship.



Envy is when it's about something that is not a relationship. You are not jealous of the vacation I'm on, you're envious because you want it without earning it. You're not jealous of a house or a car you are envious of it.

Slander is using your words to purposely make someone look bad.

There are a few things listed here. On my count last night, I've done eight of these this week. We're all there. Here's Jesus' point. We are all evil. But here's the challenge with that. Intellectually we get that. Intellectually you can look at that list and go, "Yeah, I'm not so great on that list." At the same time we are really good at comparing ourselves to people who are worse than us and it's hard to put our stuff in the same boat as their stuff.

So, let me just walk us through an exercise that I think will challenge us. I talked to a guy not too long ago who was struggling with this idea and he said, "Hey, I lie and steal sometimes, but is that really as bad as molesting a child?" That's a great question. First, that action, in and of itself, is not as bad.

But I want us to go deeper. So, we're going to do an exercise. Before we do this, by participating you're giving your agreement that you are not going to ask anyone else on the way home after church what their thing was. This is an exercise in quiet between you and God and you're not going to tell anybody later unless you feel prompted to tell it, but nobody is going to ask. Okay?

So, with that said, close your eyes. I want you to think of the sin in your life for which you are most ashamed. The thing in your life, if there is one thing you don't want people to know, it's this thing. The thing that, if you could take back that one thing, it's this thing. You can probably remember the smell in the room, the texture of the carpet on your feet. Now, open your eyes.

In that moment, you were evil. You felt the darkness of your heart, the selfishness of your soul. You did not care about God. You did not care about other people. You cared about you and you only.

Now, think of this. And this is not my thing. When I was six years old, my mom needed something from the drug store. So, she packed me and my three younger siblings into the van. Runs up to the drug store. It's chaotic managing all of the kids. When nobody is looking, I steal a package of gum and put it in my pocket.



We get in the van to go home and I show my sister in the back seat. She says, "Mom...!" We do a U-turn and we go back. I had to apologize to the manager—embarrassing stuff. When I stole that pack of gum (it was less than a dollar) I cared about no one else. I didn't care about God. I didn't care about the owner and the money that bought that gum that he needed to live. I didn't care to honor my family. I cared about me. And when I think about stealing a pack of gum, I know my heart is evil. It's black. It's a dark place.

Dr. Jordan Peterson, a few years ago, released a video called How Do You Become a Guard at a Nazi Consecration Camp, meaning how do you get to the point where you are facilitating the unjust execution of millions. And the answer is: One small step at a time, because your heart is evil.

Is stealing a pack of gum as bad as molesting a child? Absolutely not. But is my heart a dark place, that given enough steps is capable of anything because it cares only about me? Yeah. That's why Paul says in Romans, "No one is righteous. No one is good. Everyone has sinned and fallen short."

And this is why we want to perform. Because I know my heart is dark but maybe I can convince you otherwise. And this is why I compare. Because if you are worse than me, then I can pretend my heart is not a dark place. And this is why I crave rules because I know if my heart is selfish that I can keep this rule, "At least I know I'm good here." And this is why I don't want to admit I'm evil because then I'm not in control. And honestly, sometimes that will take me to a place of self-loathing or despair or apathy.

But there is good news. Because a Pharisee named Paul wrote this:

"But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping [rules]...We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are." Romans 3:21-22 (NLT)

Meaning, there is a way out. There is a way of faith. All you do is believe. Verse 24:

"Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." Romans 3:24 (NLT)

Translation: It's just grace. Only grace. Always grace. Nothing but grace. My favorite definition of grace is this:



There is nothing you can do to make God love you more

There is nothing you can do to make God love you less

And if you get this in your soul it will wreck you in the best of ways.

The author who penned this talked about how he wrote an article one time called The Atrocious Mathematics of the Gospel. He got a lot of hate mail from it by people who said, "God would never do anything atrocious or illogical."

But when I went to the gospels to fact-check them, it really looks like grace doesn't add up. Because Jesus describes the Father as a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep, puts their life at risk, just for one.

In the gospel of John a woman comes to Jesus. She has this jar of perfume. It's worth her life's savings. It's a year's salary in this jar. She pours it out on Jesus' feet as an act of gratitude and He said she did a good thing.

Jesus says, "If you want to know what God is like, it's like a guy who hired people at different times throughout the day. He just wanted them all to have something to eat at the end of the day. He hired some at 6 a.m. He goes back at 5:50 p.m. The bell rings at 6 p.m. Some worked all day. Some worked 10 minutes. He gave them all the same amount because he just wanted them to eat at night, make sure they were taken care of." It doesn't add up.

One author said it this way, "Grace is so offensive that if you are not offended by it, you probably don't understand it." Grace doesn't make demands, it just gives. Grace is recklessly generous, uncomfortably promiscuous. Grace doesn't use sticks, carrots, or timecards. It doesn't keep score.

Grace is love that seeks you out when you have nothing to give in return. Grace is love coming at you that has nothing to do with you. Grace is being loved when you are unlovable. Grace is unconditional acceptance given to an undeserving person by an unobligated giver. It is one-way love.

Jesus came to liberate us from the weight of having to make it on our own, from the demand to measure up. He came to emancipate us from the burden to get it all right, from the obligation to fix ourselves, find ourselves, and free ourselves.

Jesus came to release us from the slavish need to be right, rewarded, regarded, and respected. Because Jesus came to set the captives free, life does not have to be a tireless effort to establish yourself, justify yourself, and validate yourself. It's just always grace.



Another author put it this way, "The gospel is that you are more evil than you dared to imagine, but you are more loved than you dare to hope." It's grace. When I perform weddings for a couple, I'll meet with them one last time, maybe two weeks before the wedding, just to go over the final details. Several years ago I was meeting with this couple and I'd only just met them through the wedding process. They had come to Jesus very recently. Loved Jesus. Were in love with each other. It was really great.

They did all of the steps of homework that I asked them to do. When we met to go over the final stuff I said, "Hey, I think we're good. I think we're wrapping up." I said, "Do you have any more questions?"

And the bride to be instantly looked uncomfortable. Kind of looked down at her shoes and said, "I do have a question." She said, "I feel like if I wear a white dress I'm a fraud because my past is anything but white and pure."

And I thought, "Oh, you've forgotten grace."

As we were sitting in leather chairs in my office, just me and the two of them, I kind of preached a sermon right there, "You've forgotten that grace means you are pure. Grace means you are already clothed in white. Grace means all of that impurity which you carry so much was heaped onto Jesus. He wanted to take that from you when He died on the cross. He died for that. And He put His holiness on you. So, when the Father looks at you, He sees purity." I kept going on and on about this.

On the day the wedding came, I was standing up front. The groom is next to me. The moment comes. Doors open. And there she is in a white dress. And she's grinning ear to ear, looking at her husband to be, walking down the aisle.

And when I do a wedding, the bride, as it should be, is locked in on the groom. But I remember this wedding in particular. She kind of stole a glance at me and gave me a little head nod that communicated, "That's right. I'm in white. Don't mess with me." She got it. Grace.

Here's what is so hard for Christians. When you get baptized you feel it. You feel that grace. It's so tempting to go home and to put that white dress in a closet and say, "That's not who I feel like I am." But Jesus says, "That's who I make you."

I love the paraphrase of Matthew 11:



"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it." I love this phrase, "Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)

Don't you want to live freely and lightly? Is that not why you are here? Let's pray.

At the beginning of the day I did a little survey, I had everybody just raise your hand. I want to end by doing a similar hand raising exercise. I want to ask us a series of questions. Keep your hands down. But at the end of them I'm going to say, "If there are any of these questions you say yes to would you raise your hand?"

Here are the questions:

Are you willing to reject performance and define your spiritual maturity by what happens in secret?

Are you willing to quit comparing and trust God to convict others what He needs to?

Are you willing to quit with the unscriptural rules and keep your guardrails to yourself?

Are you willing to get off the treadmill of trying and stand on the solid ground of grace?

Are you ready to take a real rest by worshipping with your heart, not just your lips?

Will you acknowledge, "I'm evil," and let Jesus clothe you in mercy?

Are you ready to put down your tattered clothes of good deeds and put on the white dress of grace?

Do you want to live freely and lightly?

Do you want to learn the unforced rhythms of grace?



If that's you, whether you've been following Jesus for decades or today is your first day hearing His name, would you raise your hand at every location? Raise it high and keep it up.

Father, we raise this hand like a two-year-old toddler reaching for his momma saying, "Will you hold me?" Because You are all that I've got. And You are all I need. Jesus, we tried to do right on our own. It didn't work. Jesus we tried to be our own God. It failed.

God, even the successes we've had are empty. God, You and You alone are what we need. We want the rest that You give. We want to learn the unforced rhythms of grace. That's why we call this church home. That's why we call Jesus Savior.

Jesus we love You. We honor You. We will walk this week with You. Thank You for loving us first, Jesus. It is in Your holy, amazing name that we pray. Amen.

