

Message Transcript

WHAT DOES FAITH LOOK LIKE? | THE KINGDOM BREAKS IN
CARL KUHL | FEBRUARY 7 & 8, 2026

Aaron Brockett:

Well, I'm thrilled to introduce our guest speaker for this weekend, my good friend, Carl Kuhl. Carl currently serves as the Executive Pastor of Ministries at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Prior to that, he and his wife Lindsay founded Mosaic Christian Church near Baltimore, Maryland in 2008.

Now, Carl would be too humble to tell you this, but that church exploded with growth reaching thousands of people for Christ in the northeast. It's been said that one of the tests of leadership is what happens after that leader departs. And if that is true, then Carl is a phenomenal leader because Mosaic continues to thrive and it has since their departure in 2022.

Carl and Lindsay have four amazing kids: Regan, Quint, London, and Declan. They love to travel and try new restaurants. Carl is a big fan of Ravens football—don't hold that against him. He's got a book called Bloodstained Pews that is available on Amazon so go pick that up.

But, personally, can I just say that I love it when I get to introduce to you some of the men who have encouraged me, challenged me, and confront me when necessary. And Carl would be one of those men.

I'm a part of a text group with Carl and several other pastors. And we are texting almost daily: words of counsel and accountability as we seek to sharpen each other's blades for ministry.

I've found Carl to be bold, clear, humble, and he loves me enough to tell me the truth. I think you're going to see all of those characteristics in his message today. So, buckle up. Grab your Bible. And please give a warm and rowdy Traders Point welcome to our friend, Carl Kuhl.



Carl Kuhl:

Well, Traders Point it's good to see you—so good to be here. I want to first let you know that this is not my first time here. It's my first time on this side. But I grew up in Louisville and through some church things became friends with some Christians around the country. And the best of those friends were from Indianapolis. They said, "Hey, come hang out with us some weekend, attend church with us."

So, I went to this church with them and I said, "What's the name of it. And they said, "Traders Point." And I said, "Who is your pastor?" And they said, "Howard Brammer." And so I have kind of been connected to this church for a really long time. So, it's great to be here again.

And I want to let you know, I know you love your church. I know that you think that this church is dynamic and on fire and going and doing great things. What you don't know is that other churches and pastors around the country know that too. And God is not just doing a work in you, He's doing a work through you because I know pastors, me being one of them, all around the country who are following your example.

Remember in the Scriptures where the Apostle Paul said, "Hey, follow my example as I follow the example of Christ?" When I first read that a long time ago I was kind of like, "You know, that sounds kind of arrogant, like he's got it figured out."

"Everybody just follow Jesus like me."

But I think what he's doing is he's trying to help people. And he's saying, "Hey, you want to follow Jesus. You are not sure what to do, just follow me and it will be okay."

And I want to let you know that's what is happening through your church. Because churches all over the country are saying, "Hey, we heard how generous Traders Point is, maybe we can be generous like that." And, "We've heard how Traders Point is being bold to speak into this cultural moment. Maybe we can speak boldly like that as well."

And, "We heard that Traders Point is unabashedly saying, 'Hey, we're standing on the Word of God, raising up soldiers for Christ, because we're just saying out loud what has always been true, that we're in a spiritual battle and we're just going to equip our people for it. And to say that and go for it.'" And other churches and pastors are saying, "Well, let us do the same thing."



And because of what you are doing every single day of the week, people like me, churches like mine, are following your example and trying to be like you. So, I want to say: Don't grow weary in doing good. I know when you are the tip of the spear it can be difficult, you can feel alone, but we are behind you. You are blazing a trail for Christendom in America is really what is happening. So, keep up the good work. You will reap a harvest if you don't give up.

I also want to say a quick word of thank you because I know it takes so many people to make this place great. It takes the people like you in Traders Point Kids' church, it takes all of the volunteers: the givers, the small group leaders, your great elders, a dedicated staff.

But I know this is led by a general named Aaron Brockett. And there are some people who the closer you get to them the more you are like, "Oh, I'm good." Like, "I don't know if I need any more of you." And then there are a handful of people in life that the closer you get to them, the more you respect them, the more you want to be like them.

And Aaron, I just want to say, that's who you are in my life. The closer I get to you, the more I want to learn from you, the more I want to pray for you, the more I want to follow in your footsteps. So, thank you for being a leader, not just for the American church and this church, but for me personally, because you are helping me and I appreciate that.

And one last thing I always like to say when I guest preach anywhere is that I know you love your pastor. The number one way that you can honor him is to pray for him every single day. I hope you pray for your pastor and his family every single day that he stays connected to God, that God meets him in that quiet place, that God protects and strengthens him, his home, and makes it his safe place that continues to be that. And that you say, "God, would You continue to embolden him with vision and courage and compassion." as he leads you and he leads even more people who you don't see.

As he said, my name is Carl Kuhl. I was raised in Louisville and then in 2008 planted a church in Baltimore, Maryland. I've got a family of six. He mentioned them. I'll show a picture of us. This is my favorite family picture. This is when we beat the Bengals last year and we were all pretty excited. We're all pretty competitive.



Here's what's fun about preaching this weekend. This is my favorite family picture so, I'll show it whenever I can. Any other major city I preach in people boo. I don't know why they hate the Ravens, but whatever. But you all don't because you only have the Colts because you stole them from Baltimore. I'm not saying I forgive you. I will say that we can be friends. It's going to be okay.

Which, by the way, can I just throw in that it's Super Bowl Sunday and some of you are like my wife, "Super Bowl, it's just a party. This will be fun." Some of you are like me, if my team is not in it, I'm just bitter. Like, I don't know how this can happen, but I want both teams to lose because it's not my team. Right?

After being there, we felt like we would be in Baltimore for life, but a few years ago we felt led to go back to Louisville and to serve at the church I grew up at. And I know, on the video, when Aaron said our guest speaker is from Kentucky, that some of you instantly raised your eyebrows and you were like, "Oh, Kentucky. Great." Like, "Did Aaron buy this guy shoes so he could be here today? What's this hick?"

I have a video I saw on Instagram that is kind of in defense of people in Kentucky. So, watch this. [a video of a man holding a sign saying: Just because we are from Kentucky does not!!! Mean we are not smart!!! [Then tossing down every sheet of paper with arguments that support that statement from behind the cover sheet statement so all you see is the first page, not the following remarks.]

That's my people. Right there.

I know, in a church like this, in a growing church like this especially, we have people who are coming for the first time or maybe for the first time in a long time. We have people coming regularly but Jesus is not your King and you're trying to figure out things and understand.

And if you experience church like you wonder, "Why do people give their life to this? To the church and Jesus like this? Why do people raise their hands in worship? Why do people serve and give up time like that? Why do people give? Why do this 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting? Why do people give up food or something that is important to them for Jesus or church?"

Let me tell you why. In a word, it's:



Grace

I want to tell you this story from... It's actually written by CS Lewis decades ago about a boy named Eustis. And Eustis—I scared somebody with that name. Eustis is here, apparently. Okay.

Eustis was a self-centered jerk of a boy. And he was rude to everybody around him. He knew it and they knew it. Nobody wanted to be friends with him and he liked it that way. And he finds himself forced on this expedition with a couple of family members and a bunch of people who he didn't know and he's rude to them as well. And he keeps them at an arms distance. They want him to. They don't want to be around him. He stays at one end of the ship. They stay away from him.

Eventually the expedition lands on an unknown island that, as far as they know is deserted, but could be dangerous. And against what everyone says, Eustis wanders off by himself. He stumbles upon mounds of treasure, gold and jewels and precious gems. And he doesn't realize that it is dragon's treasure. And he lusts after it with everything he has. So much so that he falls asleep on top of it.

What Eustis doesn't know is that when you sleep on dragon's treasure you become a dragon. When Eustis wakes up he's scared because he looks down and he doesn't have hands, he has dragon claws. And he doesn't have skin, he has scales. And he doesn't breathe air, he breathes fire. And he realizes the horrible truth that what has been true on the inside for a long time, is finally reflected on the outside. He's a dragon.

And he makes his way back to the expedition and they all run in terror because it's a dragon. But finally through some awkward communication they realize the dragon is Eustis. Eustis is the dragon. But they realize, "We are stuck. We can't take him on this ship. He'll crush it. And we have to go on with the expedition. We have to leave."

And they reach the point where they tell him, "Eustis, we're going to have to leave you here and you will be alone and die here forever." And this is when Eustis hits rock bottom. And he's filled with regret and remorse and finally feels the weight of who he is, the choices he's made, and what he has become.

It's at that moment that he meets Aslan, the lion. And he follows Aslan. And they end up at this beautiful garden, the center of which has a pool of water that is the most beautiful, refreshing looking thing that Eustis has ever seen. He longs to get in but Aslan says, "You must undress first."



Remembering that snakes can shed their skin, Eustis peels off his dragon skin only to see another layer underneath. He does this three times and then realizes in despair that it's not making any difference.

Aslan says, "You must let me do it." Eustis nods. Aslan takes his lion's claws and he plunges them deep into the chest of Eustis and rips. And it burns and it hurts more than anything that Eustis has ever experienced in his life.

And again, and again, and again Aslan rips and tears at the skin until finally he reaches the boy Eustis inside. He picks him up. He plunges him in the pool of water. And it stings at first but then it is the most refreshing thing he's ever experienced in his life. And he laughs. And he swims. And he plays. And then he gets out of the pool and Aslan dresses him in new clothes and he realizes he has become what he was always meant to be. He's a child of the king.

And if you are new to faith, or church, or Jesus what you have to understand is the story of Eustis is the story of the Christian believer. We are selfish. We are rude. "I care about me." And no matter how hard we try we cannot un-dragon ourselves.

But then we met the Lion of Judah named Jesus Christ. And He said, "I and I alone can un-dragon you." And He pierces us with His truth. And He plunges us in the waters of baptism. And He clothes us in the Spirit. And our souls smile because it was the most beautifully refreshing thing we've ever experienced in our life. And we realize that we've become what we were born to be, which is a child of the King.

And that is called: Grace

Grace is the reason we follow Jesus. Grace means endless second chances. Grace means it's going to be okay. Grace means when you take communion every week you don't have to be filled with shame at what you did again that week. You are filled with relief and joy because you are still covered in grace. Grace means you are enough. Grace means you have a future. Grace means no matter what's gone wrong it's going to end alright. And that's why we follow Jesus. It's because of grace.

And then once we have grace, we ask, because Jesus is our King:

How do we live our lives?



And that's why we gather every single week, both on a large scale and a smaller scale to ask: what does it mean for managing money? And what does King Jesus mean for having emotionally healthy relationships, and my past pain and my future dreams and my calling and career and interacting with my fellow students and for relationships that were hard this week. And what does Jesus mean for having a family that both brings joy and is the most challenging thing at the same time.

And the primary way we answer those questions is we open God's Word. And we seek to understand it and then we seek to apply it to our life.

This year, as a church, we are going through the gospel of Mark, which is one of the four biographies of Jesus in the Scriptures. And we are going through every section of it to see what it means for the Kingdom to be among us. Meaning, the Kingdom is the place where the grace and truth of Jesus rule. So, what does it mean when the Kingdom is in us? What does it mean when the Kingdom is among us? What does it mean for the Kingdom to influence our world?

We are picking up where we left off last week, which is Mark, chapter 1, verse 40:

"A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed." Leprosy was a common skin disease in Jesus' day. "If you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean," he said. Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed."

Now, this word compassion in the Greek language, which this is originally written in, is:

SPLAGNA

I want you to say that, kind of say it from your throat. SPLAGNA. One, two, three go: SPLAGNA. There you go. SPLAGNA means: kicked in the gut. It's that feeling where you feel kicked in the gut. Compassion in the Scriptures literally means that feeling in your gut. In fact, Jesus feels this five other times in the New Testament. I want to show you.

Matthew 9:

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion [Greek: SPLAGNA] on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36 (NLT)



They were lost and He feels it. Then He goes on to teach and heal.

Matthew 14:

"Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion [Greek: SPLAGNA] on them and healed their sick. Matthew 14:14 (NLT)

So, when He sees the crowd of 5,000 people before He feeds them miraculously He said, "Hey, I've got to heal them physically."

In Matthew 20, Jesus meets some blind men:

"Jesus felt sorry [Greek: SPLAGNA] for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him." Matthew 20:34 (NLT)

His SPLAGNA says, "I can't not heal you."

Mark 8:

"I feel sorry [Greek: SPLAGNA] for these people. They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat." Mark 8:2 (NLT)

This was a group of 4,000 this time. He says, "Hey, my compassion says we've got to take care of them. Feed them."

Luke 7 is maybe one of my favorites. He comes upon a child's funeral, this widow's only son, and He feels so much SPLAGNA He says, "I can't not do anything," and He resurrects the dead boy.

That kicked in the gut feeling, SPLAGNA, is a part of who Jesus is. Now, when we think of Jesus' character we often think of Him as holy, and we should. Holy means other. He's perfect. When we think of Jesus we often think of Him as teacher and guide, and we should. But this indispensable part of Jesus is the SPLAGNA, it's the compassion, where He feels kicked in the gut.

My friend told me a story one time and I think it illustrates SPLAGNA as best as I have heard it. This story is kind of the background of this. He grew up in an atheist home. He did not go to church, literally no time in his entire life, even at Christmas or Easter. Nothing.



He went to college to become a lawyer and one week he was watching TV and a tele-evangelist comes on and this guy makes a claim about Jesus that Vince thinks is a fairy tale so he says, "Well, I'm a lawyer. I'm going to disprove this guy and show myself what an idiot he is."

And Vince goes on this deep dive that turns into weeks and then months researching the historicity of Jesus. And eventually, at the end of it all, Vince gives his life to Jesus convinced there is a God, "I can trust the Bible, He sows grace. His name is Jesus." And so he said, "I'm going to devote my life to telling people about Jesus because nobody ever told me. I found out through some rando on TV."

So, he transfers from law school to seminary. But what happened is, over time, his ability to talk about Jesus withered. Because when he was first a Christian he was telling everybody he could saying, "I don't want to leave anybody behind. I don't want anybody in the place I was in of not knowing."

But then he gets into seminary and he essentially gets insulated from being around non-believers and he realizes, to his horror, that he's gone weeks, if not months without telling anyone about Jesus. As this is happening God is slowly convicting him of this, kind of poking and prodding that, "Vince, this isn't okay. This isn't okay."

About that time Vince and his wife get invited to a wedding out of state. So, they drive the four hours to another state, go to this wedding, the reception lasts late into the night, they have a blast. They get into their car and they head home on the interstate for a four hour drive. Vince's wife, Jen, falls asleep on the seat next to him.

As he is driving, it's the middle of the night, he has the radio turned up loud to keep him awake. And a song comes on that's old, that he knew. It was from the Counting Crows. It said, "Please help me to believe in something because I don't believe in anything and I want to be someone who believes."

And that line wrecked him. Because here you have a popular artist just singing to the world, "I want to believe. If there is anybody out there who knows how to believe, tell me and I'll believe it because that will be something, anything, just give me something."

And God uses that moment to wreck Vince. And he feels SPLAGNA so much he literally gets sick. So, as he is driving down the interstate at 70 miles an hour, he rolls down his window and he gets sick outside the window.



At this point he learns the laws of physics because the sick comes back in the window, bypasses Vince—oh yeah—and lands on innocent, beautiful, sleeping Jen's face. She wakes up screaming, "What's happening to me?"

And the answer is SPLAGNA. SPLAGNA happened to her.

Jesus is always moved by SPLAGNA.

Let me tell you what that means in your life. It means when you see injustice in our world and it gives you a pit in your stomach, when you see somebody in all of this pain and your heart hurts, when you walk into a room and everybody is having a good time but you see the one lonely person and they are trying to pretend they are not lonely but you know the embarrassment of that truth because you've been there and they are all you can think about. That feeling is often something we want to numb or run from or ignore or think is bad. That is a godly feeling. In that moment you are like God, because Jesus, over and over again felt in His gut the pain of other people and then He acted on it. So, when you feel that lean into it knowing you're becoming more like Jesus.

Scripture goes on in verse 43:

"Then Jesus sent him on his way with a stern warning:" after he healed him. "Don't tell anyone about this. Instead, go to the priest and let him examine you."

And Jesus is basically going to give him here instructions to clear him back into society as you're okay.

"Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed. But the man went and spread the word, proclaiming to everyone what had happened. As a result, large crowds soon surrounded Jesus, and he couldn't publicly enter a town anywhere." (NLT)

The thing that jumps out here is, if you've been with Jesus you can't not tell people about it. Right?

And we get this. I mean, we do this with everything in life. We'll joke on Crossfitters and Vegans because you've never met one without them telling you about it. But, we're all like that. We all tell people what we are excited about. If you find a new restaurant with amazing food, you tell people. If there is a vacation spot that you went to for the first time and it was awesome, you tell people.



If there is a cheap place to buy amazing clothes, you tell people. If there is a hilarious new comedian you stream, you tell people. If you are a senior pastor who does jujitsu you tell people—hypothetically. After last service Pastor Aaron's buddies texted me and said, "Hey, we're going at 2 o'clock if you want in." I was like, "I'm sorry." But that's what you do when you are excited. Right? You just tell people.

So, here's some quick dating advice for single people. If you are dating a girl and she doesn't tell anybody, do the preemptive breakup George Costanza style. If she isn't into you, it's going to end anyway. Just end it on your terms. Why? Because if you are excited about something you tell people about it.

Look at it this way. I know this is a little bit of a divided house at every campus. I just want you, really quickly, make some noise if you are an IU fan. Okay. Alright. So, this year unbelievable—college football National Champions. Crazy. Right? Okay, you cheered once. We got it. We got it. We're good.

I've been talking to a Purdue fan who is on staff, "Don't say my name—even I have got to admit that's pretty impressive."

But if you've been watching, the IU quarterback has gotten kind of famous, not because he's great, but because he always credits God in all of his interviews. In fact, for the National Championship you could bet on how many times he would say the word God in his post-game interview. The over/under was one-and-a-half. There were two guys who bet that he would say the word God at least twice in his post-game interview. They live streamed it. Here it is.

[Video of then watching the post-game interview, it happened twice.]

"Nice. I knew it. I knew it."

Good thing they got some money.

But Mendoza said something good. Listen to this quote. He said, "I don't praise God because we won, I praise Him because He is worthy no matter the outcome." That's good.

Here's my thing. As a Christian, over the years, I have had pastors and podcasters and mentors tell me, "You need to tell more people about Jesus. And if you're not telling people about Jesus that's a problem."



And I see examples like this guy in Scripture. He goes off and tells everybody. And I think I should. And the impression is: You're not trying hard enough. Go try harder. Well, maybe. Let me suggest two other possibilities.

If I'm not telling people about Jesus, possibility number one is: I haven't been with Jesus. Because nobody has to tell me to go tell people about a great restaurant I encounter. I just tell people. So, the first question I'm going to ask myself if I'm not telling people about Jesus is:

Have I been with Jesus?

Not, did you attend church this week. But rather if with your heart and soul, mind and strength you encountered the living God in a personal way this week: in church, in the Word every day, connecting with Him in prayer, maybe listening to your favorite worship songs, maybe getting into nature in a place where you can stand in awe of who He is. If I'm not telling people about Jesus, question number one I'm asking myself is: Have I been with Jesus?

Question number two is:

Am I too busy?

Am I too busy rushing on to the next thing? And the reason I ask that is another story in Scripture where Jesus heals not only one person with leprosy but 10 people with leprosy, again, outcasts from society. He heals all of them in a word, and they are all excited. What happens is one of them comes back to worship. They all encountered Jesus, but nine of them went on quickly to the very next thing.

And too often, that's us. We encounter Jesus but too often move to the next thing too quickly. And it's important for us to slow down and say, "You know, God, I just need to recognize your kindness on me this week because it was bitterly cold and I didn't thank You for having heat all week. And I'm grateful for all of that.

And God, sometimes I complain about my car. It's got kids' food stuck in the cracks that not even the best detail artist could get out and it's old and it makes funny noises, but God, the reality is that it gets me from point A to B and that's just Your kindness blessing me and I appreciate it.



And, God, we both know I was just a complete jerk to my kid this week and I railroaded him because he's smaller than I am and I wanted to say that stuff to my boss and I really carried that home. So, if I can't say it at work, I need to find somebody weaker than me to run them over to prove myself of something—that I'm a man. And, God, You showed me grace again and I don't deserve it but I'm thankful.

And, God, I opened Your Word this week and I came to Psalm 4. And, God, I know that David wrote that three thousand years ago. But, God, I think three thousand years ago You might have put that in there just for me because You know what I'm going through this week. You met me in that Psalm and You encouraged me and challenged me all at the same time and it was like a scriptural hug from You. And I am so thankful for the grace that You show me in meeting with me in Scripture.

You know how, in your car you have a warning light sometimes? Like the temperature changes drastically and the tire pressure light comes on: Hey, you may need to put some air in your tire. If you're not telling people about Jesus, just because, it's a warning light. And I don't think it means you need to like try harder—guilt shame and guilt. I think it means you need to ask, "Have I spent time with Jesus and I'm slowing down to reflect on it?"

This guy in our verse was told, "Don't tell anybody," and he told everybody. We've been told, "Tell everybody." What are you going to do about it?

Scripture goes on, chapter 2:

"When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them..."

And I think that what that means is He was literally unpacking the Old Testament and explaining it. I would die to hear Him do that. That's amazing."

"four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd,"

I imagine them arguing because one of them waited.

"so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus."



Now, I know sometimes when we read the Bible and unpack it together you'll hear a teacher say, "Well, this sounds weird to us, but in Jesus' day there was this cultural thing where it wouldn't have been weird because this is just what they did.

Not this. They didn't dig holes in roofs in Jesus' day. Like in the middle of my sermon, it would be just as weird if dust started falling and some guy starts repelling down and we say, "Okay, I guess the sermon is over: Cirque du Soleil. What's going to happen next? I'm not sure."

And then you have, I'm sure, the owner of the house is like screaming at them like, "You're ruining my home. What are you guys doing?" But verse 5 says: "Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.'" (NLT)

I love this word they are—plural.

Here's what is true. Your faith has consequences upon others. And you can spend a lifetime unpacking how the sovereignty of God and your free will interacts, how does our faith impact the Creator and Sustainer of the universe—I've read entire books on this and I don't completely comprehend it. All I know is that for some reason the Creator of the universe has decided that your faith is going to make a difference on the people around you.

I remember when I was preparing to go into ministry years ago, a mentor required me to read a book that was written by a seasoned pastor for young pastors. And he had this one story that I've never forgotten.

He said that in a period of great discouragement leading a church as a lead pastor, he was just ready to throw in the towel. And he was venting to his wife one night about how the church was shrinking and there was this division in the church and elders couldn't get along and people weren't serving and giving was down. And he just said, "I don't think I can do this anymore. I'm so discouraged."

And his wife tried to encourage him biblically. And she said, "Well, I'm sure when Noah was building the ark, he was discouraged when he didn't have any converts either and the world was about to end."

And her husband simply responded, "Well, there was another ark down the street that was doubling in size every year."

And I was like, "Oh, he kind of Jesus juked her."



But then he said this. He said, "I just don't know if I have the kind of strength to hang on to Jesus right now, in faith." And she quickly responded, "Well, I do. In fact, I have enough faith for both of us. So, if you don't have the strength to hang on to Jesus, you just hang on to me and I have enough faith for both of us."

"If you hang on to me in this period of discouragement when you are through it you'll be able to hang onto Jesus yourself. But I'm blazing a trail. And I've got the One who is going to get us through. So, if you hang onto me then you are going to be okay."

And I know, theologically, my faith doesn't get transferred to someone else. If I force my kids to be baptized all I'm doing is dunking them in water. It is probably doing more harm than good. My faith doesn't get transferred to them. But, there is something where my faith does still impact others and you need be able to say to others, "I will blaze the trail. Hang on to me. Follow my example and you'll get to Jesus."

And I would say another word to single people. I know that you have your list of things that you are looking for in a future spouse: I want them to look this way, or make this money, or have this career, or be this funny—whatever your list is.

But I would encourage you that the number one thing on your list is that they should have such a rock solid faith that you know that when the pain comes, when the discouragement comes, when the doubt and questions come you can say to them one day, "I don't even know if I have faith to get through this."

And that person, you're sure, will look back at you and say, "Well, I do. I have enough faith to get both of us through. So, you hang on to me and we'll hang on to Jesus together. That's the kind of person you want to find to marry."

Verse 6:

"But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, 'What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!' Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, 'Why do you question this in your hearts?'"

Now, this could be that Jesus is like using telepathy, like He's reading their minds. I think it's just as likely that these guys are standing such [with arms crossed over their chest] so that they want everybody to know. And everybody else is having fun and amazed at what is going to happen and they are just standing there with arms crossed going, "Here we go. He's healing somebody again. Let's see what happens this time."



Either way, I know if Jesus starts answering what you are thinking in your head, it's not going to go well for you. Verse 9, He says:

"Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man "Your sins are forgiven," or "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk"? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.' Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!'" (NLT)

Catch this.

Forgiveness of sin is what matters the most

In fact, it looks like Jesus only healed the guy to prove that He could forgive sins, which makes you wonder if the cynics weren't around would Jesus have healed him? Yeah, I think, based upon everything we know about Jesus' character, He would have. But it is interesting to think about.

The bottom line is that He says forgiveness of sins matters most. In Luke 19:10 Jesus says, "The Son of Man, I came to seek and save those who are lost." Forgiveness of sins is what matters the most.

And the church, the capital "C" church, and this church too, does a lot of good things. The church feeds the hungry, clothes the poor. The church cares for the orphan and widow. The church provides medical help and schooling. The church has fun events that build community and just have a good time together. The church does insider things like prayer nights and worship nights and those things are part of our devotion and who we are.

But the one thing that matters most is forgiveness of sins, because your greatest need is not to be well fed or educated or have a better piece of technology. Your biggest need is not more money, a better workout, or more followers. Your greatest need is not politics, better entertainment, or even better physical health. Your greatest need is a Savior because you are a dragon and you need to be un-dragon. And therefore, forgiveness of sin matters the most.

Jesus used fixing the practical need to show the importance of his spiritual need. So, make no mistake. This church, the church, is going to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We will serve the poor. We'll help the helpless. We'll be a defender of the orphan and the widow. We will spread that type of care, not just around the region of Indy, but around the world. But, the reason why we exist, is because the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins. And that is why that is the most important thing.



Verse 12:

“ And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, ‘We’ve never seen anything like this before!’” (NLT)

Yeah, I guess so.

That’s our Scripture for today. And you have two amazing encounters with Jesus. There was a skin disease that was healed. A paralytic can walk. I mean what does all of this have in common? It’s people of faith. You have a man who is sick with a skin disease, an outcast, probably in physical pain. He’s on the outside looking in on society. He has faith to believe Jesus can change him.

You have four friends who had a friend whose life is over but they are connected with him. We don’t know his exact story. Maybe it was a work accident. Maybe he was born that way. Maybe all of them were climbing a tree as kids and they dared that guy, “Hey, why don’t you climb the highest?” And he fell and got paralyzed and they felt guilt ever since. But they said, “Let’s just get him to Jesus and see what happens.”

We talked at the beginning about grace. The reason why we are here is: Grace. The Scriptures say, very clearly, that the way that you get grace is by faith. But here’s what I want you to get from the gospel of Mark today. It’s a big thought.

Faith is spelled R - I - S - K

The people in our Scriptures took a risk. Lepers were supposed to stay on the outside of the city. They weren’t supposed to even get near people who didn’t have that contagious skin disease.

People didn’t dig holes through other people’s roofs.

Each of these were a sweaty palm thing inducing heart palpitations, causing pit in your stomach kind of moments. Think about it. What if Jesus said, “No.” What if Jesus can’t. What if you look like a fool? What if other people criticize you? What if you get in trouble or arrested? What if it doesn’t work?

But, in both stories they took a risk.



In the Bible, Hebrews 11 is called the Hall of Faith. And it was person, after person, after person who took these great risks, who put everything on the line: their lives, their finances, their reputation, and they took all of these steps and it recounts them one by one. And that's what faith is.

Sometimes in our culture, even in the church world, we'll talk about faith in kind of like ethereal ways, just this thing floating in the clouds, a thought in our minds, or a feeling in our hearts. But, scripturally, that's not accurate. Scripturally, faith is always seen. In fact, faith that is not seen is not faith.

Think about it. It is not risky to think something. It's risky to do something. The Scriptures say even the demons know God exists, but they don't take a risk.

Faith is spelled R — I — S — K

A long time ago when I was in middle school my parents sent me to camp up in the Ozarks in Missouri. And each cabin one day had to do this thing called the faith pole. And it was a big telephone pole that might as well have been 300 feet in the sky. It was probably about 30.

And the idea was that you put on a harness, and the harness had two wires that went over these pulleys and your two camp counselors were holding them down below. When you stood up on top you'd jump out for this trapeze thing. And you climb it. It's so far away. And eventually the camp counselors catch you and eventually slowly let you down.

And I would say that I don't have an irrational fear of heights. I would say I have a rational fear of heights. Meaning, if I'm in a skyscraper at the top looking out the window, I'm not scared at all because an engineer used the math to make sure that thing wouldn't fall over. But if I'm near a cliff where I can fall off and I die, I'm not getting near that thing because God put that fear in me to keep me alive. It's rational.

So, I climb up this faith pole and I'm standing on the top of it, and it's really wobbly and I have like this much space [the size of a grapefruit] and I'm looking at the two camp counselors down below who I ticked off the night before because I'm a middle school boy, and I'm thinking this is stupid. I'm an idiot. I don't need to prove anything to these people. And my palms got sweaty. I had a pit in my stomach. And there came a moment where I took a leap.



And taking that leap of faith is what it feels like to give your life to Christ. It is a risk to act as if you believe. Do you need perfect faith? No. You need enough faith to jump. And when people ask, "How much faith do I need?" Here's how much—51 percent.

Later in Mark we're going to read a story about a guy who comes to Jesus to heal his son. And Jesus says, "Do you believe?" And he says, "I do believe. Help me overcome my unbelief." Which I love because he's saying not with everything in me but enough to know You are my only chance. So, I put my life in your hands.

Do you need perfect faith? No. But you need a faith that says, "I'm going to throw myself and hope Jesus catches."

But, here's the hard part. This is really a journey that I've been on personally for the last 15 months. If the book of Hebrews says what pleases God is faith, present tense, what I want it to say, what I wish it said, is that what pleases God is to have had faith, past tense because then I would be good.

Maybe you're like me. I can tell stories of how I had faith. How I gave to that thing. Prayed that bold prayer. Forgave that person. Baptized that friend. I've got the stories. But Hebrews 11 says what pleases God is a present tense faith meaning you just don't do the faith pole once; you do it again and again and again. And you don't get past the sweaty palm moment. You normalize the sweaty palm moment.

So, let's go over our questions here:

One thing I learned:

One thing I learned today is faith is spelled R — I — S — K.

One thing that challenged me:

One thing that challenged me is having faith in the present tense.

One thing that God is asking me to do, is what?

And one thing God is asking me to do is what you have to fill in.



If you have never given your life to Christ, here's what you need to know. Every single one of us will stand before the judgement seat of Christ one day and we will give an account for everything we said, did, thought, and didn't do while in the body. And then every single one of us will go to eternal punishment or eternal reward.

And the only thing that matters on that day is not how dedicated you were, what kind of technology you had, what degrees you had, what you did on the court, how big you were, even how healthy your family system was—the only thing that matters is if you let the Lion of Judah un-dragon you. That He washed you in the waters of baptism and clothed you in His Spirit.

It's a risk. Because you have to give up control. But if you need to take that leap, we're going to have a prayer team up front at every single campus and we want you to come forward and talk to them about what it means to give your life to Jesus.

Here's my question for everyone who already follows Jesus. What risk do you need to take? Specifically, I want you to take one risk this week and tell one person. Take one risk and tell one person.

I'm connected to several of the great staff members here and here's the text I hope I hear from them over the next several weeks. I want to hear the person who said, "I increased the percent I give away even though I didn't get a raise this year." "I confessed my gambling problem to my spouse." "I asked someone at work if I could pray with them even after HR just told us that's not allowed."

"I started reading my Bible every day." "I changed majors that is something that is not my career but my calling." "I stopped watching that show—just filth." "I started praying again for the thing I stopped praying for because I just gave up that God would answer."

"I said, 'I forgive you.'" "I asked my husband to speak my love language better and gave him suggestions." "I told my wife specifically that I feel respected." "I told my girlfriend I'm moving out. We're going to do this God's way even though I don't know how we're going to afford it."

"I told my friend, 'You know I pray every day on my knees as soon as I wake up that I get to baptize you at Traders one day.'" "I restarted 21 days of fasting and prayer because the thing I gave up was pretty easy. I should have given it up anyway. And I'm going to go all in because I know the level which I can experience because of the presence of Jesus is often connected to my commitment to Jesus."



I know it scares you. But you can do it. Here's why. Grace. Because you've been un-dragoned. And you are selfish. And you were rude. And you cared about you. But He plunged His truth into you and ripped off that sinful nature. He put you in the waters of baptism that refreshed you. And He clothed you in His Spirit and He called you His child. You are a child of the King.

And over and over the Old Testament said: be courageous, be courageous, be courageous because to follow God means to do things that scare the living daylight out of you. And I know you feel it right now. And my prayer at every campus as we sing one last song is that you will commit to Jesus: I will do this thing this week because I am your child and if God is with me who can be against me?

God, we need You. God, we don't want to need You. We want to have needed You. We don't want to need you presently. But, God, we do. Because we can't drum up the courage on our own, because the thing terrifies us. And it may be the thing that other people would think is so insignificant. But not to us.

But, God, we are Your people. And we are being equipped for an eternal battle and we are going to step into the battle at the tip of the spear. We're going to go first, Jesus. We're going to be people who can say to others, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ," because we're surrounded by a community of people who have been un-dragoned, who have been clothed with Your Spirit and who are called Your children and they are cheering us on and they are doing the same thing in their own way.

And we are going to meet with them in small groups. And we're going to pray for each other and encourage each other this very week, God, as we tackle the thing in front of us that is so intimidating. But, God, we will be like the leper, we will be like the friends who cut the hole in the roof. We will do whatever it takes to get to Jesus, to follow Jesus, because we know that faith is spelled R — I — S — K. We are committed to you, Jesus. Thank You for loving us. It is in the great name of our King that we pray: Amen.

Traders Point, I love you. I respect you. Will you appreciate the people around you who are going to take a risk this week?

