

# Message Transcript

HE SET HIS FACE | THE KINGDOM REVEALED

MIKE BREAUX | SEPTEMBER 26, 2026

What is up Traders Point? Great to see you all. It's always good to be back here. My name is Breaux and I get to show up from time to time. And it is one of the highlights of my life when I see Traders Point on my calendar. My wife and I pray for this church every single morning on our back porch. And it's always good to be with you guys.

I want to welcome all of our campuses. Especially that Westfield campus. A shout out to you guys. People who are joining us online, man, super grateful for you.

We're going to be in Mark 11 today. So, if you've got a Bible you can turn to that or if you've got an app that you use, you can pull that up. I will put it on the screens as well. We're going to track along together.

But let me ask you all, before I get started, have you all ever been on a dark and scary road? I've got a grandson who just got his permit. And I let him drive my truck the other night on these dark, curvy country roads. We live in Kentucky. They have no shoulders. Trees right on the side of the road. I was in the passenger seat. It was scary. It was scary.

I can remember one time being on a dark and scary road. I was living up in the Chicago area preaching up there. And we'd just finished our Christmas Eve service. So, I was driving (it was midnight or 2 o'clock in the morning, something like that) down 65 from Chicago to our family in Kentucky. And it was really super cold, snow everywhere and there was this dense fog.

You ever had one of those drives where you are white knuckling the entire way? I could not see three feet in front of me the entire trip until I got to Seymore, Indiana. Then I could see more. I've never forgotten that. I pass that thing and I go, "Oh, I know that place."

And to be honest, some of us, we have been on some dark roads with our life. Haven't we? But now, no matter what life may throw at us, we walk in the light. And we walk with peace and freedom knowing the power and the presence of God, all because of a guy named Jesus Christ chose to go down a dark and scary road.



We've been following Jesus throughout the book of Mark this entire year. And where we are today in Mark 11 is one of those events that actually is included in all four gospels, or the four biographies about Jesus' life: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And we're going to be jumping between those.

And I think Luke 9:51 is kind of a hinge point in the whole Bible. It says this: "When the days drew near for him," Jesus, "to be taken up, he set his face," He set His face, "to go to Jerusalem." (ESV)

That phrase set His face is really strong language. It's all about resolve and determination. And it echoes the Old Testament writing about the coming Savior of the world. Isaiah 50 says this:

"I offered my back to those who beat me and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from mockery and spitting. Because the Sovereign Lord helps me. I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will not be put to shame." Isaiah 50:6-7 (NLT)

So, Jesus set His face determined to do the will of the Father. I like how The Living Bible puts Luke 9:51. It says:

"As time drew near for his return to heaven, he moved steadily onward to Jerusalem with an iron will." (TLB)

So, from this point forward the gospel story starts to shift. Jesus is no longer primarily doing ministry up and around Galilee. He is moving steadily and intentionally, courageously toward Jerusalem, toward the cross. He chose to walk a dark and scary road for you and me.

Today we find Jesus on this road. And again, not too often do all four gospels record the exact same event. But this one they do to mark its significance. You can find it in Matthew 21 and Luke 19 and John 12 and here in Mark 11. So, Jesus and the disciples are approaching Jerusalem from the east just as Old Testament prophecy says the Messiah would come.

And they are on this 19 mile stretch of road from Jericho. This is what the terrain looked like on that part of the road. It was a desert road full of caves and crevices and rocks. A great place for criminals to hide out.

You might even remember this road, the Jericho road, from the story that Jesus tells called the Good Samaritan. Remember that? Where a guy gets beat up on that road and is robbed and left on the side of the road for dead. This is the same road that Jesus used in that story.



Well, it's the first day of the week and the Passover festival is about to begin. And Jews from all over the Roman Empire are coming in to make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem too, for this week-long celebration to commemorate their liberation from Egyptian slavery.

This was the biggest event, the biggest festival of the year. It had become so much more than just a mere religious observance. On this week tourism went through the roof. Restaurants are packed out. Hotels and Airbnbs are completely booked. It's like Super Bowl week for the local economy. There were people camping out in tents filling the hillsides all around Jerusalem. Historians estimate that over two million people would jam into that city. Think Times Square on New Year's Eve or the drive through at Chick Fil-A or the parking lot at Traders. Right? And because things would often get a little out of hand, Roman soldiers were on high alert and they would not hesitate to use force to keep the peace during Passover week.

Now, adding to the already electric atmosphere was the anticipated arrival of this miracle worker from up in Nazareth. Word had begun spreading through the city and along the road that He was headed their way.

You see, just a few days before, Jesus had performed His most spectacular miracle over in Bethany when He raised his good friend, Lazarus, from the dead. So, now the whole region was buzzing with what had happened and they wanted to see this miracle worker for themselves.

So, let's pick it up in Mark, chapter 11. It starts this way:

"As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the towns of Bethpage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives." Mark 11:1 (NLT)

Now, the Mount of Olives was a ridge about two-and-a-half miles long on the other side of the Kidron Valley just east of Jerusalem. It is covered with all of these gnarly looking olive trees and it rises about 700 feet, which gives a pretty spectacular view from that vantage point. This is a modern look from the summit, but it's still the same kind of view that Jesus would have had. He could see almost every part of the city from this part of the road.

By the way, I got to stand there a few years back. It's the olive grove where Jesus went to pray in His final hours on the night of the arrest. And, honestly, it gave me chills standing there because Jesus would have been able to see that mob coming out of the city gates, coming up the hill, carrying torches and swords and clubs coming for Him.



And just kind of an interesting note here. History tells us that while Jesus entered Jerusalem from the east, Pilate, the Roman Governor, would most likely be entering from the west. He's coming with calvary and horses and banners and spears—a display of Imperial power.

So, here are these two parades, so to speak. Two kingdoms being represented. One kingdom built on intimidation. The other, built on humility. One kingdom oppressing people. The other kingdom setting them free. One kingdom saying power comes from force. The other Kingdom displaying power comes from sacrifice. Two very different kingdoms. Two very different visions of power. In a few days, Jesus and Pilate would actually meet. And Jesus would get to tell him, "My Kingdom is not of this world. Your kingdom is based upon temporary power. Mine is on eternal authority." And the kingdom that Pilate belonged to, like all of the other kingdoms of the earth, would fall and prove to be only temporary. But the other Kingdom, the one that King Jesus ushered in, is unshakeable and it has no end.

So, just a few days prior to Jesus entering Jerusalem, they come to this little town called Bethpage, and Jesus sends two of His disciples to a nearby village, probably Bethany, to get a donkey and a colt and bring them back. And it says this:

"Jesus sent two of them on ahead, 'Go into that village over there,' he told them, 'As soon as you enter it you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, 'What are you doing?' just say, 'The Lord need it and will return it soon.'" Mark 11:1-3 (NLT)

Mark and Luke add a dialogue of the owners and some of the people standing nearby saying, "Hey, what are you guys doing? Why are you untying that donkey? It's not yours. Where are you going with that donkey?" And the two disciples said, "Oh, well the Lord needs it." They go, "Oh, the Lord. Okay?" They obviously knew who they were talking about.

I can assure you all if I told a couple of you, "Hey, there is this really, really cool truck parked in a certain dealership. It's black with a sunroof. Go get it for me. If they ask you, just tell them BreauX needs it." You ain't coming back with that truck.

But not so with Jesus. Matthew adds this. He says:

"This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said, 'Tell the people of Jerusalem, 'Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt.'" Matthew 21:4-5 (NLT)



The Old Testament prophet Zachariah had predicted that the Messiah, the Deliverer, the Promised One, the Savior of the world would come riding into Jerusalem one day on the back of a donkey. In fact, there are all kinds of centuries old prophecies from Zachariah, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and the book of Psalms unfolding during this ride into Jerusalem. All kinds of signs pointing to Jesus as the long awaited Messiah—the Deliverer.

But very few would make that connection, even John who was one of Jesus' closest friends writing from the perspective of a guy who was in the loop, in the know, an inner circle dude, he writes about these events. He says: "His disciples," we, "didn't understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what has happened and realized that these things has been written about him." John 12:16 (NLT)

Here's John saying, "Even we were clueless in the moment. Coming from the east, riding on a donkey, palm branches filling the streets, Hosannah in the Highest, children singing. We didn't know. We just got swept up in the crowd. We got swept up in the excitement of the day.

"But after He was crucified and raised from the dead, we looked back at all of those old Scriptures and we realized, 'Oh my goodness, yes. This and this and this and this. Everything through the ages pointed to Jesus, our Friend, our Teacher, our Master, our Lord, our God as the long awaited Savior of the world.'" By the way, there are over 300 messianic prophecies in the Old Testament written thousands of years before Jesus shows up on the scene. And catch this. He fulfilled every single one of them. Prophecies specific about where He was going to be born, where He would live, about His family tree, what He would do, what He would say, how He would live, how He would die, how He would live again. Over 300 detailed prophecies about Jesus.

What are the odds? What are the odds of all of those things coming true in one guy? Well, let's check out some odds.

Odds of dying in a car crash: 1 in 93

Odds of dying in a plane crash: 1 in 11,000,000

Odds of getting struck by lightning: 1 in 1,222,000

Odds of winning the lottery: 1 in 292,200,000

Odds of picking the perfect bracket: 1, 120,000,000,000

Odds of eight prophecies coming true in one man: 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power: one in 100,000,000,000,000,000

Odds of 48 prophecies coming true in one man: 1 in 10 to the 57<sup>th</sup> power



The odds of dying in a car crash are one in 93. Those odds go way up on I 65 during a construction zone.

The odds of dying in an airplane crash—one in 11 million.

The odds of getting struck by lightning—one in 1.2 million.

The odds of winning the lottery—one in 292 million.

When March Madness rolls around and you're filling out your bracket just know, even if you have working knowledge of the teams and their seeds, odds of picking a perfect bracket—one in 120 billion.

So the odds of eight prophecies, let's go eight prophecies, detailed prophecies written centuries prior coming true in one guy, you want to know the odds are? One in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power. That one in 10 with seventeen zeros behind it. Increase it from eight prophecies to 48 prophecies, the odds of 48 prophecies coming true in one man—one in 10 to the 57<sup>th</sup> power.

And gang, Jesus fulfilled not just eight, He didn't fulfill just 48, but over 300. As they say on Date Line the DNA is a definite match. I happen to believe that's very compelling evidence.

So, Jesus tells them to go and get this donkey and then Mark says this:  
"When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it."  
Mark 11:7 (NIV)

All of which was a sign of respect that was paid to a king. Now they expected someone who was a king to ride in on what? A big, white stallion. Right? I mean, that's what the crowd expected. And, by the way, someday He will. But kings rode horses to signify war. They road donkeys to signify peace. So, Jesus isn't arriving as a military revolutionary, Jesus isn't coming to take lives, He's coming to give His. And His sacrifice would bring us peace with God.

So, here comes the King of kings, the Creator God, the One who stepped out in the beginning and said, "Let there be light," the great I Am, the Prince of Peace riding in on a donkey's colt affirming His humility and His majesty at the same time.

And lots of people had been following Him. Crowds of people are starting to stream into Jerusalem. They began to gather on a stretch of road about a mile outside of Jerusalem. And when they see Jesus coming, they go crazy. Matthew says this:

"Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Jesus was," catch this, "in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting..." Matthew 21:8-9 (NLT)



Man, what a spectacle. Did you catch that? Jesus, it said He was at the center of the procession. All the people around Him shouting. Man, what a boost to your ego. Right? To be the center of attention, surrounded by applause. To be right in the middle and have everybody cheering.

People are taking off their coats and rolling out this red carpet for His entrance. They are cutting branches off of trees. They are waving them in the air. They are dropping them in the street to add to this royal treatment. This was the kind of stuff only reserved for the conquering king. And everybody was caught up in it. It says the whole city was in an uproar. Mark adds this:

"Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!' 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'" Mark 11:9-19 (NIV)

Hosanna has come to be known in the church world as a way to give praise to God. I mean, some of the songs we actually sing around here actually have that word in the lyrics. But its original meaning was more of a cry which simply meant save us we pray, save us. In fact, in Jesus' day hosanna had become a slogan of the ultimate, nationalist political zealots: Please save us. Give us freedom. We are sick of these Romans.

And when people waved palm branches they were waving a symbol stamped on Jewish coins during a time when the nation was free. So, they were not so much a symbol of peace and love as we usually assume, they were a symbol of Jewish nationalism—a longing for political freedom, a longing for the return of the golden era of King David.

So, when Jesus, this amazing teacher, this prophet, this incredible miracle worker who had just raised Lazarus from the dead shows up riding on the back of a donkey the crowd goes crazy with anticipation. Political hope gets stirred up as high as it has ever been. They could see their liberation from Rome was finally at hand. And what better way than Passover week with lots of support—two million strong. This could be their king. This could be their long awaited deliverer.

So, like fans, they began chanting, "Save us now. Save us now. Save us now. Save us now. Oh, yes. He's finally here. Our Deliverer. Our Conqueror. Our King. But they didn't understand His Kingdom and where this King would lead them. They didn't know that He had come to deliver them from so much more than Roman oppression.



They couldn't see that He had come to conquer sin and death for all people for all time. They didn't realize that on the very day they were supposed to be picking out their Passover lamb for sacrifice, that the spotless Lamb of God was coming down the street to sacrifice His life for their sins.

So, when it becomes apparent later on that week that Jesus was not going to fulfill their hopes and dreams, that He was not the kind of king they anticipated and longed for, that He was not going to be their economic savior, He was not going to be their political messiah, He was not going to be their conquering hero, that same adoring crowd would turn completely against Him. Just a few days later, instead of praising Him, they would cry out, "Crucify Him."

But on this day, on this road, the masses are cheering, they are chanting, they are shouting, they are bowing, they are waving, they are singing, they are applauding. And as Jesus rides in like a king there are tears in His eyes. Guys, Luke records this part of the story. He says:

"But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep." Luke 19:41

As people cried out their political hosanna He cried tears of grief for those people. He foresaw the terrible devastation that was coming to Jerusalem just a few decades down the road. He knew the fickleness of their praise. He knew their distorted views.

He knew that they would have nothing to do with a Deliverer who came to deliver them from sin. A King who would come to establish a different kind of Kingdom, one that was upside down, counter cultural, inside out and would take up residence in the heart of anybody who would humble themselves and believe. So, as they go berserk with praise and adoration, while most people would flex and bask in the applause, while most people would be on a huge ego trip, Jesus cries.

Now, before we get too hard on that crowd, let's be fair and ask ourselves if we were in that crowd that day, that week, what would we have done? You see, we have the benefit of looking back 2,000 years at them. We all know how it turned out. But, honestly, would you and I have been sucked into the mob mentality? Would we have cheered for Him for what He could do for us one day and then have totally written Him off the next?

Would we have been amazed at His ability to bring a man back from the dead and then confused at His inability to save Himself? Would we have been so spiritually blind not to grasp what kind of King He really was, what kind of King we really needed, and what kind of Kingdom He came to establish?



Now, I would like to think that I would have had, as Jesus often said, eyes to see and ears to hear. But just to be honest, I'm not sure. I'm really not sure. But I am sure about this. I've spent a lot of my life just following the crowd, just doing whatever they said to do. I've spent way too much of my life swept up in their acceptance and their approval.

So, I've had to ask myself not only what I would have done if I had been in the crowd that day, but what I would I have done if I were in the shoes of Jesus? You know, being in the center of attention, surrounded by screaming fans, soaking up all of the adoration, would I have chosen just to go with the crowd and give them what they wanted and just bag the plan of God? Again, I'm not sure.

You might remember three years prior, before Jesus started His ministry, He goes into the wilderness to be alone with God. He wants to recenter His heart. And while Jesus is there fasting and praying, Satan shows up.

Any of you all tried fasting? I'm trying to build that discipline more regularly into my life. Historically, I've not been a really great faster. I know that's not a real spiritual thing to admit to, but it's true. One time I did a three-day fast. I was weak. I was hungry. I had a headache. I was dreaming of the Krispy Kreme Hot sign the entire time.

Jesus goes 40 days. Now, He's spiritually strong but He's physically empty. Very hungry. Very weak. And Satan comes and appeals to His flesh. He says, "Hungry, aren't you? Come on, Jesus. Gratify Your appetite. Flex Your power to satisfy Yourself. Man, if You can turn these stones into bread, You could eat. Like, right now.

"And besides that, think about this. You could feed other people too. Because I know You are big in compassion and all of that stuff. There are lots of hungry people around here. Man, You would have them eating out of Your hand. You would be the most popular guy around if You would do that. You know that's what they are looking for. That's the kind of Savior they want. It's the economy, stupid.

"Feed them and they will follow You by the thousands. That's the way politicians work. That's the way dictators rise to power. They certainly don't rise to power by going to a cross. Come on, Jesus. That's just stupid. This is Your chance." And you do know, don't you that Jesus did have the power to turn those stones into bread. He turned water into wine. He fed over 5,000 people with two fish and five biscuits. But at this moment He refused to use His miraculous power to indulge His own appetite or to impress the people. He would wait on God's plan, God's timing, with resolve in the moment.



He says, "I'm not a bread Messiah. I didn't come to be their economic savior. I didn't come to feed their bellies. I came to free their souls."

And besides that, He quotes Deuteronomy 8, from the Old Testament Scripture: "It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

There is something deeper that satisfies a man, something deeper that satisfies a woman. "There is Someone greater that I hunger for and that is My relationship with My Father. And I will humbly feed on His words and not yours."

So, Satan comes to Jesus again. He says, "Okay. Okay. So, it's a no to the turn the stones into bread thing. How about this? All of these kingdoms, all of the possessions, the power, the prestige, all the perks could all be Yours. You could rule all of it if You want to avoid the painful cross, You wouldn't want to do that. Just bow down and worship me."

And the word structure there indicates that he wasn't asking for ongoing allegiance. It was just a one time deal. That's how he starts, isn't it? "Jesus, check it out. Worship me just this once. I mean, what's the big deal about that? It's just one time. And You're all by Yourself. No one would ever know. I can give you all the stuff, all of these kingdoms: the economic kingdom, the political kingdom, the entertainment kingdom they could all be Yours. All You've got to do is do it my way instead of God's way. What do You say?"

Jesus, again, quotes from Deuteronomy, a section known as the Shema where every Hebrew child grew up learning this, including Jesus, who was already in His heart, in His mind. He says:

"It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" Luke 4:8  
"I'm interested in only one Kingdom and that's the eternal Kingdom of God. There is only One who is worthy of My worship. Only One who is worthy of My allegiance and My adoration. And you are certainly not that one."

So, Satan comes to Him from another angle. He says, "You know what You need? Jesus, You need an agent. Let me teach You how to get a crowd. Because You've tried the low-key approach. You've tried that unspectacular manager, stable thing. What did that get You? A few shepherds. You live in a little, bitty hick town. You are doing carpentry and stone mason stuff. The only guy really promoting You is some weird dude out in the desert who eats grasshoppers. So, let me market You. Let me be your publicist."

"Because, honestly, You could stand a little flash. You could use a little makeover. That's what people want. That's what they need. So, just picture this."



What I'm thinking is You could like throw Yourself down off of the apex of the Temple. It's about 100 feet to the bottom of the Kidron Valley. You could do this swan dive thing, then out of nowhere the angels will swoop, because that's what Scripture says."

By the way, Satan knows Scripture. And he knows how to twist it. And he definitely twists Psalm 91 here, "Scripture says they will swoop down and catch You and You will float to the ground. That's what I'm talking about. That is an entrance. You do that and You'll go viral. People will go crazy. They will love You. They will adore You, especially the religious people. And You know that they are the ones who are going to be a really tough sell.

"That's the kind of Messiah they are expecting and longing for anyway. You know they are not going to go with this crucified Savior on a cross thing. You're going to wind up misunderstood, rejected, forsaken, and alone. And who in their right mind would want that? So, why not play to the crowd? Get a billion likes. Get Your name in lights and receive the adoration of the masses. Come on. What do You say, Jesus?"

Well, Jesus knew the rest of that Scripture that Satan twisted and He comes back and says what Scripture really says:

"It says, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Matthew 4:7

That's what it really says. I'm not about to put My Father to some silly swoop down and rescue Me test so My ego can get stroked, where I could feel the applause or acceptance of the masses. I'm already accepted by the One who matters the most. And I have resolved to live My life for His approval and His approval alone. And for Me, that's more than enough."

And with that I believe He gets up and walks out of that battle full of confidence and peace, passion, purpose, and focus. He knew who He was. He knew why He was here. He knew what He wanted to accomplish with His life.

He said, "I am a preach the Good News, release the captives, lay down My life for the sins of the world kind of a Messiah. That's who I am. And that's why I am here. And that is what I am going to do with My life and nothing is going to distract Me from doing what My Father wants Me to do. I'm going to set My face. I'm going to set My face and move toward Jerusalem with an iron will."

Let me ask you, aren't you glad He didn't cave in? Aren't you glad He didn't bail? Aren't you glad He didn't feed His ego, gratify His appetite, play to the crowd, stockpile His portfolio, and short-circuit the eternal plan of God? Gang, Jesus had a choice that day. And He chose you and me.



There is so much I love about Jesus. So much I want and need to learn from Him. But this whole resolve to do life God's way, to not waiver or shrink back, to set Your face and trust the Father and just move toward the pain. Man, that just blows me away.

Because, honestly, we've all got crowds to navigate. Don't we? So, how do you keep your head, how do you keep your focus when the crowd is telling you what to do? How do you keep your mind straight when they are like chanting your name or applauding you or they are praising you or they like you or they re-tweet you or they share you or they follow you? What do you do when they set expectations for you, when they say, "Come on, man. You've got to go this way. If you will do this, then you will be in."

Think about it. Approval ratings and applause definitely sways the decisions of politicians and leaders. Clicks and likes drive social media influencers. The main reason homefield advantage is so huge at a football game is that the applause from adoring fans drives those athletes to another level. The applause of people can be a powerful even an addictive thing.

You've probably seen this before. But I love the straightforwardness of Proverbs 29:25:

"Fearing people is a dangerous," what? "trap, but trusting the Lord means safety." Proverbs 29:25

I think we all fight this fearing and playing to the crowd thing. We think, "Well, I have to do what they want, even if it's wrong. Because if I don't, man. I'll be out. And I really, really, really want to be in."

Listen. You'll never feel accepted. You'll never really feel like you belong. You'll never feel like you're in. I see this all of the time with junior high and high school students. I lived it. Desperately trying to fit in. Whatever it takes to be noticed. Whatever it takes to feel accepted. Whatever it takes to be loved. Whatever it takes to belong. Whatever it takes to feel like you're in is what a lot of us are willing to do.

So, let me just tell you from my own personal experience playing to the crowd, basking in the approval of others will lead you down some dark and destructive roads. It's a life of insecurity and doubt and fear and co-dependency. It will screw up your thinking. It will keep you from becoming God's best version of you. It will derail you off of the unique road God has for you. It's why you've got to set your face. You set your face like Jesus and say, "I'm living my life for an audience of One. I'm already accepted by the One who matters most. And His approval, that's enough for me."



Some of the saddest verses, I think, in the entire Bible are found in John, chapter 12 where it says:

"Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. For they loved human praise more than the praise of God." John 12:42-43 (NLT)

Isn't that sad? And I've been there. I'll bet you have too. Now, to a degree we all care about what people think. It's normal to be liked, admired, respected and such. But when we care more about what other people think or say than what God does, when we start to get our identity from them instead of Him, when we trade in the applause of heaven for the applause of the crowd it's always a bad trade.

When you begin to see yourself as God sees you, when you know what He says about you, when you've begun to place your worth on His approval, to lean into Him for your identity, when you start to grasp His high, wide, deep, unfailing love for you, when you set your face and your resolve to live your life for an audience of One I'm just telling you, it changes everything about your life. Our daughter, Jody, she's taught here before. And she was one of those who, like me, used to play the crowd. She was someone who longed to be in. She really, really struggled with this in high school. And I can't tell you how many sleepless nights her mom and I spent praying for her.

I just remember praying, "God, I can't be with her everywhere she goes, but You can. So, I pray that if she stands at a crossroads on deciding right and wrong, she would know that You are with her and she'll listen to You. And, God, I'm praying for one other thing. Would You help her to be a lousy liar?"

And she was a lousy liar. Her life was sort of coming unraveled like a cheap sweater. It's hard living with one foot in the light and one foot in the darkness and lying to everybody in your life. It's a hard way to live your life.

To make a long story short, she surrendered her life to Jesus Christ and she did a 180 and she set her face down a brand new road that God had marked out for her. And I could not be more proud of her. It is so cool, so cool to see what God is doing with her life.

And since she's been here before some of you know she likes these spoken word pieces. And from the perspective of her dad, someone who has had a front row seat to her transformation, this particular one is one of my favorites she's ever written because I think it might be the very first one that she ever wrote. And I know I've read it over 100 times and it stuck in my heart and in my head. She wrote:



I have wanted to be in. To be in the in crowd, in the loop, in the know, among the proud. Not left out but to be allowed to be in.

I have wanted to be in. Wear clothes that are in style, a trend setter, versatile, just the right cut and the perfect smile.

I have wanted to be in. To be looked at as someone who has much, all the in music right at my touch, all of the latest and greatest stuff and such.  
I have wanted to be in.

But I have felt aggravated, frustrated, unappreciated, slated as someone who is underrated, unimportant, unknown, unseen, average, mediocre, routine, beneath, below, beyond a chance, inconsequential, insignificant.

But Jesus liked people like me. He took notice of a blind man and made him see, saw a locked up kid and set him free, told little Zacheus come out of that tree. Felt it when a desperate woman touched His clothes, knelt beside a dead girl and up she woke, hung out with the down and out and broke, offered hope to the forgotten which just a word that He spoke.

Touched a man with leprosy who others would mock, touched the mouths of the mute and at once they could talk, forgave a woman at the well who was a laughingstock, came to lowly shepherds who smelled like their flock. In the company of sinners is where He would eat, defended an adulterer making her accusers retreat, make followers out of men who were crooked cheats, let the tears of a prostitute anoint His feet. And suddenly, dramatically, miraculously, undeniably they were in.

In His story. In His truth. In His grace. In His purpose. In His eyes, someone great. I have wanted to be in. And since the day I met with Him He took all that I had been, my fear, my shame, my sin and rewrote my story with the stroke of His pen, welcomed me home in spite of all I'd been, and changed my life by letting me in.

Our God is greater than the past that drowned me, stronger than those chains that bound me, higher than the shame that found me. There is no one like Him. None like Him.

See, Jesus knew He was already in with the Father. He knew not to listen to opinion polls and let the applause of people lead His life. Jesus refused to be a celebrity. He refused to do what the crowd wanted Him to do. He refused to be what the crowd wanted Him to be. So, He rides into Jerusalem knowing that in days He'd be hanging outside its walls.



He knew He was riding toward rejection. He knew He was riding toward betrayal. He knew He was riding toward unspeakable humiliation and excruciating pain. He knew but He rode anyway. He rode anyway. He rejected fickle popularity and fake power because He had set His face toward Jerusalem. He had set His heart toward us. He chose to stay on that dark and scary road that God had marked out for Him.

I think one of the reasons He rode into Jerusalem that day with tears in His eyes is He saw your face, saw my face. He saw our desperate need for a Savior. He rode in thinking, "I am a King, but I'm a King on a cross. And no one takes My life from Me. I'm going to voluntarily lay it down so that someday everybody could be in."

If you will come to Him as you are, and humble yourself, invite Him into your life, if you will say hosanna, please save me from me, if you will embrace His love, His forgiveness, if you will trust in His leadership and follow Him, you'll find acceptance and approval and the security you've been longing for your entire life.

I just invite you to bow your heads for a moment. And right now, it could happen right now, you could be in. right now say, "Jesus Christ, I need forgiveness. I've been going down a dark and scary road because I chose to go down a dark and scary road. It's a road that has been far away from light, far away from You.

"I want to turn around. I want to do a 180. I want to repent of that direction and start walking toward You. I don't know what I'm doing but I'm just walking toward You. I'm just praying that I would find love and acceptance and forgiveness from You. I need it. So, I humble myself right now. I bow my knee to Your leadership and say, "You take me wherever You want to take me." If you pray a prayer like that, if that's your heart's desire, He's been longing for you to say those words. So, say those words today.

Father, thank You that You have a longing ache within You for us to come home. And Jesus You share that longing with the Father. So much so, You set Your face and You did what nobody else would have done. Nobody. What nobody else could do. Thank You for being a perfect sacrifice that bought us peace with God.

Jesus, I thank You for what we've been learning about You through walking through the book of Mark. It's kind of weird, honestly, that we're talking about this story today in the fall. We normally talk about it around Easter, but it's not just an Easter story. It's a story of someone who loved us so much and He knew what He was walking into but He did it anyway. So, thank You, thank You, thank You. I pray that this story would be in our hearts all week long and for the rest of our lives. I pray it in Your name: Amen.

