

August 9, 2020 Notes

The Gospel of Luke: Settled in Spirit | Offended by Grace
Aaron Brockett | Luke 4:14-30



Alright, well what's up Traders Point family? I want to welcome everyone joining us at Traders Point Church online, wherever you may be tuning in from around the world. We have some of our team right here in the room. So, put your hands together, both in the room and online. We're really glad to have you join us.

And, I just can't say it enough. I can't wait for us to be able to physically gather again as a church at all of our campuses. I promise you that day is coming soon. I just wanted to update you and let you know that we are just continuing to monitor and to plan, and especially pray.

There is just no playbook for this. I would covet your prayers for wisdom and guidance through this. I do want you to know that we will make a decision and have something more to share with you after Labor Day—as to what that is. But in the meantime, we are gathering together as a church outside.

In fact, this Wednesday at our campuses we are having an outside worship time. So, please do not miss that. You can get all that information at the website or on the campus Facebook pages.

I am so proud of our team and everybody who calls Traders Point home for the way we are leaning in during this time. I just want to encourage you in that. I think we need to keep encouraging each other during these challenging days.

Don't watch the service alone, watch it with someone else. Get together with your Life Group or some other families. Attend a watch party; better yet host a watch party. Be a leader during this time, because we are the church right where we are.

And I really do believe that God is strengthening us during this time, both individually in our lives and as a church family. In my quiet time this past week, he reminded me of something I've sort of forgotten about.

I remember when I turned 16, I went right to the DMV and got my driver's license that very day. I was so excited. My birthday is in April, which meant I learned to drive in bad weather. I learned to drive in November through February. It was like the sleet, the rain, the snow, and the ice. It was really challenging and hard.

And then something amazing happened. Once I got my driver's license in April, I became an amazing driver. And it wasn't so much that I had become a great driver, but it was the weather change. All of the sudden the environment was different. It was as if God, by his Spirit, said, "Hey, Aaron, you're learning to drive in a storm."

Right now, for you individually, you are learning some things in a storm. Maybe you're learning how to communicate better with your spouse in a storm. You're learning to be a better parent in a storm. As a church family we are learning how to be on mission and to lead people to Jesus. It's what we do during a storm.

And God promises that the storm will lift. And it will. And when it does, we're going to eat up some pavement. We're going to head down the road. Does anybody agree with me? Put your hands together in the chat, in the room you are watching from.

I just want to encourage you. During this season we are going to the gospel of Luke for that encouragement. So, if you have a Bible or a device with a Bible on it, go ahead and meet me in chapter 4.

Last week we started this series. We are calling it *Settled in Spirit*. I'll tell you why in a minute. There are four biographies of the life and the ministry of Jesus that start our New Testament. So, we don't just have one account of Jesus' life and ministry, there are four of them.

The reason we have four, maybe the easiest way I can explain it, if you were hiring someone in your business or at work, instead of talking to one reference if you talk to three or four you're going to get to know that person better.

If you want to have a special night out for dinner, instead of just consulting one yelp review, you look at three or four. Then you are going to have a better understanding of which restaurant to go to.

Let me tell you, Jesus is infinitely better than a good hire or a great meal. And God wants us to know Jesus. In his goodness and his grace, God doesn't want to be vague. God doesn't want to be misunderstood.

In fact, Jesus would say in John 14:7, "If you know me, then you know God the Father."

That's an astounding statement. Jesus says, "If you want to know what God is like, if you want to know what God cares about, if you want to know how God feels about all kinds of people then just look to my life and the ministry."

Just so we have an adequate account of it, he didn't just give us one biography, but four. And all of them have a unique perspective. They are writing to a certain group of people, so we can understand Jesus better.

I love Luke's Gospel, because he is writing primarily with the person who feels like an outsider. He has them in mind as he is writing his gospel. We saw this last week.

Luke is a physician, which meant he is well educated. He takes his education, and he applies it to what he writes about Jesus. He is writing with a friend in mind, a guy named Theophilus, who is a fellow Greek. Luke is the only Greek author in the New Testament. And he says to Theophilus, "I've taken the time to write out an orderly account so that you might come to believe."

I'd love to know more about that relationship, but I think we can fill in the blanks to see that Theophilus was a guy who had some questions. Theophilus was somebody who maybe was trying to recover from some bad experiences. Theophilus wondered if he would be accepted, as an outsider. He felt uncertain about his future.

Luke says, "I've taken the time to write about Jesus so that your spirit might be settled." I don't know about you, but I need that. I think all of us are navigating through a year when we feel unsettled and uncertain about the future. Many of us, we feel like outsiders for whatever reason.

Maybe it's due to your ethnicity or your skin color. You feel like, "Will I be accepted there?"

Maybe it's due to your marital status. Maybe your spouse walked out on you. You fought for the marriage, but they still left you. And you were rejected, maybe by a group of Christians or a church, because of that unwanted divorce.

Maybe you grew up in a legalistic church environment, and when you graduated from high school, you were like, "See ya, I'm never coming back into that environment," and you just wonder if you'll be accepted in that.

Maybe you've just got some questions about an unknown future.

Then Luke is the Gospel for you.

And my prayer is that you would come to know that real Jesus. My prayer is that you would not become more religious, but that you would become more relational with the God who loves you and laid everything on the line for you.

Last week we left off in Luke 4, where Jesus spends 40 days and nights in the desert known as The Devastation, which is terrifying. And he squares off with Satan. And Satan is trying to tempt him, to derail the whole thing before Jesus can even get started.

And it's a gift that Luke writes this down for us in Luke 4, because he shows us Satan's play book. It's the same play he keeps running over and over again through the years. And Jesus shows us how to stand up under it.

And he emerges out of the desert. In Luke 4 it says, "...filled with the power of the Holy Spirit." And then Jesus goes to his home town, his own region. He grew up in Nazareth. The region was known as Galilee.

This first interaction we're going to see with Jesus in a group of people who, for lack of a better term, were known as insiders. They were Jewish, they were from Israel, and they were from the family of God.

Jesus is going to communicate something to them that is going to set the whole tone of his ministry. It's ultimately what will crucify him on a cross. And it is the very heartbeat of God even to this day.

So, we pick it up in verse 14 of chapter 4.

"Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone."

Please understand this is Jesus' home church. This is where he would have played baseball games and gone to summer camp. And, everybody would have known who he was.

When he came back into town, people would have been like, "Hey, wait a second. Isn't that Mary and Joe's boy? My, how he has grown. We're been hearing some reports about some of the things he's been doing and saying, particularly in Capernaum."

Jesus was a home-town celebrity in a small town. Not very many well-known people had grown up in Nazareth, so this was a big deal when he came back.

I don't know if any of you have ever had anybody from the home town you grew up in who maybe went on to do bigger and better things—maybe they became kind of a celebrity in some fashion, well-known in some way.

I grew up in a small town in Joplin, Missouri. Not very many people who grew up there went on to do bigger and better things. But, there was one individual, in particular, who went on to become relatively well-known. I actually went to junior high with him.

So, we are the same age. His name is Jamie. Jamie used to talk about go karts all the time. We would go to the local go kart track just for fun. Jamie would never come out and say, "This is for fun," because he was in the back in the professional oval with the helmet and body suit, doing time trials.

He took it really seriously. We all gave him a hard time about it. We would joke around with him about it. I think the reason why, looking back, is we were jealous. That's really what it was. We wanted to be able to do that too, but none of us had the opportunity.

And I sort of lost track of Jamie after junior high. We went to different high schools. We grew up in the same town, but went to different high schools. Five or six years after high school graduation, I'm on a road trip and I pull over to a gas station late at night, walk in, go back to the cooler to get something to drink.

I came around the corner and there was a full-size cutout poster of NASCAR driver Jamie McMurray. He has since retired. Some of you might recognize that name. He is sitting there with his helmet, you know he was sponsored by Bud Light, and he is giving a big, thumbs up. And I'm standing there with my slushy at midnight going, "What am I doing with my life?"

That's Jamie, who we used to give a hard time to for racing go karts. Now he's gone on to do bigger and better things. I've got to tell you, right then and there I became a fan boy. I started following Jamie on social media. I watch all the NASCAR races. I figured out a way to work that into almost every conversation, that I knew Jamie McMurray. He wasn't even that big of a star, but big for Joplin.

And in the same way, Jesus came back to Nazareth, and immediately all of these people are fan boys. Like, "Hey J.C., do you remember the time we hung out that one summer? Can I get a selfie with you?"

These people are excited about Jesus, but for all the wrong reasons, primarily for what they can get out of it. And their excitement isn't going to last long. It goes on in verse 16.

"When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went," and I want you to see this, *"as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures."*

I just want to point this out really quickly. Jesus grew up in church. Jesus grew up attending church. I never thought about that until this last week. Could you just imagine being from Jesus' home church? Better than that, could you imagine being the teacher who taught Jesus in Kids' Ministry, how intimidating that might have been?

Like Jesus is over there in the corner multiplying the Goldfish and Kool-Aid? Could you imagine there would be so many times when he was growing up that he said, "This was a really bad sermon. That's not true. I could totally run circles around you."?

That would be so intimidating, but what I want to point out really quickly is that Jesus had a home church and it was imperfect. But he went as usual. The Son of God went to church and saw value in it, even though it was an imperfect gathering.

If Jesus thought it was important, you and I need to be there too. Not necessarily for what we get out of it, but for what we contribute to it. God actually uses the lives of other imperfect people to make us grow. But that's a different sermon.

Verse 17 says this:

"The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

'The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come.'"

So, they knew that Jesus had been teaching. Hometown boy comes back, and they want to hear from him. So, somebody hands him a scroll. The Bible at the time, and they obviously didn't have a New Testament because it was being written at this time, was the Old Testament.

And it wasn't like in a paper Bible like the ones we have with chapters and verses. Chapters and verses are not inspired, by the way, they were added later on to help us navigate. Not only that, maybe you don't even have a paper Bible, we just use the Bible digitally. You just type in or tell Siri where to take you, and it just automatically goes to the Bible passage you want to look at.

But, at the time, the Bible was just a big, giant scroll. It shows how well Jesus knew the word of God. He just went right to the place where he wanted to read. And he reads out of the prophet Isaiah, which contains the best summary of the life and the ministry of Jesus in the Old Testament.

So much so that Isaiah is often referred to as the fifth Gospel, because Isaiah is so clear about who Jesus is and what he has come to do, get this, 700 years in advance of when Jesus would be born. And Jesus is quoting from the prophet Isaiah, and he says, "The Messiah has come to liberate four kinds of people."

We all fit into these categories in one way or another. He says they are the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. And then he references the year of the Lord's favor. It's a reference to something called the year of jubilee. If you're not familiar with it, it's an incredible thing.

Every 50 years there was a reset. Every 50 years the people got to take a mulligan, a do-over, where captives were set free, debts were cancelled, and property that was lost got returned. It was a year where everyone got a clean start.

And my vote is that we get another one of those this year. Can't we all just kind of say, "Time out? Let's just get a re-do on 2020?"

And Jesus references this year of jubilee. It was as amazing as it sounds. And then in verse 20 it says this.

"He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. 'The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!'"

Wow. In fact, this is the first mic drop moment in recorded history. There has not been a prophetic word spoken in 400 years at this point, and Jesus is talking about something that Isaiah prophesied 700 years before.

And he says, “You know all that stuff Isaiah talked about? That person who would come for the poor, the oppressed, and the captives? You’re looking at him. I am right here. I have come to fulfill the very promises that God gave 700 years ago.

And in verse 22 it says:

“Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed by the gracious words that came from his lips.” And I think primarily they thought, much as Jesus’ disciples often thought, that Jesus was talking about an earthly kingdom, that he was talking about something he was going to immediately, usher in for their immediate benefit.

And, since they were from Nazareth, his home town, they were likely going to be the very first recipients of this social and economic revolution. That’s why they were initially excited. But that excitement isn’t going to last long. Apparently there were at least one or two people in the crowd who began to question it. That’s usually all it takes.

Usually all it takes is a little bit of cynicism, a little bit of division, and it will spread faster than any virus. Somebody poses this question that other people jump onto:

“‘How can this be?’ they asked. ‘Isn’t this Joseph’s son?’” Translation—Jesus grew up in a carpenter’s shop. He’s not an heir to a kingdom.

“Jesus, you’re a nice guy and all. But you’re just a regular guy. Like, take it from us. We grew up down the street from you. Jesus, you were in our home room class. You’re a good guy, but being a fulfillment of a 700-year-old prophecy. That just seems like quite a leap.”

And it was just that little bit of doubt coming from the home town crowd that just sets everything else in motion. Notice Jesus’ response in verse 23. As you read it, you almost get the sense that Jesus takes this sigh of exasperation.

“Then he said, ‘You will undoubtedly quote me this proverb: “Physician, heal yourself”—meaning, ‘Do miracles here in your hometown like those you did in Capernaum.’ But I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his own hometown.”

What is that supposed to mean? Well, in those days, as you might imagine, their medical advances hadn’t gone very far. So, a lot of people were quite skeptical of physicians.

So, if a physician offered some sort of a remedy, they would often say to that physician, “Prove yourself. You take it first, and we’ll see what happens. You drink it first. You inject it first. And we’ll see if you grow a third eye or something. If you’re okay, we’ll take it.”

It was almost this idea that they had to prove it before they would believe it. That is what Jesus is referencing here. As far as they were concerned, Jesus was just an heir to a carpenter shop, not the Kingdom of God.

And then Jesus launches into a passage. The next verses sound a little confusing, but I’m going to unpack it for us. So, hang with me. But it is the very heartbeat of God, and we oftentimes miss it. Jesus responds in a very unusual way. Look at verse 25.

“Certainly there were many needy widows in Israel,” and note that Israel had a home team advantage. This was the essence of God’s people, *“In Elijah’s time, when the heavens were*

closed for three and a half years, and a severe famine devastated the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them. He was sent instead to a foreigner—a widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon. And many in Israel had leprosy in the time of the prophet Elisha, but the only one healed was Naaman, a Syrian.”

To which you have to go, “Jesus, what in the world are you talking about?” It seems like Jesus is taking a dramatic turn into an area where you are like, “I don’t understand what he is talking about here.”

So, let me break it down. What Jesus just did here is give two examples of some of the oldest Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha. They were like the Michael Jordan and the LeBron James of the Old Testament. They were the best prophets.

And prophets lived a really rough life. Why? Well, they were oftentimes saying things to people that people didn’t want to hear. And they oftentimes suffered from depression due to frequent rejection. They were booed off stage a lot. They often went without honor in their home towns.

And Jesus is saying God used these two guys to share his grace with two outsiders, people who didn’t belong to the religious establishment, people who were not from Israel. Oh, there were lots of widows in Israel, but God chose Elijah to go to a foreign land. Oh, there were lots of lepers in Israel, but God chose Elisha to go to a leper in a foreign land.

And he makes this point to stress that God’s grace can reach anyone. If I could put it this way, I would say this: Jesus is stressing that his grace wasn’t just for those in Israel (aka “church people”) but for anyone and everyone who is willing to come to him in faith.

Please never forget that. If we forget that, we ruin everything. If we forget that, this just turns into toxic, self-righteous religion. Jesus is willing to come to anyone and everyone. And he references this widow.

Well, who is she? Her story is found in 1 Kings 17. You can read it later today, if you’d like. I’d encourage you to. It’s an amazing story.

There is this famine in the land. Everyone is suffering, including the prophet Elijah. And God says to him, “Hey listen, why don’t you go to this foreign land,” it was actually the land where they worshiped Baal, an arch-enemy of God, “...and there is a widow there. She has a little son, and she’ll give you something to eat.”

And Elijah goes to this widow and he says, “God sent me to you,” which, by the way, she didn’t acknowledge God, she didn’t worship God, she worshipped Baal. And he said, “God told me to come to you, and that you may have something to eat for me.”

Initially, her response wasn’t good. Initially, her response was, “I don’t have anything. I’m a widow. You should be feeding me. Why don’t you tell your God to provide for you?”

And he’s like, “God sent me to you.”

He said, “Listen, I get why you might be skeptical, but don’t be afraid. Bake a cake, give me some, and feed you and your son. And I promise you this—he says this in verse 14, “God will make sure that the flour and the oil will not run out until the end of the famine.” Amazingly, this widow, she does it.

Now why does Jesus give this example? Partly because she is an outsider, somebody you would least expect God to use, but primarily it was this. And this is an important lesson for us:

She had to believe God's promise before she saw God's provision.

And I'm just saying that somebody today needs to hear that. I know I do. Because often times we get it reversed. We want to see God provide, and then we'll believe his promise. "He came through for me."

God says, "I want you to believe my promise before I give you my provision."

Why does it work this way? Because God wants your relationship, he doesn't want you to just turn this into an equation. And every relationship, every friendship, the relationship with your spouse, requires trust first. You can't say, "Well, prove it." You've got to take some sort of a risk.

And God says, "Trust my promise, and then just watch me provide." We see this play out in the life of this widow.

The same thing is true with the story of Naaman, the leper. God just reinforces the exact same truth.

Naaman was a commander in the army of one of Israel's most despised enemies. Unlike the widow who was poor, Naaman was wealthy. But he was just as needy. He has a physical ailment. He's got this skin disorder, leprosy, and he goes to Elisha, travels from Syria, and Elisha says, "Why don't you dip yourself in the Jordan River seven times?"

It seems like kind of an unusual thing to do. Why couldn't he just dip once? Why couldn't he just dip four times? Why not eight times—would that be one too many? Why seven?

He says, "Dip seven times," and Naaman initially is skeptical. He says, "That sounds ridiculous." But thankfully he has a group of friends around him who speak into his life. They pull him aside and say, "Naaman, you've come all this way. What have you got to lose? Why don't you just try it and see?"

And he does, and he is actually healed. This is what I want you to see:

His faith was flimsy, but it was enough.

And I want you to know that your faith may be flimsy, but it is always enough when you place your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. I would even go as far as to say if your faith doesn't feel flimsy, you're probably doing it wrong.

If your faith feels rock-solid and you're like, "I've got all the confidence in the world," I would go, "What exactly do you have confidence in?"

That's exactly what faith is. It's trusting God's promise before his provision. And we are completely dependent on God's grace. We are leaning all of our weight against Jesus, not just some of it. We don't bring anything to the table.

So, Jesus gives these two examples here. When the insiders, the church people from Nazareth, hear this, their admiration for Jesus quickly turns into exasperation. And the whole tone in the room changes. Check it out in verse 23:

"When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious." That's just heartbreaking. Jesus just gave two examples of two needy people who felt like outsiders, how they received the touch of the grace of God in their lives. And the response from the church people was they were furious?

“Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff, but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.”

I would love to know how that worked. Luke doesn't give the details of how, but how did Jesus do that? Did he just kind of slide on through? Did he moonwalk out of there? Did he levitate? I'm going to ask Luke one day. How did Jesus do that?

But they were furious at him, and they wanted to throw him off the side of the cliff. You see, Jesus just told them something they did want to hear, but it was truth. When you hear something that is truth that you don't want to hear, the result of that is conviction.

And there are only two responses to conviction. You can either be cut to the heart, or you will harden your heart. And if you're cut to the heart, that is a pivotal moment in your life.

You see, you can be cut to the heart with conviction. Have you ever had a moment when you felt like you were the only person in the room, and the preacher or teacher is speaking directly to you? And it just hits you like a Mack truck. And it's not fun. But you receive it in humility. And God will always work with that.

Or you can harden your heart. You end up lashing back out, or you end up, “Not me,” or you make an excuse and continue to harden your heart even further.

When I first started preaching about 25 years ago, I had a mentor pull me aside and say, “Aaron, are you sure you want to preach?” I was like, “I think so.” He said, “Make sure, because preaching is dangerous business.”

“What do you mean?”

He was like, “Every time you stand up, if you are declaring truth from God's word, it's as if you are throwing yourself into oncoming traffic weekly. There are people who may not like it.”

You know what? Looking back all these years later, he is right. It is amazing to me at times I can preach a message out of God's Word and get dramatically different responses from people.

There will be email and letters from people that cut to the heart. They will say, “It was not easy for me to hear that. It was uncomfortable. And I even got angry a couple times. And then God hit me like a Mack truck, and it was the turning point in my life. Thank you for saying the hard truth.”

For the exact same message, I'll get another email. “How could you? How could you say that?” I've never had anybody threaten to throw me off the side of a cliff. But the year is not over. So, this might be the year that might happen.

I just want to challenge you and encourage you that, if you're always liking what you hear in a message from God's Word, maybe you're hearing it wrong. Because God wants to say some things that make us uncomfortable, but it's for our good.

And this crowd wants to throw Jesus off the side of a cliff for what he just said. Why in the world would they want to do that? They resented the implication that outsiders would receive something so easily that they themselves, as insiders, did not have the faith to receive.

Let me say it this way:

They were offended by the idea that God would extend grace to people who didn't deserve it.

And many of us still get offended by that. Maybe we don't say it in so many words, but it may come across in our behavior, our actions, the way we conduct ourselves on social media.

What makes grace grace is that none of us deserve it. That's why it's called grace. We don't bring anything to the table. And grace uses its power, both to engage people and to transform lives. When we forget that... It sours when we forget we are unworthy. The ground at the foot of the cross is level.

Sadly, as far as we know, when Jesus says this to the home town crowd at Nazareth it is the last time he will visit there. We don't have any recorded history of Jesus ever going back to Nazareth. Even to this day Nazareth, while it is still highly religious, it is not very receptive to Jesus. That should be a warning to the rest of us.

So, what's the application? I've got two big application points for you. Here is the first one, if you want to write it down, take a picture, and talk about it in your Life groups.

Jesus makes his grace available to everyone by faith. Therefore, don't make it more complicated for yourself than it needs to be.

And as a pastor, this is one of the things I've seen over and over again through the years. People have a tendency to make it more difficult than it really needs to be. They feel like they need to know more. They feel like they need to get their act cleaned up first. They feel like they need to get a few things in order, and then they'll come to God at the right time.

God wants you to come just as you are, because it is not based upon what you do, or even what you know. You only need to know one thing. God saves you by his grace. And I'm putting all of my weight on Jesus. It's his finished work on the cross, not anything I bring to the table. It's not 90-10. It's not even 50-50. It's 100. It's all on Jesus.

I remember vividly when the lightbulb came on for me when I was growing up. I kind of grew up in a church environment where you would say, "You're saved by grace," and I didn't know what that meant. "Well, yeah, but I've still got to go to church. I've got to act right, believe, and then God will accept me based upon my behavior."

I was kind of functioning that way. And I was headed toward either becoming a self-righteous Pharisee, or I was headed toward walking away from God altogether once I graduated.

I'll never forget my senior year of high school. My chemistry teacher was named Mr. Hollingsworth. We had this big chemistry test coming up. We all knew it was going to be really, really hard. It was going to be a big part of our grade.

Mr. Hollingsworth had kind of been hammering it up for a couple of weeks. "You guys better get ready. This is going to be a big test."

The day comes, and he hands it out and gives us this one set of instructions. I want you to put your pens on the desk. Do not answer any questions until you have read every single question in the test. And then at the very end, there are some instructions. Then you can start the test.

This was a little bit unusual. I started reading through the test. About three or four questions in I realized I was in trouble. This was like PhD level chemistry. There were questions where I didn't even understand the question, let alone how to answer it.

And I'm reading down through it and getting this sick feeling in my stomach. I knew this was going to be a big part of my grade. I was like, "I am in so much trouble."

By the end of reading through the test, I was like, "I don't know how to begin with any of this," and I got down to the very end and there were these instructions from Mr. Hollingsworth.

"You can try and get an A by taking this test or you can just put your name on it and automatically receive an A." –Mr. Hollingsworth

Now some of you are like, "What kind of school did you go to?" That's a valid question. Others are like, "This explains a lot."

And I've got to tell you, I didn't hang around long enough to see if he was joking. I was like, "Sweet. Aaron Brockett, making sure I spelled it right." I got up, turned it in, and I was out of there. Most of the rest of the class did as well.

But two people didn't. The first was a guy named Patrick. Now Patrick was a nice kid, but let's just say that he was not the sharpest tool in the shed. And Patrick was kind of day-dreaming when Mr. Hollingsworth gave us instructions. So, immediately he starts trying to answer every question.

There is obviously no way that he can. It didn't even dawn on him that everybody else had left the room. He was still trying to answer all the questions, do everything he could. He flunked the test.

And then, there was Mikayla. Mikayla was the class valedictorian. She had the highest GPA. She was headed toward a full-ride scholarship to a division 1 school. She was a Brainiac. And Mikayla was so upset at this, because she had spent so much time studying. She was not just going to get an A by putting her name on the test.

She was like, "What kind of teacher does that? What kind of teacher gives away an A for nothing?" So, she stayed and she took the test on principle. She was going to earn her grade. And she stayed there, and answered every question. Annoyingly, Mikayla got an A-, but she could have gotten an A.

Today, I believe there are generally three kinds of people:

UNAWARE of God's grace.

Maybe you're a little bit like Patrick, and just kind of taking the test. And you really desperately want to be loved and valued; you're constantly searching for that in a new job and a new relationship, a new pursuit. You're trying to be good enough. You're trying to be religious enough; you're trying to be spiritual enough for God. You're trying to prove yourself, but it often feels like you're flunking.

EARN God's grace.

Maybe you're a lot like Mikayla, and all of this grace stuff kind of ruins the system you've been living by. If God loves and accepts you by grace, well now what are you supposed to do?

It seems unfair. There's got to be something more. It almost seems like a license for others to live their lives as they want, and you don't want that. You don't like handouts. You like feeling validated by comparing your best moments with other people's worst moments. We're trying to earn our status.

What I would like you to do, regardless of which of those categories you find yourself in, is to find freedom today and to just simply receive God's grace. Don't be unaware of it, don't try to earn it, but just simply receive it.

RECIEVE God's grace.

Recognize and claim that without Jesus you and I bring nothing to the table. We are poor, captive, blind, and oppressed. Now, don't be offended by that. Be convicted by it for sure. But don't be offended by it. Are you sincere? Of course, you are sincere. Do you have good in you? Of course, you have good in you. You've been created in the image of your heavenly Father.

Now see him, and recognize what he's done for you and how much he loves you. You lay it on the line and say, "Jesus, I want to do this with you, not apart from you."

And you just sign your name to the test in faith. And Jesus says, "Come on in. You're part of the family." At this point, because I know I'll get the emails, I'll back it up by Scripture. I'm glad you asked.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God..." Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)

So, let me leave you with this last application point. This may be the most important for those of us who might be "insiders."

Jesus makes His grace available to everyone by faith. Therefore, don't make it more difficult for others than it needs to be.

Can you have personal convictions? Absolutely. Just don't let those become barriers to others receiving his grace, because life change happens when you come to Jesus, not before.

Do you have standards of personal holiness? Well, absolutely, and those are great things to help you grow in your faith. But realize that I didn't expect my kids, as they came in as infants in the world, to be fully mature. No, I walk with them into maturity, and we do the same thing when it comes to everyone and anyone.

I'll never forget my senior year of high school. The town right outside of where I grew up is known as Webb City, Missouri. They have an amazing football team. They have for decades. They win all these Missouri state championships—if you've ever seen Friday Night Lights, it's essentially Webb City football.

A little tidbit for you, our very own Landon Rose, our worship leader, is from Webb City. He played on their football team. You can tell. But I'm a little bit older than Landon. When I was in high school, that team was really special. They had several guys who went on to play division 1 football, a couple of them in the NFL.

And one of the team leaders, his name was Dusty Frizzell. Dusty and I were the same age, had very little in common, Dusty was notorious. We knew him all over the region. Dusty was a fireball of an athlete. He was a wild man. He was a partier. He was super-cool. Everybody wanted to be like him.

Usually, when I would see him I would never look him in the eye, because I didn't want to draw any attention from him. I didn't want to be picked on by him. So, I just kind of kept my distance.

We graduated high school, and I enrolled in a small Bible college there in town. I stayed in town to go to Bible College. I'll never forget, my very first day of class I walked in. I got there a little late, the room was packed, and there was only one empty seat on the front row.

I walked in and right next to me was Dusty Frizzell. And I was totally shocked, because everybody knew he was supposed to go play college football. And I was so confused. "What is he doing in Bible College?" I was afraid to ask him, because I thought, "This has got to be some practical joke, and I don't want to be the butt of his joke." I'm trying to look straight ahead.

And after class, he just kind of nudged me and was like, "Hey man, my name is Dusty." And I could just tell there was something totally different about him. And I was like, "I know who you are. My name is Aaron."

Over the course of the next few weeks, Dusty and I sat together in class. We would get together on occasion. Dusty shared with me a story. Right after high school graduation he was partying all summer. He said he hit rock bottom, hung over and high. He had this dramatic conversion experience with a small group of friends. They were reading the Book of Romans.

It was this amazing thing. During the middle of the night he gave his life to Christ, and his dad baptized him in their bathtub. And Dusty said, "Upon my conversion, I felt immediately called into ministry."

He walked away from the football scholarship and enrolled in that small Bible College in town. Dusty and I became friends. We hung out all through the four years of college. Dusty is now a student pastor in a large church in the Los Angeles area.

He is one of the most passionate communicators I have ever heard, and he has impacted the lives of thousands, and thousands, and thousands of students. Not too long ago I got a text message from him.

He said, "Hey Brockett, I was just thinking, doing some reflecting. Today marks the 25th anniversary of when I came to know Jesus." He said, "God's just been kind of recalling some of those old memories, and I was so intimidated to enroll in Bible College because I was a brand-new baby Christian. I didn't feel worthy."

He said, "I knew that a number of you knew who I was, and I thought you would think I was a fraud. I thought you would think I was insincere—just give it enough time and he'll fall away." And he was like, "You were one of the first people to just befriend me, and accept me as I was. Thank you."

I've got to tell you I didn't deserve it. I thought, "If you only knew what had run through my head." I'm like, "God, thank you that you gave me just a flimsy enough faith to encourage him and to fan into the flame what you had already started in his life."

I just want to leave you with this today.

If you call yourself a Christ follower, would you please represent him well? Right now, in the divided world we are in, there is a Dusty Frizzell in your life somewhere who is watching you, looking to you, wondering if you're going to accept and receive him.

Don't just tell him about God's grace, show him. Live it out. Right now, we are living in some of the most divisive times in our lifetime, and the world is watching how Christ followers conduct themselves, both in-person and online, and on social media.

The things we say, the things we re-post, the fears that we perpetuate, right now is the time for us to represent the grace of Jesus that is available to anyone and everyone. When the world is at its darkest, that's when we should shine the light the brightest. Amen?

Finally, if you are here today, watching in your car, your living room, in your backyard, replaying this during the week, and you're like, "I've always felt like an outsider. I've always wondered if I would be accepted and received," can I just say this to you right now? You are welcomed.

And God's grace is enough to reach you wherever and whoever you are. Today, if you want to respond you can simply go to tpcc.org/Jesus, and we would love to just meet you right where you are, no judgement, and help you walk through your next steps in your spiritual journey.

What I want to ask us all to do, within the room and online, would you just stand to your feet as I pray. Then we're going to worship together just one more time.

Father, we come to you today. I thank you for your grace that is available to anyone and everyone. May we never forget that, God. May we continue to lean into it, and may we continue to give it to as many people as possible.

God, if there is somebody here today who has placed his faith and trust in you, we celebrate that with him today. We thank you, God, for your goodness and your grace. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.