
Alright, well what's up Traders Point family? Those of you in the room and those of you online, so good to see everybody today. And I just want to welcome you wherever you may be joining us from.

And, if you have not heard the news, we are regathering as a church in just a few short weeks on Sunday, September 20th. We're really fired up about that. I'm looking forward to it.

You can actually go to this link right here:

tpcc.org/regathering

and get all of the updated information on our plan for September 20th. And I just want to encourage you, to just be praying toward that date and beyond. Our team is working really, really hard to create a safe yet exciting, meaningful experience on all four of our campuses. And we've really thought through everything.

And I want to encourage you to jump on to a serve team. If you've served before, love to have you back. Never served in our church before, this would be the perfect time to jump in.

This is going to be an all hands on deck kind of a thing, because we want to be able to greet people who, perhaps, have never been to any one of our campuses, physically, before so that they can experience the love of Jesus.

I also want to say that there may be a number of you who are not ready to come back, or maybe you're not able to come back for a number of reasons. Maybe you're in a high-risk category, maybe you're just not comfortable with it yet, maybe you don't live in Indy. And that would be a long commute. I just want you to know that we totally understand that, we are for you, and Traders Point Online will continue to be there.

I just want to encourage you to engage. That's the biggest thing. Engage, get into a watch party, host a watch party, get into a group. We'd love to help you along your spiritual journey.

I don't know how many of you tuned in last weekend to the Indy 500. If you live in Indy it's kind of a big deal. It's a big race, right? Anybody watch the Indianapolis 500? I did. I watch it every year. I love the race. I love the tradition behind it, what it means to our city.

Obviously, it was somewhat unusual this year because they ran it for the first time in its history without fans. And I know that that was a bit disorienting for the drivers and the teams. But hats off to them, because they put on a great show for us even though there were no fans at the track.

And there was some great driving going on. Now, granted, they ended the race under a yellow, which is kind of a bummer, but it's 2020. What did you expect? But they ran a great race.

I am always paying attention, especially during races like that, to just bold moves that the drivers make. There was one that really stood out to me. I don't know if any of you saw this. It was toward the end of the race. Alexander Rossi actually got a penalty in the pits and he had to go to the very back of the track instead of racing up front.

He's a little bit upset about this. And he makes an amazing move in which he passes 5 cars in one turn. I don't know if any of you saw that. When I saw that, I jumped up off of the couch. That was amazing.

And there is something about, when you see somebody who's really good at what he does make a bold move, like takes a calculated risk—that could have gone really, really bad for him, and yet you see that he actually comes out in front on that.

There's something about that that causes me to reflect on my own life. It causes me to go, "Well, are there any calculated risks or bold moves that maybe I've been hesitant in making that I need to make?"

And I'm not talking about passing five cars on 465, alright? It could include that, depends on where I'm going. But I'm talking about is there any area in my life in which God is prompting me to make a bold move, and I've been telling him no or I've been pushing it off for whatever reason. I've just been apprehensive.

Is there any area of your life? As we get started today, I just want you to think about that just for a minute. Is there anything in your life where God is prompting you to make a bold move?

Maybe it's some sort of a step of faith. Maybe it's to start a business or to re-direct a business. Maybe it's loving someone sacrificially and they're not easy to love. Maybe it's having that hard, but necessary, conversation. And it's going to require you to make a bold move. It's going to require you to take a calculated risk.

I love what Theodore Roosevelt said. It's one of my favorite quotes. I'll just read you a portion of what he said. He said.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly... [and] if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

I love that quote. It's this idea that God may be calling you to something hard, and you may get knocked down. But if you're in the arena, you need to get back up, and you need to continue to make a bold move.

I think one of the things that sometimes I hear from people, and maybe you've thought this at one time in your life, is that following Jesus sort of makes you soft or that faith is a crutch for the weak-minded.

And I would say that Jesus is a lot of things, but Jesus is not soft. And Jesus, if you've spent any amount of time with him, if you read about his life and his ministry, you see that he makes lots of bold moves and he responded to the bold moves of others.

In fact, I want to give you this working definition of faith:

Faith is a bold move into an unknown future, based on reliable information.

So, there is not such thing as blind faith, we all are facing an unknown future, that's what we mean by it—but it's not blind in the sense that it is foolish, because it's based upon reliable information, namely, the person of Jesus Christ, which is why we have four gospels to tell us all about it: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

And if you're just now joining us, we're in a series of messages working through the gospel of Luke. And we've said that each one of these gospel writers writes with their own, kind of unique, explanation of who Jesus is and what he did, so that we might have a more, well-rounded understand of him. Because having that connection with Jesus—that changes everything.

And Luke's primary motivation was a good friend of his by the name of Theophilus. And Theophilus was an outsider who was somewhat skeptical, and he was unsettled in his spirit.

And we get that because Luke says, "Theophilus, I've taken the time to put together a well-ordered account so that you might come to believe," implying that there were some things keeping him from believing. There were some things that were holding him back. So Luke's motivation, in part, was to help his friend know Jesus.

So we're just spending the bulk of the rest of 2020 in Luke's gospel and letting his words about Jesus settle our unsettled hearts.

As we come to our passage today in Luke, chapter 5, we're going to read verses 12 through 20, we see two different narratives, two different examples—we're going to cover them both—of people who made bold moves and Jesus responded to them. And then we're going to learn what we can take away from it. Starting in verse 12, it says:

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy.

Now, you've probably heard about leprosy before. It was this horrible skin ailment. Some leprosy could be caused... You were numb, you had no feeling and so you would just damage your body and your body would never heal. It becomes disfigured. It was a horrible, horrible disease and it says that this guy was covered in it and nobody wanted to be around him.

Now, I've never had leprosy before, but I have had really, really bad poison ivy. And the thing is that I actually have never been allergic to poison ivy before. Like we never get it very easily, until a few years ago.

I was cutting down a tree in our back yard and I had a chainsaw and the tree was covered in poison ivy, but I didn't know it was poison ivy, I just thought it was pretty, green leaves.

So, I cut this thing down. I'm in a short-sleeve shirt, it's August, it's hot outside. And then I just start cutting it up into pieces so that I can put it over into a brush pile. And as I'm sawing this tree, it's splattering all over me. And I just had no idea.

And I get done and I pick up each of the pieces of the tree and it's draped all over my arms. And I throw it into the wood pile. And two or three days later this was the result, I had poison ivy, don't you love that high-density close-up? Aren't you ready for lunch now? You can go ahead and take the picture off. I was covered in poison ivy. You're all still here. I'm glad you didn't leave—you online as well.

This was like four years ago, in August, and those of you who were in our church then, you might recall that I preached every Sunday in August in long-sleeves. That's why. Because every time I would approach somebody with all of that poison ivy, they would just recoil in disgust. They would just kind of step back. And that was just a little bit of what it might have been like to have leprosy.

I did a little bit of reading about that this last week. Lepers were total social outcasts in that society. In fact, there was literature on this that said that you should not buy an egg on a street if there was a leper there, because it might be contaminated.

Lepers were ordered to stay six feet away from everyone. Sound familiar? In fact some literature said that you were to carry a rock, put it in your pocket, just in case you saw a leper—to throw a rock at them to keep them at a distance. This was a horrible, horrible disease, not only physically painful, but obviously, emotionally, and spiritually as well.

And even if you've never had leprosy, chances are that you know what it feels like to feel alone. And actually feeling alone and isolated is detrimental to your health. Did you know that:

- Feeling alone increases the risk of death by 26%, while social isolation increases mortality risk by 29% and 32%
- Loneliness is as lethal as smoking 15 cigarettes a day
- Loneliness affects more than one-third of American adults
- Loneliness has negative effects on mental health, depression, anxiety, mood disorders and cognitive decline, also leading to higher rates cardiovascular impairment, chronic pain, and fatigue
- Internet and social media engagement exacerbate feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety

See, if you've ever felt alone and if you felt alone and isolated prior to the pandemic, then all the pandemic has done has magnified those feelings. And it's not only my guess, I feel like we just know that right now so many people are wrestling with this, so many people feel alone and isolated.

And even though technology has helped us to stay connected, it's actually contributed to the problem of isolation, because instead of face to face communication we're just talking via a screen. And oftentimes people say things, via a screen that they would never say to somebody's face. It just creates more isolation and hate.

And when this man was feeling isolated and alone it says:

"When he saw Jesus, he fell," he fell, "with his face to the ground and begged him, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.'"

And right there this is what I want you to see, this was his bold move. That is an extremely bold move. Some of you might say, "It kind of seems like that would be a no-brainer." Like, "If I saw Jesus, I'd probably do the same thing in that time."

And I would just say no you wouldn't have. And the reason why is because what he just did here was illegal. It was illegal for him to approach anyone and to talk to them, let alone to say, "Hey, would you get up close and personal with me?"

In fact, the Levitical law actually told lepers that if they were walking down the street they were morally and legally obligated to yell out to people who may not see them coming, "Unclean, unclean." Can you just imagine the humiliation and the isolation that it would have felt like to have to do that every single day?

So he falls down to Jesus and he says, “Lord, if you are willing could you heal me?” And he really has no idea if Jesus would or could, there’s really no precedent for it. And I love Jesus’ response to this man’s boldness in verse 13. It says:

“Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.” Could you just hear how Jesus would have said these words? With tenderness in his eyes and his voice, *“I am willing…”* “No one else may be willing to touch you, but I’m willing.” *“...be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.”*

See Jesus here reaches out and does something that this man had not experienced in years. He would not have felt the touch of another human being in who knows how long.

You know, a friend of mine who is a chiropractor, I was talking to him a few months ago, and he said that right after lock-down began to lift and people started to venture out of their homes for the first time he was having all kinds of people make appointments with him to come in and see him, because of all of the stress and pain—clearly there were so many people who needed an adjustment.

And he said this to me, he said, “Aaron, I don’t know how many people have come into my office got down on my table and as soon as I laid a hand on them they would begin to cry. They just began to sob, because nobody outside of their immediate family had touched them in weeks and weeks and months and months, especially people who live alone.”

See, human touch is so powerful, and Jesus knew this.

So, here’s the question that I’ve asked, maybe you’ve asked as well. Is that in this passage... Did Jesus really need to touch him? I mean, couldn’t Jesus just say it? Couldn’t Jesus just heal him from six feet away? Because, in John, chapter 4, Jesus healed a nobleman’s child at a distance of 20 miles. So I think Jesus could have handled six feet.

Like, why did Jesus touch him? And I think the reason is because Jesus knew that this man’s needs weren’t just physical. This man’s need was spiritual, and it was emotional. He needed somebody to touch him. And Jesus was more than willing.

See, instead of Jesus becoming contaminated with this man’s leprosy, Jesus cleansed the man. And the Jesus ordered him in verse 14:

“Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

So he says, “Don’t tell anyone.” See, this is the difference between me and Jesus, alright? There are a whole bunch of differences, a long list of differences between me and Jesus. But this is one of them. I think if I would have healed the guy, I think I would have been like, “Hey, man. Will you tag me in that post? Hey, can you tell some of your other friends. Here’s my business card. I’m happy to do this for some others.” You probably would as well.

Why is it that every time Jesus healed somebody he said, “Don’t tell anybody.”? Have you ever thought about that? Why is it that Jesus does a big-time miracle and it’s like, “Wow, Jesus, this could get your message out even more than before.” But Jesus said, “Hey, I don’t want you to talk about it.” Why does Jesus do that? Well, I think... Is it false humility or something? I think the reason why—there are a couple of reasons.

Number one: Jesus wanted to be really clear with all of us that he came not to just do tricks. His primary motivation wasn’t to just do miracles, wasn’t just to fix somebody’s problems in the

immediate, because eventually the leper is going to die. No. Jesus came to reconcile us back to God. And he didn't want the miracles to supersede that message. So that's one reason.

I think the other reason is because he knows that many of us have a tendency to just want to use Jesus to get what we really, really want. I've been guilty of it, and you probably have been guilty of it. We pray and we want Jesus to smooth it out and kind of do a quick fix, and Jesus can, and oftentimes he will. But not always. And just because he doesn't doesn't mean that he doesn't care, it doesn't mean that he didn't hear your prayer.

It might mean that he wants to do a deeper work than what you are asking. It might mean that he wants to do some character work. And that's going to take a little longer. It might mean that he wants to change your perspective, and that won't happen if you just get everything that you pray for.

And so instead Jesus says to this man, "Go to the Temple and show yourself to the priest." Well, what's that all about? Well, in the Old Testament, lepers were often off-casts in society even after their condition cleared up, or maybe they got healed in some way, but they still had the social stigma of it—that person used to be a leper, that person used to have that. It was this sort of thing that stuck with them.

So, in Leviticus, chapter 14 and 15, Moses designated an offering as evidence for the full cleansing of leprosy, not just the physical, but for the whole person releasing them of the public stigma. Isn't that a beautiful thing? And Jesus said, "This is what I want you to do too. I want others to see that I have totally cleansed you from the inside out."

Have any of you ever had somebody judge you because of your worst moment? What's that feel like? It feels pretty condemning, doesn't it? It feels like you'll never get out of that hole. And you know what it feels like to have somebody, like assume—they think they know who you are, and they don't really know your heart, and they automatically label you? You ever have somebody just judge you by an outside appearance?

Man, we have all felt that way to some extent or another. And Jesus is in the redemption business. He changes us from the inside out. You can put your hands together for that. Jesus touches the untouchable. And there is somebody here right now that is like, "Not me." Yes, you. Like, "Oh, man. If I ever came to church the roof would cave in. You don't know what I've done." I'd say, "Man your taking way too much credit for your own sin. You can come on in."

Listen, Jesus can handle it. Jesus forgives what you might assume is the unforgiveable. Jesus has a far easier time forgiving us than what we do. So, Jesus says to this leper, "Hey, man. I want to cleanse you completely and fully. So you go to the Temple."

And all of this took place because this man made a bold move. Once again, I want to remind you of this definition:

Faith is a bold move into an unknown future, based on reliable information.

Well, I want to just finish out the passage really quick, because what Luke does here is, he actually combines two different narratives together that almost seems like a shift, but there is a reason why he puts them together.

This particular narrative is one that has actually informed the direction of our church over the past six or seven years. And most of the time we study it out of Mark's gospel. But Luke

actually includes it as well. And I want to read it really quickly for us, starting off in verse 12. It says:

“One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.

“When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd,” because the crowd was all crammed in and they weren’t making any room, “they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd,” which Luke is very nice about this. They tore a hole through the roof of somebody’s house that was not their own, alright? “...right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith,” collectively, a bold move “he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’”

Now, there is so much that I love about this passage. If you know me well, you know that. Like I said, this has informed the mission and direction of our church. It is why we have stated our mission statement the way that we have. Our Mission Statement comes out of Matthew 28, the Great Commission, go and make disciples of all nations and this passage right here. We want to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus.

And I think that the reason why Luke puts these two narratives together is because they are two different sets of individuals making bold moves when they didn’t have all of the information, but they went ahead and did it anyway.

These friends are like, “Could Jesus heal our buddy’s legs? We don’t know. We think he might be able to, but let’s take a chance on it, because we want to get our hurting friend to Jesus.”

Well, what can we take away from this today? What’s the application? What’s the take-away? If you’re a note taker, if you’ve got a phone and you want to take a snapshot of these application points, then feel free to do that, because I want you to take this with you and I want you to mull it over later today, maybe in your group later in the week or around the dinner table with your family. Here’s the first application:

Make a bold ASK

What is it in your life right now in which God is prompting you, calling you to make a bold request of some kind to God?

Now in seasons like what we are now in, oftentimes it may seem as if... There have been seasons in my life where my prayer life seems really dry. You ever been in a season like that? You pray and it feels like the ceiling is made of rubber, like your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling coming right back to you? Or you wonder if God is really listening.

There are times when God kind of impresses upon me, “Hey, that’s the wrong thing to pray.” But there are also other times when I just get this prompting from his Spirit, like, “Hey, Aaron. It’s not that I’m not listening. It’s not that I don’t want to answer your prayer. It’s that you are praying too small. I want you to pray bigger prayers. I want you to make bolder requests of me. I can handle it.”

In fact, Jesus would say this himself in John, chapter 14. This is an astounding statement. Jesus said:

“You can ask for anything,” anything, “in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!”

And that is such an astounding statement that it’s almost hard to believe, isn’t it? Anything? Really? Could I pray that my annoying co-worker would get fired? Could I pray that my worst critic could get crippling constipation? Could I pray that, Jesus?”

And very simply put, Jesus would say, “Well, does it bring glory to my Heavenly Father?”

“Drat, I don’t think it will.” So, maybe I shouldn’t pray that.

But that’s a bold thing that Jesus just said. Could anyone of us potentially want to take advantage of that? Yeah, possibly. Jesus is like... That’s why he offers those qualifiers, “Make sure that it glorifies my Heavenly Father. Make sure that your heart is in the right place.”

Can I just say to our church that right now is the time, not for us to shrink back but for us to run in. Now is the time not for us to pray, “Lord, get us through this,” prayers, but it’s the time to pray, “Lord, what do you want to do through us?” prayers. “God, what is it that you are asking me to do? What is it that you are asking me to step into?”

Now is the time for us to pray big, bold prayers. We need them, don’t we? In what we are navigating right now, not just with the pandemic—I think that we could pray, “God, please bring an end to the pandemic,” and I don’t think that you need to feel bad about that. A big, bold prayer—“God, please bring an end to it.” But, at the same time say, “But, God. I don’t want to miss what you want to teach me through it.” That’s just as bold.

“God, we need healing in our land. Things are so divisive. They are not getting any better, God, would you please unite us? God, would you please help us to lead the way. God, we don’t want to continue to contribute to the division. But God, we want to be a city on a hill. We want to be a light in a dark place.” We need to pray big, bold prayers.

So, can I just give you a few questions to help you with what you need to ask? Here’s the first question:

What are you afraid to ask God for?

Just name it. Like, “I’m just afraid to ask God for this.” Well, why? “Well, because I don’t feel like I’m worth of it.” That’s an honest answer. “I’m afraid to ask God because I’ve asked for this before and he didn’t do anything about it. I don’t want to feel rejected again.” That’s an honest answer.

What are you afraid to ask God for? Here’s the next one:

Is there anything you’re saying “no” to for God?

You ever done that? You ever done that with somebody else. Like, “Well, we really need a baby-sitter, but I don’t want to ask them because I don’t want to put them out. They are probably busy.” Well, you just said no for them. Why don’t you give them the opportunity to say no? Maybe they would love, actually, to babysit for you.

The same thing is true with God. Oftentimes we’re like, “I’m not going to pray that because God will say no.” Well how do you know? He might just say, “Yes.” Like when he healed the leper.

Here’s the third question:

Is what you're asking glorify God and benefiting others?

And, man. If the answer to that is yes, then you ask it and you pray big, bold prayers unapologetically.

Here's the second application:

Make a bold INVITE

And what I am talking about is an other's focused kind of a thing. One of the things I love about John's gospel is that it is a come and see kind of gospel where skeptical friends are like, "Well, I've got some questions about Jesus. Jesus is from Nazareth. Can anything good come from Nazareth?" And I love it. They are like, "Well, I don't know the answer to your question. Why don't you just come and see?"

That's the kind of environment we want in our church. I'm not asking you to try to convince anybody of anything or to answer all of their questions, but to have a come and see kind of an attitude, "Man, just come and see. Come and experience it."

And now is a time to invite others, because, others are open to an invitation now more than ever, because the ground has shifted under everybody's feet. And God is doing something. I mean, sawdust is flying everywhere. God's remodeling something, and people are open to it.

Now, here's just an observation that I'm going to make. Many of you will probably be able to relate to this. I grew up in a very legalistic church environment and I don't know how many of you did as well. I know a number of you probably have.

And when I say legalistic church environment, what I mean is a church environment where people whose intentions were good, but they were high on moralism and shame, and very low on love and grace. Anybody grow up in that church, are you with me? Yeah, a few of you.

Now, here's the observation that I've made in my own life and maybe in the lives of some others who have that background. It's that oftentimes we're pretty timid to talk about our faith. Oftentimes we're a bit hesitant to invite people to come to church because we are reacting to the legalism that we grew up in. and that's totally understandable.

We don't want to come across as pushy or preachy—which I actually take offense to that last one, because preaching is what I do and I'm okay with it, alright? But we don't want to come across that way, so we don't invite. And while I think that comes from good intentions in place, it's not openly the most loving thing.

One of the observations that I've seen is that, over the last decade, we have reached more people for Christ who didn't have a church background. So when I say legalistic church, they don't even really know what I'm talking about. And they have no problem inviting people to church. And they have no problem talking about their faith, because it's coming from this space—like, "Here's a man who changed my life. I want you to meet him too."

And right now some of us need to lay aside some of those legalistic chains. We need to say, "No, no, no. Actually, the most loving thing is for me to be authentic and real, but for me to make a bold invitation to people who are in desperate need of only what Jesus can offer. And I'll do it with authenticity."

I love the boldness of the paralytic's friends. Can you just imagine the scene on that Sunday morning? They go over to his apartment. They bang on the door. He's still in bed, and he's depressed.

It's like, "Hey, bro. Get up. Get your stuff on. We're going to go see this guy named Jesus." And he's like, "No thanks, man. I'd rather sleep in."

"We're not going to let you do that. We're going to go see Jesus, because we think he can heal your legs."

"I don't think I really want to go."

"Hey, sorry man. You're going." They made this bold move and it completely change his life.

And I just want you to think about someone right now who's hurting, and make an invitation. It just might change their life. And that invitation might be a digital invitation where you invite them to watch online. That invitation might be toward September the 20th. You can actually go to this link right here:

tpcc.org/invite

and you can find tools, digital invites.

But I'd just be encouraging you, right now, to make a bold invitation, "Hey, man. Our church is regathering on September the 20th. Love to have you as a guest."

And I just want to say this. September the 20th there are going to be a lot of first-time guests who are going to come on to our campuses. I've been out and about. I've been out to get my hair cut, go to the grocery store, and I'll have my mask on. It's amazing how many people will still recognize me with a mask. I don't know what that is, they recognize me from the nose up, or something.

And they'll just come up to me and say, "Man, I've started joining your church online over the past few months, but I've never been there. When are you re-opening? I want to come."

So, I just have this feeling that we're going to see a lot of guests who are going to come, and we need to be ready to love them with the love of Jesus. You with me on that? It's a little quiet in here.

Hey, one last application. It's just simply this:

Make a bold MOVE

Make a bold move. Now, I'm not talking about being abrasive. I'm not talking about being careless. I'm not talking about steamrolling over people. I'm talking about, what is it that you're kind of afraid to do? And maybe God is prompting you to do it and now is the season to do it. This is a season for bold moves, not tentative steps.

And I get it. Like 2020 has pushed every single one of us to the ground. And I just want to gently, but directly, and pastorally encourage you to get up. Get up on your feet. None of us knows what the future holds and it's totally okay because we are following after a King who does.

Remember that:

Faith is a bold move into an unknown future, based on reliable information.

Well, what is that reliable information? Namely, the person of Jesus and what he said. And Jesus said, "Hey, listen. I've told you that in this world you are going to get knocked down. I don't know why you are surprised by that. Get up. I've overcome the world."

And he is in control. And I believe down to the core of my being that he is in control and that he is at work. I believe this stuff more than ever, because of what we're walking through right now.

And we can be bold because our confidence is in him. And he has a plan. And he is using it for our good. He is using it right now to strengthen you. You don't know it yet because you feel pretty weak. But he's growing you. He's using this right now to actually expand your capacity to feel for others. You don't know it yet because you still feel sort of isolated from others.

He's using it right now to actually grow your faith. You don't feel it yet because your faith feels pretty wobbly. I'm telling you that he's using it. This is a year in which God is strengthening us because the only way you can grow stronger is through resistance. And this year has given us plenty of it.

So, last Thanksgiving I got invited by a friend to go for a run in one of those Thanksgiving Day runs, like a 5k deal. And the night before he goes, "Hey, I've got this idea, Aaron. Why don't we run it in weighted vests?" And this vest has an extra 20 pounds around it [putting on the vest].

That was a really bad idea. We go running last Thanksgiving and I started off okay. I could feel it. I was like, "Whoa, I can feel the extra weight. This is different." But, man, I got about half way through that run and I started slowing down. And my joints were hurting. And my quads were burning. And my calves were cramping up. And he left me in the dust. He was in much better shape than me. He just like takes off.

And, literally, by the very end of the Turkey Run, I was running slower than I walk, if that's even possible. I was just barely getting my feet off of the ground and every single step hurt. And there were these sweet, little old ladies speed walking past me. There were little kids who were just running circles around me.

It hurt so much. And I got down to the end and stripped the vest off and I had to go home and ice my legs. I was sore for the next two or three days. But then, when my body began to recover, and I went for another run without the vest, oh man, I made up so much time. I was in so much better shape.

Can I just say that in so many ways...? This is 2020. We've got a weighted vest around us. We're running and we're laboring. Some of you are running slower than you walk. And your joints are hurting, and your quads are burning, and it feels like everybody else is making progress, but you are like, "How much longer?"

And I just want you to know that even though this feels painful, it is strengthening you. It's creating more endurance within you. And eventually, Jesus promises us this, eventually the weight will come off.

And when the weight comes off, watch out, man. You're going to make up so much ground and you're going to be able to look back and say, "As painful as that was, I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy, God used this and he used it to help me grow stronger in ways that I never would have grown without the resistance."

And can I just say, right now, that as a church, we are going—we are going to reach more people, not less because of 2020. We're going to engage more people, not less, because of 2020. We are going to remove more unnecessary barriers, not less because of 2020.

Listen to me. We are not going to let the divisiveness of our culture divide our church. We are going to come together more than ever in unity in the name of Jesus because of what he's called us to do.

Does that mean we have to agree on everything? No way. We have unity in diversity. And actually we are better for it because of who Jesus is because of how he has changed our lives and we should be leading the way in this thing, not lagging.

So can I just ask you today:

What bold moves do you need to make in your life?

What conversations, what changes, what choices do you need to make today and they are a bold move, but you need to make them.

What step of faith is God prompting you to make right now?

What step of faith is it? Maybe for some of you it is to respond and to follow Jesus for the first time ever. Maybe for some of you it's because you realize that you've been spiritually drifting, and you actually need to come back to center.

Maybe for some of you during this season where we haven't been able to regather as a church, maybe you started off online really strong but then it got easy to kind of forget. Like, "Oh, man. I didn't even know what day it was, and I missed the service. I forgot." Or, "I was tired of worshipping via screen."

And you didn't mean for this to happen, it just subtly happened. You started letting Facebook, CNN, or Fox News disciple you more than God's word. When that begins to happen, then we begin to go off of the rails and we need to come back to center.

And right now, what is it that God is calling you to? If you say, "Well, when the pandemic is over, I'm never going back to the way I used to be. I'm never going back to the way I used to think, the way that I used to live." "When the pandemic is over, I'm not going back to those destructive decisions and patterns of behavior that I made in my marriage or in my years of life." "When the pandemic is over, then I'm going to put God first in my finances, rather than just giving my leftovers."

And I think all of that is great, when the pandemic is over. How about this? You can do it now. You can do it now. It's like that old Chinese proverb. Any of you remember this? It says:

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."

The second best time is right now. You plant your tree. You do what God is prompting you to do now. You make that bold move now and watch what Jesus does.

And today, if you are ready to give your life to Jesus, whether you are in the room with us or you are online here in our city or online on the other side of the world you can do that. You can go to this link right here:

tpcc.org/Jesus

and someone would love to follow-up with you and help you take your next steps toward following Jesus.

So, can I, right now, just pray? I want to ask everybody in the room and online, wherever you might be, would you just stand to your feet as we pray and then we're going to worship a little bit together.

Father. We come to you right now and I thank you for the fact that Jesus is One who calls us to make bold moves. And when we do, he responds to that.

So, Father, right now, if there are some who are hurting, feeling isolated, and alone—if there are some who are depressed in bed and thinking, "Man, I've tried that before. I don't know that it's going to work," God would you allow them to have the strength today to make a bold move?

Would you give us a heart for other people, to make a bold move in your name, to bring us together under what it is that you want us to do in and through this world? Because we know that you have the answers

So, God. We lift up our voices to you right now. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody says: Amen.