

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

SUICIDE AND SELF-HARM | WEEDS IN MY GARDEN

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Wow, thank you guys. I appreciate that so much.

Honestly, I was just thinking this last week about the season that we are in as a church family and all of 2024 to date. I haven't always been able to say this, but I can say it now. We're in such a sweet season. And even though this is a difficult, heavy sermon series to be in, I just have so much gratitude for the way that God is working and just the sweet spirit that is in this room.

I kind of sit down here in the front of the room that I'm in and as we're worshipping I'll kind of turn around and just look, just to see the look, at least in this room and I'm confident this is true at our other locations as well, just the sweet spirit that in this place, looking at the expression on many of your faces.

And I've got to tell you, I don't want to be anywhere else. There is no other church that I'd rather serve than this one right here. So, I'm just grateful for how God is at work in and through our church.

If you happen to be visiting with us, I do not get a standing ovation every week. Alright? That's not a normal thing. But I'm really grateful that you did.

I'm glad that you're here wherever you may be joining us from geographically. But also, let me say this. However you may be showing up today emotionally. Maybe you just had a really tough week or you're in a tough season or you're in a dark spot and a friend invited you or you stumbled across this message online and you chose to listen today. And if you're not quite sure if you're going to listen to the end or not, especially as you've heard about the subject matter that we're talking about, I want to encourage you to stay with us to the end because I really believe that there will be some words of hope and there will be some practical help for you regardless of who you are or whatever you may be going through or the pain that you feel.

We are in week three of a five-week series of messages called Weeds in My Garden. And what we've been doing is we've just been talking about a subject that touches every single one of us regardless of who we are in varying degrees. It's the subject of mental health.



And if we're being honest, we're not always honest with how we are doing. And we have a tendency to suffer in silence or to put on a fake smile or wear a mask. We're handing each other roses so that we won't see the weeds in our garden.

The reason why we do that... There could be a number of reasons for this, but one of those could be because maybe you decided to get real with somebody. You shared what you were going through. And they didn't receive it very well. Maybe they shamed you, guilted you, tried to fix you, made you feel like there was something wrong with you and so you are like, "I'm never going to do that again."

Maybe another reason why we suffer in silence is because of the stigma that is oftentimes, unfortunately, connected to these issues that we're talking about. So, what we're trying to do in this series is just run very directly but very compassionately toward these subjects that we all know exist but oftentimes we don't talk enough about. What we're trying to do is to demystify the stigmas.

Here are a few:

It is not a sin to be sick.

And some of you, today, when it comes to struggles with your mental health, you're realizing that all of us are susceptible—it doesn't matter your age, your gender, your season of life, how successful you are, how much money you have in the bank, how many followers you have on social media, mental health shows no discrimination. And all of us are vulnerable to it.

How about this one?

You can love Jesus with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength and still go through intense bouts and battles with mental health.

It doesn't mean that you've done anything wrong. And it doesn't mean that God doesn't love you. And it doesn't mean that He's trying to punish you for anything. I don't know where we got that idea.

Psalm, chapter 34, verse 18 says the exact opposite. In fact, today across all of our locations, I just want you to help me read this verse by saying the words that are underlined out loud. Here's Psalm 35, verse 18:

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (NIV) Yeah. That verse tells us, specifically, (and there are a host of others) that God draws near to those of us who have a broken heart and those of us who are crushed in spirit, He seeks to save. Now, other people may push away and against you if you're broken or crushed, but God never does and He never will.



If you look at the pages of Scripture you see imperfect men and women who love God and yet they still wrestled with their mental health.
David was depressed—Psalm 13.

Job was hopeless—Job, chapter 3; Job, chapter 7; Job, chapter 15; Job, chapter 16.
Man, you just go through most of that book and Job is wrestling with hopelessness.
A guy named Solomon hated life—Ecclesiastes, chapter 2.
Elijah was suicidal—1 Kings 19.

Jeremiah the prophet wished he had never been born—chapter 15.

The Bible does not hide these stories. We don't have to hide either. Other people may not know how to handle your brokenness but God always does. The more broken you are, the more crushed you are the more He leans in and seeks to save. And that would be especially true of the topic that we are talking about today.

Just as a brief overview—on week one, we laid out three general principles, scaffolding if you will, for how we want to talk about the subject of mental health. That was week one. Last week I pulled back the curtain to just reveal the spiritual battle that all of us are in, especially those of us who are desiring to follow after Jesus. I said that the spiritual warfare that we are in and mental health overlap. The last three weeks of this series, we just want to get super specific and very applicable.

Over the last six to eight years or so... I've just gone back to my preaching files and I just realized how many difficult subjects we've tackled over the last six to eight years. In fact, 20 or 25 years ago, when I first started preaching, if you would have told me I would preach sermons on some of the stuff that I've preached about over the last six years, I would have told you you were crazy.

But I went back through my files and I was like, "Wow." I've preached multitude of messages on sexuality, I've addressed same sex attraction, transgender, gender dysphoria, racism, honoring government when government isn't always honorable, the conflict in Israel—on and on it goes.

And I would say that today's message ranks right up there with most of those. In fact, I would even go as far as to say this. Today's message just might be the most challenging message that I've preached all year and that's saying a lot because this is an election year.

Today, as most of you probably have already gathered, we are talking about suicide and self-harm. Now, just by chance that there might be a small minority or somebody listening to this who wonders, "Well, why are we devoting a whole message to this topic,



is it really that big of a deal?" Let me just respond to that very clearly and directly: Yes, it is that big of a deal.

The stats on this just continue to rise. This is a massive issue, when you look at the statistics, primarily for younger generations and older generations. And it has, in many instances, irreversible implications. And we don't talk about it enough.

I don't think we talk about it enough in society. I don't think we talk about it enough within the church. And there are a lot of people who are feeling the pain of this topic and have lots and lots of questions around it.

I think part of the reason we don't talk about it more than we do is for very understandable reasons, but one of the reasons why we don't is because we're not quite sure what to say and when we don't know what to say, oftentimes we can just not say anything. And what that does is we just perpetuate the feeling of aloneness and people suffering in silence.

The other mistake we make is we end up feeling something should be said but we end up saying the wrong thing. The church should be the safest place in the world for us to address topics like this and for us to be honest about our brokenness. And oftentimes it's not. And that needs to change. That needs to be reversed.

So for the next few minutes I just want you to know my heart on this. I'm not coming to you as an expert, I'm not a mental health expert, I am a pastor. So, whenever I'm like quoting from the mental health experts I'm going to say so. And whatever is in God's Word, I'm going to say so. And if it is my opinion, I'm going to say so.

But my heart in this is that I just want to be as clear and compassionate and pastoral as I can be. There are a lot of questions around this topic. I know you have them. I want to try to provide as much clarity on this as I can. And I want my words to bring some healing. I want there to be some hope to be found, because there is hope to be found. I think the place that we've got to begin when we are talking about a heavy subject like this is to recognize something that we all know to be true, it's just that we oftentimes forget it. And that is that every single person you will lock eyes with later today or throughout this week, you can just bank on the fact that there are two things going on. Everybody is carrying around brokenness to some degree. Everybody is broken. Everybody has pain in their past.

Right now it could be a relationship thing, it could be a health thing, an economic thing, a career thing, an emotional thing—everybody carries brokenness to varying degrees. Here's the second thing. Everybody is in a battle and we may not have any knowledge of it, because on the outside we make things look good. Maybe we look successful. We're



comparing how you are from a distance to how we are up close. But everybody is broken and everybody is facing a battle and we need to remember that.

I like this phrase. I don't know who originally came up with it. You've probably heard it before. It just says: You never know what somebody is going through so be kind. I think there is a lot of truth to that.

There was a tweet that came out not long ago that expanded on this. Let me read it to you. It simply said this, "Someone is in pain today. They are hurting and you never know who it is so be kind, be compassionate, be loving, smile and hug them, be quick to listen and not judge. You could be the one to change it all around for them today. You could be the one to save their life.'

And I would say that this could be especially true for those of us who are following after Jesus, seeking to be His representatives of His kingdom coming, salt and light to a very hurting world that is fearful, anxious, and angry. Christians should provide that stabilizing presence of a sovereign God and be kind even to those people who we disagree with.

We've just got to remember everybody is hurting. Everybody is in a battle. We have a tendency to forget it in one of two ways. We forget it in traffic. And we forget it online. And, man, we just say some of the vilest things to each other in traffic and online. You've got to remember there is a real person, somebody's father or mother, son or daughter, sister or brother, close friend, family member, spouse on the other side of that windshield and on the other side of that keyboard. And we've got to be kind. You don't know what they are facing. And our behavior toward them could inch them toward something that might be irreversible or it could inch them toward hope. We've got to decide.

I was just reminded of this a couple of weeks ago. I was out running errands. It was a beautiful day. I was having a great day. And I had a red light. I'm on a main road that was kind of a cross section. The light that I was approaching had one of those sensors on it and it apparently picked me up as I'm approaching the light and it triggered a yellow then a red light for the cross traffic.

And there was a lady kind of pulling up. Apparently she was in a rush. And I'm pulling up at just the right moment, so that my presence triggered her red light. And apparently she wasn't very happy about that. So, as my light turns green and hers is red and I'm rolling through the intersection, I just kind of glanced over at her and she was being very, very animated.

I could just tell she's talking to me and I can't hear her but let's just say I could assume that it wasn't very nice. She's going at it. She's leaning over the steering wheel. And then



she, with sign language, tells me I'm number 1. And then she decides to like double bird it—she was double birding me.

I had two thoughts. Here's my first thought. I was like, "Is that Sheila from the 11:15 service? It looks like Sheila." Just a caution here. Be careful who you flip the double bird to, it could be your pastor and you'll end up in a sermon on the weekend—righteous justice. Alright?

Now, here is the second thought that I had. I was like, "You know what, Sheila has..." And by the way I have no idea if her name is Sheila, I'm just making that up. So, I want to apologize to all of the Sheilas listening to this. I would have changed the name to Karen but I got an email the last time I did that. So, I'm not going to do that anymore. Here's the second thought I had. I was like, "You know what? Sheila has no idea who I am or what I'm facing." I thought about this for a second. I'm like, "What if I was coming home from the hospital and my spouse had just passed away?" Or, "What if I just came from the doctor's office and I received a diagnosis of a terminal disease?" Or, "What if I just came from my boss's office and I got fired and I'm not quite sure what I'm going to do next. I'm on the brink." But she's upset because I triggered her red light. We've just got to be reminded that everybody is broken. Everybody is facing a battle. Part of being salt and light is realizing this and just going ahead and assuming that somebody is in a battle and that they are fighting for their lives. We are either pushing them closer toward the love of God or pushing them away. We have got to remember that in a contentious election year.

So, let me go ahead and just kind of start with some definitions. I'm not trying to insult anybody's intelligence. You probably are aware of this, but I just want to make sure that we're all on the same page and, for clarity, define three terms. Here's the first one:

Suicide: Self-inflicted death with evidence that the person intended to die.
The next term is:

Suicidal ideation: That's different. This is defined: Thoughts of serving as the agent of one's own death. Suicidal ideation may vary in seriousness depending upon the specificity of suicide plans and degree of suicide intent.
The third is:

Deliberate self-harm: Willful, self-inflicting of painful, destructive, or injurious acts without intent to die.

A lot of younger people are wrestling with self-harm. The stats are staggering. Total deaths by suicide in 2021: 48,183. That's one death every 11 minutes.

The average suicide attempt per day: 130. That's one every 27.5 seconds.
Suicide is a leading cause of death for teens and young adults between the ages of 15 and 24.

American adults who seriously thought about it: 12.3 million,
Suicide attempt: 1.7 million.

High school students reported seriously considering suicide in the past year: 18 percent.

Listen. Those are not just stats. Those are people. Those are people's mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, sisters and brothers. Those are people who are hurting. Those are people made in the image of God.

As a pastor, some of the hardest conversations that I've ever had to have have been in my office with family members who have just experienced the loss of a loved one who died by suicide. Can I just tell you that it is brutal sitting in the office not quite knowing how or what to say? And there is a look of confusion and grief as they are trying to pick up the pieces; they are trying to figure out, "What does this mean?" They are trying to figure out how to move forward.

Oftentimes when I write and prepare and deliver a message it helps to visualize who might be listening to the message so that way I'm not just communicating content, but I'm delivering a message to real people. So, I'll think about, "Okay, who might be listening to this? And what stage and age and place in their life are they in? And what objections do they have? What questions do they have?"

I did that as I was writing this message and there are really three primary groups of people I was thinking about as I wrote this message; that I've been praying for as I deliver this message today.

Here's the first one:

Those of you who are listening to this message today who love God and want to love hurting people in your life really well. Man, you care. You care deeply for the people around you. Maybe you have somebody in your household right now struggling with this. Maybe you have kids going through this. You know people. You're working with people who are having deep, deep battles in their minds.

And you can hear the despair in the voices, you can see the pain on their faces, you want to do something, you just don't know what to do. You want to say something, you're not quite sure what to say. You want to help, but you're not quite sure what you can do to help. You don't know what that looks like. I just want you to know that I've prepared this message specifically for you in that group.



Here's the second group:

Those of you who have lost someone you love to suicide. Can I just say this? I know for a fact that we have people and families in our church who are wrestling with this. And I just want to say thank you for having the courage to stay through this message, because I know that it is likely brushing up against some pain in your life because there isn't just a hole in your heart, and your heart isn't just broken, your heart is shattered into a thousand pieces.

And to grieve for the loss of your loved one comes in waves. It might have been years ago, but maybe it comes whenever you hear their favorite song on the radio, unexpectedly. Maybe it comes when you walk past their room and you left it decorated exactly as they left it. And it just reminds you of them. Maybe you catch their scent on an old sweatshirt. Or you finally have a good day and then immediately you feel guilty for having a good day. I just want you to know that we see you and have prepared this message with you in mind.

Lastly, the third group:

Those of you right now who are self-harming or you are bombarded with suicidal thoughts. And, honestly, you're just exhausted and you feel alone, even in a room crowded with people. And you wonder if it is really worth the fight any longer. You wonder if anybody will ever miss you. You wonder if anybody truly cares. Can I just speak very directly to somebody listening to this right now? Can you just look right at me? You matter. You matter to God. You matter to us. Your life is not a mistake. If you hold on, man, God will redeem the pain. Those emotions will eventually recede. I'm not trying to diminish or dismiss the very real feelings and pain that you have. Those things are real. They don't always tell you the truth. And you need to know the truth of God. There is a God who made you. Here's the truth in the face of some of the things that you are feeling. Ephesians 2, verse 10, says:

"For we are God's masterpiece." He's talking about you. And "He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (NLT) God had a plan for you long ago. And he ordained these days for you to live. You are here for a reason. And you are a masterpiece, you've been made in the image of God. In Lamentations, chapter 3, it says:

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (NIV)

Now, that passage... You may hear that and it doesn't really stir much in you because you don't feel it. That's when you need to rehearse the truth of God until you do. And even though you may say, "You know what? I don't believe that just yet," I want you to



hear it. The faithfulness of God never fails. It is new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. God is there. Alright?

So, I just want you to know this. If at any point in this message you're like, "You know what? I really realize that I am in need of some help." I want you to call or text this number behind me. It's the national suicide prevention life line: 988. There is a real person there 24/7 trained to help and he or she will walk you through the steps that you need to get the help that you are looking for.

The other thing that I want you to know is that at every one of our locations... We have trained volunteers at every campus who are here to help and to pray over you. Do not walk out of here today without getting the help that you need.

Now, in the remainder of our time what I want to do is I want to carefully and compassionately wade into these waters to provide some clarity around questions that you may have, but maybe you just haven't had the courage to ask them. Or, maybe you did ask them and you got hurtful answers in the past. Here's the first question:

Does the Bible talk about suicide? And the very straightforward answer to that is: Yes, depending upon how you count, there are six or seven mentions of people in the Bible who died by suicide. There is a guy by the name of Abimelech in Judges, chapter 9. There is a guy by the name of Sampson in Judges 16. Some say that was a suicide others say that it wasn't. But it kind of looks that way. He had his strength as long as he didn't cut his hair. He had his hair cut. He was weak. He was taken by his enemies. And he prayed that God would give him strength one last time and he pushed and collapsed the pillars of a temple and they collapsed down to kill his enemies but it also killed him. You've got King Saul. You've got King Saul's armor bearer. And then maybe the most infamous suicide, or well known suicide in the Bible is in Matthew 27, one of Jesus' very own disciples, Judas, who after betraying Jesus hung himself.

Here's the next question:

Is suicide a sin? And the very straightforward answer to that question is: Yes, the sixth commandment in Exodus, chapter 20 says, "Thou shalt not murder." And suicide, technically, is self-murder. And the reason why it is a sin is because it says in Genesis, chapter 1, God is the creator of life.

Acts, chapter 17, verse 25, "God gives everyone life and breath."

Job 14:5, "Our days belong to the Lord."

All life is sacred, important, and valued by God.

Here's the next question:



Well, then, is suicide an unforgivable sin? And the very straightforward answer to that is: No.

It's oftentimes phrased this way. If a Christian dies by suicide, then what does that mean? Do they go to be with the Lord? Do they go to heaven? Do they go to hell? Where do they go?

I've sat with a number of grieving people who have lost a loved one by suicide and this is something that, very understandably, every one of them wants to know. And there has been a lot of damage caused around this question because maybe, considering the church or the tradition that you grew up in, maybe you heard something very different from what I just said.

Perhaps it went something like this. Well, you're not with the Lord because the last thing that you did was murder, the taking of life, and that's a sin as we've already established. And you didn't get a chance to repent of it.

I want you to hear this very clearly. When Jesus died on the cross for your sin, and you received that sacrifice made on your behalf, then He forgives all of your sin, past, present, and future: Colossians, chapter 2; Psalm 103.

We are not saved, thankfully, based upon our last act. We are saved by the blood of Jesus. We are not saved by our sinless state, we are saved by a sinless Savior. And your eternal destiny is based on one thing and one thing only. Your relationship with Jesus. Now, there may be some who might push back on what I just said and say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah but if one is truly saved then he wouldn't take his life by suicide." And I would just very gently, but very directly respond back that is very, very naïve.

When you look at the pages of Scripture you see men and women who loved God deeply. No doubt they had a relationship with Him. People like Moses, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah—they all had suicidal thoughts or vocalized a desire to die. And my response would be this. Can a Christian commit murder and be forgiven and go to be with the Lord? I would sure hope so. We look at the pages of Scripture and we see that David, Moses, and Paul—all murderers—and to our knowledge they all had a saving relationship with God.

Listen: The death that defines eternity is Jesus' not yours. Now, with all of that said, I would say to those of you who are really wrestling with this or contemplating this, I want you to hear David's words to God. When David wanted to die, here's what God said to him in response. He said to David, "Surely you shall see the good of the Lord in the land of the living."

What that meant was that God was saying, “Hey, don’t give up hope. I know you want to die. That’s a very real thing. David, you hold on and you’re going to eventually see the good of the Lord on this side of eternity.”

So, I would say that to those of you who are wrestling with this. Same thing. Hold on surely the good of the Lord you will experience in the land of the living on this side of eternity.

Now here’s another question:

What do I do if somebody I know is struggling with suicidal thoughts or ideations? Let me just give you several different suggestions here. By the way, all of this comes out of the QPR Institute on Suicide Prevention Training. So, I’m not making any of this stuff up. This just comes right out of their training manual.

Here’s number one:

Take the subject seriously.

I think for a lot of us we kind of suspect that maybe somebody might be wrestling with these thoughts, but we kind of talk ourselves out of saying anything because we don’t want to say something and maybe be wrong and then be embarrassed and make them feel bad. So, we don’t say anything at all. But, listen. It is better to do or say something and be wrong than it is to not say anything and be right.

Number two:

We’ve got to talk about it.

That’s part of the reason why we’re doing this in a series. I just want to get those muscles going around how to talk about it and have the courage to talk about it. There are a number of myths that are going around that are not helpful, but there are facts to redirect the myths. Let me just give you a few.

Here’s a myth:

Talking about or using the word suicide will cause it to happen.

Fact:

Talking about it may be the only thing that will prevent it.

Myth:

No one can stop a suicide. It’s inevitable.

Fact:

If people in a crisis get the help they need they will probably never be suicidal again.

Myth:

Confronting someone about it will only make them angry and increase the risk.

Fact:

Asking someone directly about intent lowers anxiety, opens up communication, and lowers the risk of an impulsive act.

Myth:

Only experts can prevent suicide.

Fact:

Suicide prevention is everybody's responsibility and anyone can help prevent them.

Myth:

Suicidal people keep their plans to themselves.

Fact:

Most suicidal people communicate their intent sometime during the week preceding their attempt.

Myth:

Those who talk about suicide don't do it.

Fact:

People who talk about it may attempt an act of self-destruction.

Myth:

Once a person decides to attempt suicide there is nothing anyone can do to stop them.

Fact:

Suicide is the most preventable kind of death and almost any positive action may save a life.

Number three:

Talk about it, but talk about it carefully. Pay attention to the terminology that you use. So, don't say things like, "Committed suicide." Or, "Killed themselves." Rather refer to it as death by suicide or just say simply that they died. Now, that may seem trivial but words have power. And when you speak, you want to help bring hope. We don't want to actually push people who really need hope into further isolation and pain.

Number four:

Talk about it as directly as you can.

In fact, the more direct the better. Don't beat around the bush. Don't be vague. Ask the question straight up. If you suspect that somebody may be thinking about this, ask them like this, "Hey, are you thinking about taking your life? Are you thinking about killing yourself?"

And, if they respond with, "Yes," here are three follow-up questions:

Have you thought about how?

Have you thought about when?

Have you gathered the things necessary that you would need to do it?

And if the answer is, "Yes," to one or all three of those questions, you immediately call 911 and you tell the dispatcher you have a person who is at risk for suicide. If available, you ask for a mental health crisis professional. And then you stay with the person.



And if you have to leave, you look right at them and you say these powerful words, "Promise me you will not take your life until you get the help that you need." Those words are really powerful.

Number five:

Man, just love them the way you want to be loved.

Be an all in kind of friend. Say, "You know what? I'm going to go with you. I'm going to check in with you. I'm going to make the call." It is better to save a life and worry about what he or she thinks than to not say anything and be wrong.

Platitudes are no comparison to being present. Just fully present. You don't have to say the right thing. You just be present. And extend lots of empathy. There is so much shame that is being carried around, not only about this issue, but all mental health issues. And empathy is a shame killer.

In 1 John, chapter 3, verse 18 it says this:

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." (NIV)
Here's the last question, actually the second to the last:

What do I do if I've lost someone I love to suicide?

First of all, once again, let me just say that I am so sorry and I want to thank you for the courage that you've had to sit through this message. And quite possibly you might still be wrestling with guilt or shame or wondering if you could have done something more to prevent it. And I want to just encourage you to let go of that. You cannot take responsibility for someone else's actions.

And it was not life that he or she wanted to end, it was the pain. We never move on from grief. We move forward with it. The pain will always be there and your loved one will never be forgotten. And I want to throw you this verse like a lifeline. Psalm 34:18.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and he saves those who are crushed in spirit."

I want you to remember this. God knows what it is like to lose a child. He knows the pain of death. He also knows the beauty of resurrection hope and He offers that beauty and that hope to you in your pain and in your grief today.

Last question:

What do I do if I'm the one struggling with self-harm or suicidal thoughts?

Number one:

I'm so glad that you are in our church. I'm so glad that you are hearing this message.

And I want you to know that you are seen, loved, and heard, and we want to help. I just want to encourage you to call or text that number 988 behind me. A real, live person (it's confidential, it's available 24/7) who is trained will give you the help that you need.

Number two:



I want you to realize just the possibility, in this moment, that your feelings, as real as they are, often cannot be trusted. I just want you to open yourself up to the possibility that you just might not be thinking as clearly as you could right now. And your struggles might explain you, but they never define you.

There is only One who gets a say in defining who you are and that is your Creator and your Savior. And here's who He says you are. He says, "You are loved." He says, "You are valued." He says, "You are no accident. You were made on purpose for a purpose." So, you hold on. You hold on. And here's why.

Number three:

Emotions, no matter how dark or painful, will not last forever. They just don't. Emotions are like waves. They may come in and they crash, but they dissipate and they eventually fall away. And no matter how intense the pain, no matter how intense the struggle, the struggle cannot last forever.

Now, some struggles last longer than others. Some struggles feel more pervasive than others. But, eventually they recede. So, do not make an irreversible decision when you are at your lowest.

In Revelation, chapter 2, verse 14, God says that at the end of time He's going to wipe every tear away from our eyes, there will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain. All of these things are gone forever.

There is coming a day when God is going to do away with the pain and the suffering and the disappointment that we feel. And it even goes as far as to say, it gives us this imagery, that God is keeping a bottle of your tears. Every tear you shed, He takes that and He puts it in a bottle and says, "I'm not forgetting that." Eventually He is going to reconcile every one of those tears.

The last thing that I will say is simply to say this. Don't fight this battle alone. Say something. Get in community. If that community doesn't work out, then fight for another community, which is what we're all going to have to do. Everything weighs less when carried together.

There is a link behind me, tpcc.org/care. Go to that link there are a number of resources that we want to make available to you. I want you to know Psalm 46, that God is an ever present help in times of trouble.

And right now the darkness and the despair and the pain that you feel, it might feel like a dark pit in which you can't see anything light. You don't know your way out of it and you're like, "There is no way I can climb out of this."



I just want you to know that that is not an accurate analogy. It is not a pit as much as it is a tunnel. Tunnels are different than pits. Tunnels, it's dark in front of you but God meets you in the tunnel of your despair and then He walks with you through and eventually out of that tunnel. But, you've got to give it some time.

Here's what you need to know about our God. He specializes in redeeming broken things. He specializes in placing a Master's touch on people who feel that there is no hope for the future. And He does remarkable things through people's brokenness. I don't know if any of you have ever heard of the story of a Jazz pianist by the name of Keith Jarrett. But, in 1975, he was hired to play a piano concert in Köln, Germany and he requested a certain type of piano to play on. He was a professional and he requested some sort of baby grand piano that he needed to be there for him to play this concert. There was a mix up in communication and when he arrived at the venue the piano was not there. The only piano that they had was back stage. It was a neglected piano, broken keys, out of tune, and needed all kinds of attention and work.

Keith Jarrett gets there, he's this professional, and he's looking at this and he's really kind of miffed off by the fact that the piano that he requested wasn't there. So he says, "I'm not going to play the concert on that piano. It's too broken."

And one of the venue coordinators convinced him, somehow, to stay and play the concert. I don't know how she did that, but she did. So, he goes out and he is a master at what he does. He played this concert and it ended up becoming one of his top selling recordings of all time.

Here's why. Broken instruments can make beautiful music when they are in the hands of a master. And we are all broken instruments. There is no such thing as self-made men and women. We are all broken. And there is a God who wants to bring His healing touch and God makes some of His most beautiful music, the most beautiful pieces, through broken instruments like you and me.

So, here's what we want to do as we wrap up this time. We've just been trying to do this through this whole series, whether one person responds or hundreds of people respond, it's just to create a space for you to receive and to be prayed over.

I know that it's kind of nerve racking to get out from where you are and walk in a room full of people to the sides or down front to pray with somebody. But, I just want you to know this; everyone has weeds in their garden. Everyone needs prayer.

I got an email from a couple of people this last week and they each said, "You know what? I felt prompted to get prayer and I didn't do it. I just stayed nailed to my seat. And then I left and I got home and I regretted it. I wish I would have come forward for prayer."



For those of you who may be in a spot where you're like, "You know what? I don't know that I really need to come forward for prayer." I want you to be praying where you are. This is a heavy topic. Man, if you are somebody who loves God who wants to love hurting people well...

If, right now, you've lost somebody due to death by suicide, if you are contemplating it yourself, then we just want to create a space and a place to have an encounter with God and to be prayed over.

And if you don't need to respond, then you stay in your seat and you pray that the presence of God would be thick in this room. I'm just going to ask that nobody leave just yet. Don't leave the service early, but stay in this moment because what we're getting ready to do next is the most important moment of our time together. So, I want to invite you to respond just for a few seconds together. If you don't want to do it in this service, as soon as the service is over we'll have people to pray with you and over you.

Join me in prayer right now.

Father, we come to You and we just want to be honest about the fact that we're not always honest, that we are broken, fallen, hurting people who are in a battle. Some of us, right now, we're losing that battle. It's painful and the grief is real and the darkness seems pervasive.

But, God, I pray that these words today hopefully threw a lifeline to somebody. And we just want to invite Your presence into the room. We know You're here. But we want to vocalize that You are welcome here so that way we can be more aware of Your presence and Your power that is made available to every one of us.

God, I pray that You as a Master would touch the lives of broken instruments, that You would redeem, that You would bring hope, that You would draw near, and that You would save.

Father, we have no other hope than You. So, would You meet us in this place? We ask this in Jesus' name.

You can respond right now in these moments to the prayer counselors on the side. Would you come now?

