
Hey, I want to welcome everybody across all of our campuses today. I just want to look right into the camera and say hello to Northeast, North, Midtown, Downtown, West, those of you in our p.m. services, and those of you joining us online around the world. And last, but certainly not least, you beautiful people here at Northwest. How are you doing? You guys look pretty good for an hour less sleep.

I'm glad that you are here today. We are in week number two of a three-part series of messages (we'll wrap it up next weekend) called *We Are TPCC* and we're basically talking about these three core distinctives that we are running after as a church.

We're talking about being:

HUMBLE...
HUNGRY... and,
HEALTHY...

And I would imagine that the one that we are talking about today, Hungry, needs the most explanation out of the three that we will talk about. Because I would imagine that Humble, you're like, "Of course, the church should be humble. And Healthy, I would imagine that you probably know where we're going with that one next weekend. But Hungry, what's that supposed to mean?"

And I think that you probably know that we're not talking about physical hunger, but we're talking about our motivations, our desires, our ambitions—the things that we're chasing after. And you might think, "Well, should a church have those things? Should a church have ambition? Should a church set goals? Should a church be driving? Because, "I could get sideways real quick and I thought that a church was just supposed to be faithful and content."

And those are really, really good questions. And it's what we want to talk about and clear up and explain today. So if you have a Bible or a Bible app, go ahead and meet me in Mark, chapter 2 at all of our campuses go ahead and grab a Bible and get there. We're going to walk through just a few verses of the story that really is where we get our word for a church being hungry.

Now, contrary to what some might think, we are not in competition with other churches in our city. We are not trying to get better coffee, and more entertaining Kids' Ministry, and awesome worship, and funnier messages in an effort to try to steal people from other churches. We are not trying to steal disgruntled Christians from other churches in order to grow bigger as a church, primarily because disgruntled Christians are not very much fun to be around. You ever been around one? They are a nightmare, especially when they gather together—this must be the service where all of the disgruntled Christians have come, because you guys are pretty quiet.

No, we are unapologetically going after people who are far from God. We are unapologetically running after people who don't think they believe in God, people who think that they're too smart for God, people who think they are good without God, or not good enough for God, people who are sort of done with God because they've been burned or bored with religion. We're going after people who have stayed away or strayed from church for whatever reason.

Now, at this particular moment if you are already a Christian or a Christ follower, you might say, "Well, what about us? If we're already believers, is this church for us too?" Yes, it is. This is a church for you to come and to get on mission with us as we try to reach more people who are really far from God, and we continue to grow together.

But I want to be really, really clear that we are not in competition with other churches, primarily because, statistically speaking, there are more people who are far from God and outside the church than those who are up close to God and in. And the reality is that it is going to take every single church to be at its absolute best to even to begin to make a dent in this spiritual and emotional deficit that people have outside of Jesus.

If we're going to move the needle on that at all then every church has got to be on its game. And the mission that Jesus gave us in Matthew 28 is far too big and far too complex for any one church to try to handle on its own.

I love what pastor Rick Warren said. He said it years ago now, but as a young man it really made an impression on me. He said:

"It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people."

Now, he's talking about all kinds of churches, still looking at the same Jesus, still teaching the same word, still talking about the underserved grace of God, but different kinds of churches in the sense that we have a fingerprint that looks similar, but it's distinct, in effort to reach all kinds of people.

I'm under no illusion that our church will reach everybody and I'm so glad that we aren't, because we need every church to do it. So right now can I just say that I'm really grateful for the other churches that are pointing people to Jesus in our city? Churches like: Northview, iTOWN, College Park, Mercy Road, Connection Pointe, Heartland, Eastern Star, Soma—there are others that I could mention. I'm personal friends with all of their pastors. I love those guys. I love their hearts. I'm a big cheerleader for all of those churches.

In fact, when I am driving around 465 and I see a bumper sticker from another church I just take it as a moment to be reminded to stop and to pray for that church. And I pray for their pastor and I pray for their people, and I pray that God would bless their socks off, and I pray that they would have amazing Easter services and that tons of people will come to know Jesus, and then I cut them off. I'm just kidding. That's only happened like two times, because they were asking for it.

I love this picture our Northeast campus pastor, Nick Durm, posted a few weeks ago. If you follow him on social media, this is our Northeast campus pastor, Pastor Nick. And as you know there are a lot of churches in the Fishers area, so we are told—like every week. We launched this campus, though, on the Northeast side of Indy and you would think that because of all of the churches that are in Fishers that they would be somewhat territorial, but these are a bunch of pastors who reached out to Nick a few days before and said we want to pray over you and the Northeast campus launch.

I just love that heart. That's the kind of heart that we want to have. So I just want you to know that that's our heart. We're talking about this series *We Are TPCC* and we're talking about the unique thing that God is doing in and through our church. And I just want you to know the heart behind it and I want you to know why. Why would we spend three weeks talking about this?

It's not to pat ourselves on the back, it's not to say that we're the best church in town, because we're not. We're doing it for these three reasons. Number one:

So we can celebrate what God is doing.

And I love the fact that our church is getting better and better at celebrating. Man, if you missed the worship night on Wednesday night when we had all six campuses under one roof, you missed something special. There was something significant that happened. Those of you who were here (four of you were here)... Honestly, it was in my top three favorite, most memorable moments in the 12 years that I've been here at Traders Point. It was amazing.

Another reason is:

We want to give God the glory for it.

He's the only one worthy of it.

But the third reason is:

So we can be as intentional about it as we can be.

We don't want to drift from our mission. Vision oftentimes leaks. We have a tendency to slip into autopilot. We want to be as intentional as we can about what God is doing. And what God is doing here is really, really unique starting with the age of our church.

Now, some of you know this, some of you may not. I get this question all of the time. People will ask me if I started Traders Point. And I'm always like, "No, we got started in 1834." We are getting close to our 200th birthday. In fact, turn to your neighbor right now and say, "You look pretty good for nearly 200."

And the reason why I point that out, and some of you know this, is that the average life-span of the typical church in America today is 40 to 50 years—40 to 50 years of effectiveness and fruitfulness before it begins to plateau, decline, and close its doors. Roughly 3,000 churches

close their doors every year. And I think the reason why it's 40 to 50 years is because that represents a generation. And a generation said, "This is how we like doing things and we're not going to change and so they fail to pass the baton to the next.

But for whatever reason, God has seen to it that the life cycle of this church has kicked over multiple times for us to be nearly 200. And now it's our watch. Now it's our turn to actually run the race and pass the baton.

So, the question is: How do we keep it going and how do we keep it going for the right reasons, because we don't want to let hubris set in, we don't want to get overly ambitious. One of my prayers is, "God, I never want to get to far ahead of you, I want to follow you into where you are leading us."

And that's where the word *hungry* comes in to play. So, what do we mean by hungry? Well, what's it like to be hungry? Think about that for a minute. When was the last time you were really, physically hungry? What did that feel like?

For me, I usually get hungry whenever I travel to a third-world country and I don't know what I'm going to be eating, or how often I'm going to be eating. So I'll kind of slip some peanut butter M & Ms or some Cliff Bars into my bag to eat late at night, because I just never know when I'm going to be hungry.

Man, it's hard to sleep when you're hungry. It's really difficult to concentrate on anything else when you're hungry. It's hard to feel satisfied when you're hungry. It's impossible to feel content when you're hungry. When you're hungry, like really hungry, you get motivated and obsessed with satisfying that hunger.

And I think it's a pretty good word to describe the disposition of Jesus and his earthly ministry 2,000 years ago. He was hungry. He was focused and incredibly motivated by one thing and one thing only, getting people back to God. Jesus didn't come to establish another world religion. Jesus didn't come to run for political office. He didn't come to become the CEO of a major organization.

The reason why he left the throne room of heaven and stepped into the back room of Nazareth was people. The reason why Jesus took off his full divinity and clothed himself in frail humanity was people. The reason why Jesus hung on a cross and gave his life and then walked out of the grave three days later was people.

In fact, he would say it this way in Luke 19. He said the reason why I have come is "...to seek and to save," those two words right there, Jesus came to seek out and to save, who? Well, "...the lost." Well who are the lost? Well, you and me. It's never us and them. It's you and me. We've all been lost at one time or another in our lives.

All kinds of people. Jesus came for smart people, dumb people, angry people, chill people, funny people, boring people, tall people, short people, confident people, insecure people, have it all together people, barely keeping it together people, religious people, non-religious people,

expressive people, reserved people, broken people, confused people, enneagram one through nine people, Meyer's Briggs ISTJs, INTPs, ENFJs, ESTPs, and the 12 other ones.

In fact, he told a couple of stories one time to demonstrate just how serious he was about this. One time there was a shepherd who had 100 sheep and one of them wandered off and he left the 99 perfectly found ones to go find the one. That sound responsible to you? Sounds compassionate. One time there was this lady, she had 10 coins. She lost one. She wrecks her whole house, turning everything upside down to find that one coin, even though she had nine others. Jesus goes: That's the same kind of compassion and desire that I have trying to find the one.

Why did Jesus come? He came to seek and to save. This kept him awake at night, unable to focus on anything else. People kept distracting him from his mission and he kept coming right back to it. He has a sense of urgency about it. And so will we. We want to have the same focus, passion, and determination that Jesus modeled for us.

Jesus has called the church to be a lot of things. Content is not one of them. In fact, the very first word in the Great Commission in Matthew 28 is the word *Go*. It implies movement. He said: I don't want you to be static, I don't want you to be content, I don't want you to sit still, I don't want you to play church, I don't want you to just be religious. I want you to go and to reach as many people for me as you possibly can. Why? Because Jesus is the only one who can change anyone. Our job is to get everyone to Jesus.

And, unfortunately, there are so many unnecessary, unnecessary barriers in the way. So the passage that I want to teach to illustrate this is the passage that we looked at, I preached a very similar message out of this passage five years ago, it was April of 2015, in which we cast vision (we were one location at that time) we cast vision to be a multi-site church. And I want to revisit that passage today, because there are some of us who need to be reminded of it and there are a whole bunch of us who weren't here then and need to hear it.

Starting off in verse 1 of chapter 2 it says, "When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home."

Well, where did he return from? In Luke's gospel when he talks about this same event, he tells us that just before this, Jesus was teaching in some small villages outside of the Sea of Galilee and it was in that moment that he healed a leper. Now, that may not sound too surprising to us because we sort of think that's sort of like what Jesus did, like every day.

Hey, Jesus. What did you do today?

I walked on water, fed 5,000 people, healed a few lepers, all before breakfast. What did you do?

But this was actually the first time that Jesus had healed a leper. Keep in mind, by the way, he's 30. He hasn't healed anybody for the three decades that he'd walked that planet and for whatever reason in this moment Luke tells us that Jesus chooses to heal a leper. Now, why?

What's even more significant is that not only is this the first time Jesus healed a leper, this is the first time that a leper has been healed since the Mosaic Law had been given.

And the reason why that is significant is because in the Old Testament there were these prophecies that were given, that were basically Messianic prophecies. Here's how you know the Messiah when you see him. And one of them is that he would be born of a virgin. That's why Jesus was born of a virgin, by the way, nobody else ever has been. You see somebody born of a virgin then you know that that is the Messiah. Another one was that he'll heal lepers. And this is the first time that a leper has been healed since the Mosaic Law.

That got the attention of everybody. And Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He knew that he was getting ready to set some wheels in motion that would eventually lead him to a cross. Jesus knew that this was going to get the attention of the religious leaders, who were scratching their heads going: Who is this unconventional Rabbi with a rag-tag group of disciples, what does he think he is doing anyway?

And it says in verse 2, "Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door."

So this place is just packed out. Why would all of these people show up? What could possibly be their motivation? Well, Jesus just healed a leper. So, I would imagine that for many of them, they were like, "We want to see Jesus do another trick." I would imagine that some of them were thinking, "Well, they showed up because they had some selfish motives for being there. What can Jesus do for me today?"

And then there were some religious leaders and they showed up because they were testing Jesus. They were critiquing Jesus. And in a typical religious leader fashion, they show up and they take all of the VIP seats up front.

And the place is packed out. There is no more room for anybody else to get in, even outside the door. And Jesus starts teaching. And it says going on in verse 2, "While he was preaching God's word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat."

So get the picture in your mind, four guys show up late carrying a friend of theirs on a mat, he's paralyzed. How did he get paralyzed? We don't know, but chances are that he's been in that condition for a long time. And what we do know is that this would have been a death sentence in this culture, because this was long before the days of health care and worker's comp, and wheelchair accessibility. If you were paralyzed, then you didn't have very many options in front of you.

My guess is that this guy didn't even want to be there, because chances are that he's already tried some things to get better and nothing has worked, he's gotten his hopes up before in the past only to be let down. Others have tried to help, but it only hurt.

In this particular day, people who were part of the religious system in particular, they would have made somebody like him feel really, really bad about himself because they would have

suggested that he had sinned or done something wrongly against God and that's why he was paralyzed. God was punishing him. So my guess is that he had avoided public places for a long time, especially religious ones. And he didn't want to be there.

But it says that his friends bring him anyway. And my guess is that one of those friends had been sitting in the crowd in one of those little villages outside of the Sea of Galilee that Luke tells us about and he watched Jesus heal that first leper and all of a sudden a light bulb goes off in him mind. And he says: If Jesus can do that for that guy, I've got a friend back home. Maybe he can do it for him too. So about the time that Jesus comes to Capernaum, he willingly gives up his seat in the house, goes to get his friend with his three other buddies and they show up late and it says in verse 4, "They couldn't bring him to Jesus," why? "...because of the crowd..." I want you to remember that.

They couldn't get him to Jesus because of the crowd. So, I love this, "...they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus."

Now, it's at this particular point of the story, maybe because you've heard or read the passage before, that you might think to yourself, "Huh, that's what I would have done." And I just want to tell you as lovingly as I can, no. No you wouldn't have. And the reason why I know that to be true is because I wouldn't have done that either.

How many of you have ever shown up at a restaurant and you forgot to make reservations, really long wait, how many of you at all of our campuses hold up your hands—should be everybody unless you've never eaten at a restaurant, alright? Come on. Let's play. How many of you have ever decided to forgo the line and just go through the roof? Anybody? I didn't think so. Me neither. Why? Because rational people don't do that. This is unconventional. It's crazy. It's risky. It's dangerous. And it's expensive. You're likely going to get slapped with a lawsuit by the homeowner. People would have thought that they were crazy.

Now, it's at this particular part as I was studying this last week, that I was reminded of where I grew up. I grew up in southwest Missouri. And there are certain places in southwest Missouri where there are a few groups of people who do things a little bit—shall we say differently? And I don't know how politically correct this is nowadays, but we often referred to them and rednecks.

And I read this in the story and I immediately thought to myself, "This sounds to me like a little bit of redneck reasoning." And I'm related to half of them, alright? And so I came across this thing on the internet this last week called the redneck name translator. Basically how it works is you type in your name and then it generates your redneck name.

So, I typed in my name and my wife's name, Aaron and Lindsay Brockett, that's my lovely wife, and it generated our redneck names:

Bubba and Larlene Tucker

And I have an uncle who looks just like that.

This is Greg Anderson, our Executive Pastor. His redneck name is:

Clitus Jackson

And then, Landon Rose, our Worship Department minister:

Butch Hoggreaser

And then my favorite one is Ryan Bramlett, our Teaching Pastor. His name is:

Cooter Ray

Now the amazing thing about this is that his is the only one that isn't even photoshopped. Love you, Ryan.

So, I want you to get the picture in your mind. You've got Bubba Tucker, Clitus Jackson, Butch Hoggreaser, and Cooter Ray all up on the roof. Just a bunch of good ole boys doing whatever it would take to get their friend to Jesus. And they were not following the rules of religious etiquette, they didn't have a theological pedigree, they had just seen what Jesus could do in the life of another person and they wanted their friend to experience it too.

And I just want to remind you what Mark shows us, the reason why they couldn't get their buddy to Jesus wasn't the roof, it was the crowd. That's important to note. The roof wasn't really the barrier. The crowd was what was in the way. They were not at all interested in helping. They were just there to either get something from Jesus or to try to catch Jesus in something.

The Greek verb that is used here implies that these four friends were trying hard. Going through the roof was not their first option. They resorted to that option because the crowd kept blocking them every step of the way. And their hunger was there to get their friend to Jesus. And that hunger led to innovation and a passion that caused them to go through the roof.

Now, think about all of the other ways that they could have responded in that moment as they walked up there with their buddy on the mat and they see all of the pickup trucks parked out front and everything is crowded, they could have just stopped and said, "Oh, man. We're sorry buddy. We tried really, really hard but it's crowded. There's no way that we can get you in."

Here's the rational response. Here's where I think I probably would have said. I think I would have said, "Hey, man. Why don't we wait 'til the service is over and everybody disperses? We'll wait in line. Maybe Jesus will give us a few minutes. We'll get you into him. Let's just wait a minute."

So, why didn't they do that? Here's my guess. My guess is that the paralyzed man didn't want to be there. My guess is he's like, "Guys, I just want to go home. I'm tired of the shame. I'm

tired of the judgmental looks. Jesus is just going to reject me anyway. This isn't going to work. We've tried this before." He would have worn them down. He would have figured out a way to get out of there at some point. So their hunger said: We can't wait around. We've got to get him to Jesus as fast as we possibly can. So they climb up on the roof and they punch a hole in it and lower their friend to Jesus.

Look at what it says in verse 5, "Seeing," whose faith? "...their faith," in other words, these four guys loaned this paralyzed man some of their faith. Jesus saw their faith and so he turns to the paralyzed man and said—what's he going to say in that moment?

That's where it gets really suspenseful, because at this moment, you know that the record room is scratched, Jesus stops preaching, the house gets quiet because this paralyzed man was lowered and was coming down in the middle of the room. His worst fears have come true. Everybody is looking at him now.

And Jesus turns and he's picking ceiling tile out of his hair and his beard. What's he going to say? Is he going to get angry? Is he going to be annoyed? Is he going to throw him out? How about this? Is he going to heal him? That would be great if he would heal him right there. Here's what Jesus says, "Jesus said to the paralyzed man, 'My child, **your sins are forgiven.**'"

Well, that's kind of unusual. I want you to picture this with me in your minds. You've got Butch and Bubba and Clitus and Scooter. They are all up on the roof looking down through the hole that they made. And they are trying to hear what is going on. And one of them goes: What'd he say? He's saying his sins are forgiven (my inner southwest Missouri coming out, okay?).

Hey, Jesus. Hey, uh, we don't want to be ungrateful and all of that. That's pretty cool and stuff that you'd like heal his sins, but, uh, like I think there's been a misunderstanding because he ain't done nothin' wrong. We checked his Inner Wave history before we came over. It's clear. He gave up the alcohol. He's got a handle on his anger issues. He's a good dude. We vogue for him. Did you notice his legs? They don't work. You need to do something about that, that would be awesome. We're going to go on a duck hunt this weekend (I just created a new clip for the internet).

Why did Jesus forgive his sins? It's so clear what the guy needs there, right in front of him. And Jesus is trying to make a couple of different points through this move. But here's the one that I want you to tuck away and put in your back pocket to take with you today, because somebody today needs to hear this:

Jesus' biggest priority is to reconcile you back to God, not just meet all your immediate needs.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. He cares about your immediate needs. And he's going to heal this guy's legs. But his first priority is reconciling you to God. His first priority is restoring what has been taken from you. His first priority is to get you to heaven. His first priority is to

say: I want to spend eternity with you. And oftentimes, I can only speak for me, I get so blinded by my needs that I don't know exactly what I need.

And Jesus refuses to be your cosmic vending machine where you pump in a few prayers and get back whatever it is that you want. He says: No, priority number one—I'm going to demonstrate this for you and for everybody here today is that I want to reconcile you back to God first.

Look how tragic this is in verse 6, some of the religious leaders, this was their response, "But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, 'What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!'" *Exactly*. "Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, 'Why do you question this in your hearts?'" Then he asked this incredible question, it's a little bit confusing. "Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk?'"

That's a great question that Jesus poses to all of them. And he's basically saying: It's easier for me to say that your sins are forgiven and it's much, much harder to actually heal the guy. Now, why is that the case? Well, let me just demonstrate it for you.

You right here, right on the end your sins are forgiven. There you go. Aren't you glad you came to church today? It's a good day. Fourth row, that whole row right there, your sins are forgiven. That sounds pretty good. Wish you were more grateful. All of our other campuses, those of you sitting on the ninth row—sins forgiven. All of you sitting in the back, tough luck. Maybe you'll sit up front next week.

Hey, that was super easy. And you've got no way to prove it, right? Talk is cheap. It'd be much harder if somebody had a broken arm. There's no way I'm bringing him up here like, "Broken arm? Heal." I can't do that, and you'd know. And Jesus is basically trying to demonstrate here that he is the bridge back to God. So he forgives the guy's sins first, to sort of get their attention, like, "What in the world are you doing?"

And then it says in verse 10, "So I will prove to you," those are big words, "that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!' And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers." Going: How do you like me now? That's what he was doing. And, "They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, 'We've never seen anything like this before!'"

He forgave his sins then he met his needs and he did it for that guy, look at me, he'll do that for you too.

So I want to just give you three questions right now—three questions of application for you to take home today. Here they are. Number one:

WHO IS MY "MAT-BOUND" FRIEND?

Those of you who have given your life to Jesus, I want you to think about that. If you've not yet, you're in the right place. We're so glad that you are here. But for those of you who are following Jesus, who's your mat-bound friend?

I want you to think about... You maybe have a group of people. I want you to think about one. Just crystalize it. Get his face in your mind. Think about her name. Who would you love to get to Jesus, but there is something significant standing in the way of that happening?

Maybe it's his beliefs, her choices, his past his pain. Maybe it's his lifestyle. His questions, his objections, his skepticism, or his mistakes. Who is that one person...? You think this. You kind of snicker a little bit because your like, "Ah, man. It would take nothing short of a miracle to get him to Jesus, to get her to Jesus." That's the person who I want you to think about.

Now that you have that person in your mind, I want you to ask God to develop a passion and a sense of urgency within you to get him to Jesus. And I know all of the objections. I'm not talking about being weird. I'm not talking about being obnoxious or pushy. I'm talking about being authentic.

In fact, I'm not even talking about you even saying a word to them just yet, I wouldn't even suggest you say a word to them until you've cried over them. I'm talking about the prayers you pray over them. Are they urgent?

I'm not talking about pushing your beliefs on anybody. I'm talking about saying, "Hey, man. I don't have all of the answers and I'm not perfect, but come and see. Come and see a man who changed my life. I think he can do it for you too."

I just want you to know that I don't have all of this figured out. As your pastor, I still struggle with this, even up to just a couple of weeks ago. I was talking to somebody in our city and he found out who I am, that I'm a pastor. And I try to put that off as long as possible, because people get weird around me when they find out that I'm a pastor.

And immediately, when he found out that I was a pastor he said this to me. He goes, "Oh, that's cool. I'm not really religious myself." And here's what I said back to him. I'm just confessing this to you at the risk that you'll think less of me. If that's the case, then just hang around with me for an hour or two and you'll think less of me anyway. I said, "That's cool." And then the subject got changed.

I walked out and I got in my truck and before I started it, it was as if a wave of conviction from the Holy Spirit washed over me and I thought, "That's the only thing I could say? Brockett, what is wrong with you?" I could think of half-a-dozen other things that are not weird and obnoxious, pushy or religious that I could have said in that moment, but instead I said, "That's cool." You want to know why? It's because I wanted to be liked by him more than I wanted to get him to Jesus. And I bet you've been in that situation too.

These four friends, they put everything on the line—their reputations, their finances, their safety—to get their friend, who I’m guessing didn’t even want to be there, to Jesus. And I bet you later that night he thanked them for it.

That’s a really good question that I’ve asked myself. I want you to ask it for you. You’re the only one who can ask this question of you, because if anybody else asks it, it’s just pretentious: Who, in heaven, will thank you for being there? When you get to heaven, will there be a receiving line of people who want to talk to you and thank you for your compassion and all of your efforts and for never giving up on inviting them to come and see Jesus?

Who in heaven will walk up to you with tears and say, “Thank you so much for not walking away from me, even though I cursed you out and froze you out and was so annoyed with you. Thank you so much for having the compassion—I didn’t see it then, but I see it now. Thank you so much.”? Or will you be standing in a corner somewhere alone?

Here’s the next question:

WHAT’S STANDING IN THE WAY?

In Acts 15, there was a group of men from Judea who showed up teaching this: “Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses,” that sounds important, “you cannot be saved.”

Whoa. In other words they were saying it’s Jesus plus some other stuff that saves you. And it’s this mentality that still exists today. We blur the lines between personal and spiritual growth—a very fancy word for that is called sanctification. After we give our life to Jesus and after we walk out of the baptistry, we are all works in progress growing to be more and more like Jesus—that’s sanctification. That’s a real thing. That is an important thing. More of Jesus, less of me until it is Christ alone.

And you know what? You’ll never get there without exerting any effort. You’ve got to exert some effort to grow spiritually, which means you deny yourself, your desires, and your impulses in order to grow. That’s a real thing. That’s a good thing. But listen to me, you are not saved by doing those things. And we get that confused all of the time.

See, today it’s not circumcision—thankfully—but there are a couple of other things that we’ve used to fill in the blanks. So we say, “It’s Jesus plus worship music that saves you.” “It’s Jesus plus Bible study.” “Jesus plus abstinence.” “Jesus plus church attendance.” “Jesus plus hand raising.” “Jesus plus fasting.” “Jesus plus church camp.”

Now, don’t misunderstand me. I’m not saying that you shouldn’t do those things. In fact, I think that you should. They are all great ideas. It’s just that nobody is saved by those things. They are not salvation issues.

Here’s the big mistake that many of us make—those of us who have been following Jesus for a while. We take the personal convictions and the tools that we use to grow spiritually, and we

place them upon people who have not yet come to Christ. And they become unnecessary barriers that they can't see beyond, because some things you won't be able to see until Jesus gives you the eyes to see.

So Peter stands up in Acts 15 and he says this, "God knows people's hearts," never forget that, "God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through," what? Through, "faith. So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear?" He's talking about the Old Testament law.

Verse 11, "We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus."

That's really good news. Go ahead and give it up. Not half-heartedly, full on. It's undeserved. And then James chimes in with this. In verse 19, "And so my judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."

And I want you to know that our mission statement as a church, many of you know this if you been around, is that:

We remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus.

And where this statement has come from is two passages, Matthew 28, the Great Commission, where Jesus said to go and make disciples of all nations, and Acts 15, let's not make it difficult for anyone to come to Jesus.

And removing unnecessary barriers does not mean that we are watering down the gospel, caving into culture, lowering the bar. It doesn't mean that we are sacrificing personal holiness or conviction, it's that we are crystal clear on the essentials for salvation, grace alone by faith alone through Christ alone, and everything else is a matter of opinion or personal preference.

And one mark of maturity is that you begin to feed others, you don't just demand to be fed. One mark of maturity is that it is others first, it's not all about me.

And I keep thinking about the crowds that were in this house in Capernaum and they are listening to Jesus' message—I'm sure it was really good. By the way, Mark doesn't tell us what he's teaching on. And I'm sure they were leaning forward taking notes, really compelled. But their backs were turned toward people outside who needed to get to Jesus, totally unaware that there was somebody outside who needed Jesus' touch.

They were being a barrier, unknowingly, but none the less. And we are being the "crowd", so to speak, when the experience of those inside the house is prioritized over the needs of those outside the house. And that's when we, the church, care more about the way that we like it rather than how we can reach more people for Jesus, for preserving tradition or preferences and the list goes on and on and on.

And it's really, really tragic when some finally decide to accept somebody's invitation to come to church, they finally give it a try, and they pull into the parking lot and they can't find a space because everybody parked up close to the building, and they don't know where to go, it's the first time they've ever been in, and the building isn't clean, and the signage isn't clear.

And nobody acknowledges them, and nobody says hello, and they ask for directions, but nobody really helps, and they overhear a group of people over in the corner complaining about something. And they sit down, and somebody tells them that they are in their seat. They look around and people don't look like they want to be there. They don't see anyone who looks like them. People don't seem to into it, they come in late they leave early.

Everything being communicated up front is in insider language. The sermon is being taught as if they are already convinced and they are not even sure there is a God. They have no idea what it means. They leave feeling worse about themselves than when they went in.

Maybe you went to a church looking for hope but all you got was a good dose of, "How could you do that? You should be ashamed of yourself. You'd better watch out. You'd better not cry. You'd better not pout. I'm telling you why. Jesus Christ is coming to town and he's mad at you. You'd better get your act together."

See, when we say that we want to be hungry, what we mean is as a church:

We have a bias toward action...not apathy.
We have a bias toward the broken...not the perfect.
We have a bias to take some risks...not play it safe.
We have a bias toward the unconventional and innovative...not the safe and predictable.
We have a bias for what we bring to it...not just what we get out of it.
We have a bias toward grace...that's tethered to truth...delivered in love.

So the last question that I want to give you today is:

WILL YOU WRECK THE ROOF?

Will you decide right now, today, that this isn't just going to be about you? It's going to be about others who are far from God and you're going to wreck some roofs to get people to Jesus.

I'm so grateful because we've got a whole church full of roof-wreckers across all campuses who are willing to not play it safe, but to do whatever it takes.

I think about Tyler who came to Traders Point after a painful divorce and some financial trouble. He joined the set-up team at our North campus when North was portable, and that set-up team just embraced him with open arms right where he was. And he felt like he was a part

of something bigger than himself. And he would say, and I quote, “This church literally saved my life.”

And when we moved North into a permanent location he served on the parking and safety team, he joined a group; he actually met a woman who is now his wife. Now he’s gone to be a part of the Northeast campus launch. And he gets up a 4 a.m., God bless him, to pull a trailer for set up at Northeast. He’s a safety team leader where he’s developing other young leaders. Tyler’s wrecking the roof.

I think about all of our door holders and people who greet out in the lobby and help people find seats and everybody in Kids’ Ministry...

And you know what? We have two campuses that are portable right now, which means that Daylight Savings was really brutal for them today. They got up really early to turn a middle school auditorium at the West campus and a gym at our Northeast campus into an environment where people can come to experience the love of Jesus. You are the true heroes in our church, by the way. We should give you guys a huge round of applause.

At our Northeast campus launch a few weeks ago I was just walking around the lobby talking to people. I met so many people and I said, “Hey, where are you from.” And they told me, “Oh, I’m from the North campus, Northwest, Downtown.” And I was like, “Are you going to make Northeast your home campus?” “Oh, no, no. I just have friends who live in Fishers and I invited them today and I didn’t want them to sit alone, so I came today to sit with them.” They are wrecking the roof.

I think about a young lady named Maddie who serves in our Kids’ Ministry at the Downtown campus. Get this. Each weekend she comes early so that she can learn the content for the day so that she has time to translate it into Spanish for a group of Hispanic foster care children who are waiting to be reunited with a sponsor. And we’ve got them temporarily at our Downtown campus. And she’s wrecking the roof.

I think about a couple named Billy and Annette who have six kids and one granddaughter who is always in their home. Their child, Jackson, has special needs. And they serve every single week in our Kids’ Ministry here at Northwest when they have every reason to say, “No, we’ll scale back.” But they don’t because they know how important the mission is.

I think about a young lady named Tara who struggled with drug addiction since the age of 15. By the age of 32 she was a victim of domestic violence and unable to care for or provide for her children. She lost custody of them. She lost her home, her car, and her job.

Tara would say, “I no longer felt human. I no longer recognized myself and I couldn’t see any good in me. I felt like a show of a person. I had no hope of ever changing and living a normal life. I didn’t know how to fix me, or if I was even fixable. I thought about ending my life. And I cried out to God. And it was the summer of 2018 that my kids and I were invited to Traders Point Downtown. And we walked in timidly, but we felt so welcomed. We felt like we belonged.

A few years ago when we were building the Park—the indoor playground here at our Northwest campus—I went to lunch with somebody and we had the blueprints and we rolled them all out on the table. And the waitress was overhearing our conversation and she looked over our shoulders at the blueprints. And she said, “Well, that looks interesting. What is that?” And we said, “Well, it’s an indoor park at our church.” And her eyes lit up. And she said, “That looks amazing.” She goes, “I’ve got a little three-year-old. I’m a single mom.” She said, “She goes stir crazy at home, especially in the winter. That would be amazing.”

And I said, “Well, you ought to come.” And she goes, “Oh, no.” She goes, “I’m not a member of your church.” And I said, “Well, that doesn’t matter. We’re not building it for members of our church.” She was like, “Well, who are you building it for?” I said, “You.” And immediately, in that moment, she broke down into tears.

I think about a lady I talked to in the hallway out here a couple of Easters ago and we’d invited people to give their lives to Jesus that day and be baptized. And she walked up to me and she said, “Pastor Aaron, I really want to give my life to Jesus, and I want to be baptized today. But I’ve got a big problem.”

And I said, “What’s that?” And she pulled up her pant leg and showed me what appeared to be some sort of probation like anklet. And she goes, “That’s the problem. That can’t get wet.” She goes, “Can I still get baptized today?” And I go, “You bet you can.” And she goes, “Great, how are we going to do it?” “I don’t know. We’ll figure it out.”

And luckily for me, Bubba and Clitus and Cooter they were all in that back hallway and these four grown men held her up, walked her down in to that tiny little baptistry, flipped her upside down, dipped her into the baptistry like a chocolate covered strawberry, kept that ankle out of the water, she doesn’t need that ankle in heaven anyway—wrecking the roof. I love it.

See, oftentimes you’ll hear these different analogies used for church and people, they mean well, but they say things like, “The church is a hospital for sick people.” Or, “The church is a university for people to come and grow in knowledge so they can really know the deep truth of God.” I don’t think that either one of those is right. I think the church is a medical hospital where you come to get well so that you can come to help others get well, “Now, we’re going to wreck some more roofs to get people to Jesus, because the need is so great.”

The church that I was growing up in in that small town of Joplin, Missouri, it wasn’t located in the best neighborhood. It was kind of a rough neighborhood, actually. And I’ll never forget that there was a young boy, a year or two younger than me, and his name was James. And James lived in that neighborhood and he would walk several blocks to the church every single week by himself. Sometimes he would bring his little brother.

James was a nightmare. James was annoying. James wore the same thing every week. He was always dirty. I suspect it was probably one of the few things that he owned in his closet. James had really greasy hair all of the time. He had really, really bad BO. I do remember that.

And James' favorite thing to say was, "Up yours." He said it all of the time. "Hey, James. How are you doing today?" "Up yours." "Hey, James. Could you sit over here?" "Up yours." And it was just really annoying and offensive. Nobody wanted to be around him. And James would sit by himself and it was almost as if he seemed to relish getting under people's skin.

I'll never forget one Sunday; it was pouring down rain, and after church everybody was kind of hanging out in the lobby and the crowd was slowly dispersing. And James was standing in the breezeway of the front door of the church just looking out the window at the rain. And me and my sister, and my mom and dad were walking out. We were leaving. And as we walked up next to James—you could tell he was just looking at the rain and he was dreading walking home in that. And my parents said, "James let us give you a ride home today."

And I was like, "Nooooo." And James kind of mumbled something. Gave his consent and so I went, "Yeah, come with us." So we get in the back seat and James is sitting between me and my sister and he was elbowing me. And I was just looking out the window trying to ignore him and trying to hold my nose.

And we drive a few blocks away before we pull up in the driveway. And my dad said, "Hey, Aaron. Why don't you take the umbrella and walk James up to the front door?" And I was like, "Ugh." So I get out and I'm walking James up. And we get up to the front door and for the first time I could see inside this small, little house. And what I saw didn't look good.

And I remember this man, who I am assuming was James' dad came to the door. He didn't have a shirt on. He was covered in tattoos. Looked hungover. And the first words out of his mouth were this, "James, where in the blankety, blank have you been? It's raining outside." And James just cowered.

Right there in that moment I knew that there was some verbal and physical abuse going on. And right there in that moment the Holy Spirit just kind of swept over me. And He said, "Aaron, he needs me. He might be annoying to you, but he needs me." And in that moment, I looked over at James and I just said, "Hey, James. Save you a seat next week?" And he just sort of nodded his head and walked in.

See, we live in a world that is looking desperately for hope and help. And Jesus said: I've given you my underserved grace. Not for you to keep it to yourself, but for you to wreck some roofs to get others to me. And as a church we will never stop until the one has come home.

Father, we come to you today and I pray that you would break our hearts for what breaks yours. I pray that you would give us a hunger to go after people who are far from God, for the right reasons. We're not just trying to grow a church, we're not in competition with other churches. We're trying to reach people who are far from you.

God, please give us the strength to remember our experience of grace and to never forget it so that we might wreck some more roofs to get people to Jesus, because you're the only One who can change anyone. And we ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody says: Amen.