
What's up church family? How are you doing? Good to be with you today.

Last week, if you missed it, we rolled out what we are just calling our vision lanes. And what we mean by that is we just want to get in on what we feel God is already doing in our city and around the world. We just want to let you know about it and we want to be as intentional as we can.

One of those vision lanes that we want to highlight between now and the end of the year is God's heart for vulnerable children—kids who are in the foster care system, who've experienced trauma in some area of their lives, maybe they feel forgotten and they wonder if they are loved. And we want to come along side of them as a church family and say, "Absolutely, you are seen, and you are known, and you are loved by a Heavenly Father and by us as well." We just believe that that's at the very heart of the gospel message.

And one of our strategic partnerships is with who you just saw in the video, Back2Back Ministries. They do some incredible work in a couple of different countries around the world. And because of your generosity last year, we were able to help them build a special needs resource center in Maitland, Mexico. It's what you saw there. That facility is going to minister to hundreds if not thousands of children and their families for years to come.

Yeah, you can go ahead and give it up for that.

What we just want to do is we just want to continue to keep in front of you through stories and through articles about what it is that we are doing in the world and how, collectively, we can make a difference and move the needle on that.

I just want to welcome everybody across all of our campuses and anybody tuning in online. We are in this series of messages with a really funny name called *modgniK*. And it's just Kingdom spelled backwards.

And in week number one we said that a kingdom was anyone's sphere of influence or control. So under that definition we all have one, whether it's a big kingdom or a little kingdom. Maybe your kingdom is your car, you've got all the pre-settings catered just to you. Maybe your kingdom in your kitchen or your back yard or your basement. Your kingdom is where you control the thermostat and the remote. Can I get a good Amen? It's like, "This is my kingdom. What I say goes here because there's nobody else in here, it's just me."

And God has a Kingdom too. It's like the whole universe. It's his sphere of influence and control. But God's Kingdom, the way it operates, is backwards and upside down from what we might think or assume.

It's Jesus' favorite subject to talk about. He brought it up all of the time in conversation and in messages that he would teach. If we're counting, in the four gospels Jesus brought it up 126 times. And the things he said about it just seem a little bit backwards and flipped upside down.

And maybe, perhaps, the most backwards thing and the most central thing that he said about the Kingdom of God can be found in Mark, chapter 10, verse 45. Jesus said this, "For even the Son of Man," that just another name for Jesus, "came **not to be served** but **to serve others** and to **give his life** as a ransom for many."

That's just an astounding statement. Jesus is saying: I'm the King of this Kingdom. I'm the leader. I'm the boss. I'm the head hauncho so to speak and I came not to be served but to serve others and to give my life as a ransom for many.

My youngest daughter, Cadence, she is like our little extrovert in the family. She loves being around people. She's the life of the party. She's hysterical. A couple of years ago when she was in pre-school, she had a doctor's appointment in the middle of the day. So my wife comes and gets her out of class, takes her to the doctor's appointment, and on the way back she gives her this lecture.

She's like, "Honey, when you go back to the classroom, the teacher is going to be teaching. Please don't disrupt the class. Walk in. Be very quiet and respectful. Take off your coat and your backpack and go to your seat and just be respectful."

And my daughter, she indicated to my wife that she understood. But she did not, and she had no intentions of doing this plan. And so she gets in the classroom and, as my wife tells is, she walks in and as soon as she walks in, she drops her backpack on the ground, unzips her coat and takes it off and she goes, "I'm here now." [Arms flung wide] Just all heads turn, spiraled around, looking at my wife standing behind her. My wife wanted to run and hide underneath a rock. And my daughter's just like, "I'm the center of attention here. I'm the spotlight." She's just drinking it in.

She was in the front row first hour and between services she comes up to me—I told all of my kids anytime I use them in an illustration I'd give them five bucks—she says, "Daddy, ten dollars." I was like, "Ten dollars?" She was like, "One for each service." "You drive a hard bargain."

But Jesus says here in this passage, he goes: Listen, when I come into the world... When he wrapped himself in human flesh 2,000 years ago, it wasn't a big production. There weren't the lights and the hey. Jesus didn't rip open the sky and go, "I'm here now." He didn't do any of that. He came in a very understated way. He was born in a barn in Bethlehem to disoriented parents who weren't quite sure what they were going to do.

Jesus said: My sole purpose for coming was not to be served but to serve you, to give my life for you. Here's maybe another way of saying that. You and I will never inherit the Kingdom of God unless we let Jesus serve us, unless you let him serve you. Well, what does that mean?

Well, it means that you are not going to get into the Kingdom of heaven on your own merit, on your own good works, on your own good intentions. And that's good news, because we could never get there anyway. Jesus said: Man, just let me serve you. And that's really, really good news, but it's so backwards from what we oftentimes think.

So in this series *modgniK* we've basically been taking it a letter at a time each week and the letters stand for a different word to help us remember the values of this backwards Kingdom. On week one we talked about **M**—More is less. And then on week two it was **O**—Others first. And then **D**—Descend into greatness. Last week was **G**—Generosity flows. And today it's **N** which just stand for:

Not to us

And here's what we mean by this. I think that every single one of us—regardless of who you are and what you do and whatever generation you're in—all of us, it feels really, really good to be recognized and appreciated for not only who we are but for what we do. And that's not a bad thing.

It's not a bad thing to receive some recognition, to hear a thank you every now and then, "Man, you're doing an incredible job." Or, "We just couldn't do this without you." And it feels good and there is nothing wrong with it, unless we begin to like it a little too much. Unless we begin to want it a little bit too much or we need it a little bit too much. And all of a sudden, we find ourselves finding our sense of worth, value, and identity in the things that we do and the gifts and the abilities that we have.

And when we begin to find our identity in a temporary role that we're serving in: whether that's as a parent or a boss or a career of some kind, or if you're serving in some way, whatever it is, it's a temporary role and if we find our identity in that rather than identity first as a child of God, then we'll begin to do whatever it takes to guard that thing. We'll hold on to it so tightly. And Jesus says in God's *modgniK* Kingdom we don't serve to be seen, we don't accomplish to be applauded, we don't step up in order to be singled out as someone who is adored or praised.

And I'll tell you from first-hand experience it is an easy trap to fall into—finding my sense of worth in what I do and the temporary role that I have and the gifts and the abilities that I bring.

How many of you are like Cliff Notes version people? Like, "I don't got any time to read books. Give me the Cliff Notes version." You're ashamed to admit it here, but you're my people—you're my people.

When my wife reads a book, she relishes every page. She's got her cup of coffee, she's got her highlighter, she's taking notes, she'll shed a few tears after every page. She's drinking it in. Me?

I'm listening to audio books and podcasts in time-and-a-half speed to get through all of the content as fast as I can, alright? That's just reveals the darkness of my heart.

So for some of you Cliff Notes people, actually Jesus speaks to you, because one time he said this: You want to know the Cliff Notes version of the Bible? It's this right here. This statement:

Love God and love people

Everything hangs on that statement right there. In other words, the purpose of our life is to glorify God, it's to lift God up in everything that we do and lift other people up in the process of doing it.

But oftentimes, instead of loving God what I end up doing is I try to leverage God. I try to leverage God to get what I want or to get me out of the things that are uncomfortable and I end up maybe pulling or pushing other people down, because my pride says that I need to lift myself up and I need to actually stay up. But Jesus says that that might be how the rest of the world operates, but not so with you.

David writes this in Psalm, 115. He says, "**Not to us**, O Lord," like, "**not to us**, but to your name goes **all the glory** for your unfailing love and faithfulness."

Now, I don't know if you have a good working definition for the word *glory* but really simply put glory is just:

recognition or admiration

And David says Lord, "Not to us," we don't want to receive the primary recognition and admiration, it all goes to you, primarily we know, God, that you're the only one who is worthy of it and you're the only one who can handle it.

So here's the question that I want you to think about to yourself today, what are you really good at right now? What do you excel in and why? What comes easily to you?

Maybe some of you here today, you're just a really gifted athlete. You've just always excelled in sports, whether it's the field or the court. And maybe you've even had an opportunity to serve professionally or at a collegiate level—it just comes easily to you.

Maybe you're just a really gifted mom, or you're a gifted dad. You're just really good at that and actually you've really found identity in that temporary role.

Maybe you're just really gifted in the classroom, like academically your GPA is through the roof. You ruin the curve for everyone else. Thank you very much. You're just amazing in the classroom and you're just going to go far academically.

Maybe you're an entrepreneur. You've come up with a really great idea. You built a business around it and you employ other people and you've actually experienced some success.

Maybe you're just a really gifted communicator. Like, any time you stand up to speak, people just lean in—they listen.

Maybe you're gifted in the arts. You're a talented musician or you're a vocalist.

Nothing wrong with any of that. But here's where we've got to be careful:

Whenever you receive **recognition** or **admiration** and it becomes a **temptation** to make that part of your **identity**.

And whatever your thing is, you'll be tempted to make that *thing* the thing. And when that happens, you'll do almost anything to guard and protect your glory—the recognition and admiration that you think you deserve. Why? Because it informs your identity.

So, "Without the field or the court, I don't know what I'd do with my life." "Without the classroom, I'm not sure what I would do." "Without the kids in my life at a certain age, I'm not sure who I am anymore." "Without the career, without the platform, without the accolades I'd be lost." What we end up doing is we hold onto it so tightly and we push God out and we end up using other people. And we eventually lose our influence.

And David says: God, will you receive all of the glory? We want to continue to look to you, because you're the only one who is worthy of it and who can handle it. Now, where did David learn that? Where did David get that wisdom? And if you know anything at all about his up and down story, I would say that David knew first-hand misplaced glory can go sideways in your life really quick. David was not only the cause of some misplaced glory in his life, we could talk about that, but David was also the recipient of misplaced glory.

If you know anything at all about his story it begins back in 1 Samuel, chapter 17. David just comes out of nowhere. He's complete obscurity, he's a nobody. And almost overnight, he skyrockets to all kinds of fame, recognition, and glory.

The setting is that the Israelite army is in a standoff with their arch nemesis, the Philistines. And the Philistines had an MVP; it was their version of LeBron James, this guy named Goliath. And Goliath is just a beast, man. Nobody can take him. And Goliath knows it. He comes out every single day and taunts them and he says: send out your biggest and your baddest, and your best—I don't care who it is. Just bring him out and we'll go one on one, winner take all. And it was crickets from the Israelites. They had no answer to this taunting.

And there were a couple of boys in the Israelite army, they had a father named Jesse and a younger brother named David. And Jesse was a worried dad. So he brings David in, he was a shepherd during the day, he brings him in, and he said: David, I need you to go give a care

package to your brothers. Here's some cheese and some bread. Go. And just check in on them and tell me how they are doing.

And, David, please follow these strict orders. If you sense any danger, like if the battle starts to ensue while you're there, drop the cheese and bread and run. Get back here David. Don't be caught up in the battle. You're the last of the boys, I couldn't lose you too.

David doesn't pay attention to any of that. He takes the care package. He marches in fully confident on to the battlefield. Check this out in verse 26. I love this. "David asked the soldiers standing nearby, 'What will a man **get** for killing this Philistine and ending his defiance of Israel? Who is this pagan Philistine anyway, that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God?'"

We've all met that guy, haven't we? It's the young, inexperienced intern who thinks he knows how to do your job already, even though he doesn't have any experience. It's the person who is full of themselves, he is so confident that it's actually crossed the line into arrogance.

Verse 31 says, "Then David's question was reported to King Saul, and the king sent for him."

You've got to understand that this guy named Saul is the leader. This is his lower-case k kingdom. This is his sphere of control and his element of domain. He's in charge. What you need to know about Saul is just a few chapters back, Israel had no king. They were God's people. All of the other nations around them had a king and so they decided they really wanted one.

So, they go to the prophet, Samuel, and they go: We really want a king. And he was like: Well, why do you want a king? And they go: Well, all of our other friends have a king. And Samuel was like: Well, if all of your other friends jumped off of a bridge, would you? And they were like: Yes—yes we would.

So God gives in and he gave the Israelites a king. And his name was Saul. And Saul comes out of relative obscurity as well. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, which was the smallest tribe in Israel. His family were just a bunch of nobodies. But, almost overnight, Saul just skyrockets to all kinds of fame and recognition and glory. He's a success.

It says twice in chapters 9 and 10 that he stood head and shoulders above everyone else. He was gifted. But now, by chapter 17, in this stand-off with Goliath, people are starting to talk around the water cooler: Saul's slipping. He's not as good as what he used to be. I don't think he's got what it takes anymore. They were questioning his leadership and his ability to lead them out of this. And he knew it.

And so the weight of responsibility had dropped squarely on Saul's shoulders and he's like: I feel like I'm blowing it here. And everything is on the line as Goliath calls him out. Then he hears about this young guy named David who is actually showing no fear, so he sends for him.

And you probably know the story, at least parts of it. They are going to send him out on the battlefield to take on Goliath.

Now, when I heard this story growing up, I never, ever read it through the lens of King Saul. I was always reading it through the lens of David. But I started to read it through the lens of King Saul. And I thought to myself, "Why in the world would Saul send a little shepherd boy out onto the field to take on the UFC champ one on one. That doesn't make any sense.

And I think it just shows the kind of stress and pressure that he was under. Like at this point, he had no options and they'd been in a stand off for over a month. And he's like: I've got to do something. And when you're under that kind of pressure, any neck is better than yours. So he sends David out.

David goes out, super confident, you probably know the story. He's got a slingshot, some smooth stones. He drops Goliath like a bad habit and the Israelites just rushed the field and they take their enemy.

And then it says, "Whatever Saul asked David to do, David did it **successfully**." And we'll find out, he did it a little too successfully. "So Saul made him a commander **over the men** of war, an appointment that was **welcomed** by the people and Saul's officers alike."

I love this. Saul does what any good leader would do. He's like: I hired him. He's like: You guys didn't believe in him, but I saw the potential in the kid a long time ago. I always knew he would take him out, alright? He hires him and he gives him position and rank and influence and David does really, really well.

A little bit of time goes by and check this out, chapter 18, verse 5, "When the victorious Israelite army was returning home after David had killed the Philistine, women from all the towns of Israel came out to meet King Saul. They sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals. This was their song:" I'm not going to sing it, I'll read it, "'Saul has killed his **thousands**, and David his **ten thousands!**'"

Ouch! Can you imagine what that would have felt like if you were Saul? Maybe you don't have to imagine. Maybe you're like, "Oh, I know exactly what that feels like," You feel like daggers right to your ego. "Man, I feel overlooked. I feel underappreciated. I feel disregarded. I feel taken for granted. It doesn't matter how long I've served in this company. It doesn't matter how long I've sacrificed for this family. It feels like somebody else has come along and now they are threatening the recognition and the admiration that I think I deserve."

Someone else comes along and he's more talented and more connected and he's got better ideas and he's better looking, and he just seems to have it all together and he is making you look bad.

And it's in this moment that Saul has a decision to make. This is going to really show what kind of a leader he truly is. Is this going to be about his title and his lower kingdom or is it going to be about something else? Saul's got a decision to make.

And really what he should have done in this moment—it's easy for me to say looking back on it, I get that. But what he should have done is he should have immediately gone to David and said: David, from now on you ride with me. We are the one, two punch. We are the Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen. We are the Jay Z and Beyonce, right? We... David, together we are the 11,000 club. Just think about that a minute. It will catch on. I realize the delivery wasn't as on point as it could have been.

But here's what Saul does. It says, "This made Saul **very angry**." Why? Well, because his identity was wrapped up in his role. His worth was found in his ability, and now that somebody else has come along to take it, who is he? He was so angry. He goes "What's this?" In fact I think the Hebrew is like, "What's up with that?" I think that's how it reads, "...he said. 'They credit David with ten thousands and me with **only thousands**.'" That's an exaggeration. I've got the books to show it. I've got way more than just thousands, "Next they'll be making him their king!" This may be the saddest statement in this whole section. "So from that time on Saul kept a **jealous eye** on David."

And it just spiraled his leadership out of control. Saul did not have any room in his chariot for a David. He didn't have any room for a young eagle in his organization. He could not time stand that somebody on his team was more talented than him. He'd celebrate David's achievements just as long as they make him look good, but as soon as David's achievements began to overshadow his own—no way.

And I realize that maybe you're not the boss at work. Maybe you're not the CEO. Maybe you don't see yourself as the one in charge. You don't see yourself even necessarily as a leader. I might challenge that because I think a leader is just anybody who influences people, which means you are one.

But it doesn't matter who you are today, all of us are going to find ourselves in Saul's position at some point in our life. And we're going to say, "Well, I have the position." Or, "I've been here the longest." Or, "I've got the most experience." Or, "Pastor Aaron, we've been members of this church for over 25 years." Which in code means, our voices should be louder than anyone else's. "I've been around here a long, long time and so therefore, it should be a little bit more about me and my preferences."

How did Saul get here? How did Saul make this about him, right? I mean these are God's people, Saul is serving in a temporary role of a king, how did he make it about him? It's in the same way that you and I have a tendency to make it about us. And we say, "Well, it's my business." Or, "It's my team." Or, "My staff." Or, "My church." Or, "These are my kids." Or, "After all, I started this. I'm the entrepreneur. I've been here the longest. I sacrificed for this."

I think there are a couple of important questions that all of us need to ask. Maybe you should ask them of yourself today. I know I'm asking them of me. It's just simply this:

What are my **aspirations**?

Maybe you did this a long time ago. Maybe it's time to review it. And I would encourage you to do this. Create categories in your life. So what are your aspirations, your goals, dreams, and desires as it relates to your family, or to your marriage, or to your career, or to your spiritual growth—whatever it is, what are your goals, dreams, and aspirations? Super healthy thing to do.

Here's the next question we oftentimes overlook:

What are my **motivations**?

And that is key. What is motivating me to chase after that goal? What is motivating me to want to accomplish this? Is it because I want to glorify God and love people well? Man that's great. Is it because I want to expand God's Kingdom here on earth? Fantastic! But maybe for some of us it's because we're trying to earn someone's approval or we're trying to prove our sense of worth or we're trying to find our value from this thing that we contribute.

Here's the thing. At some point in your life, I pray that you experience some success, you accomplish the *thing* you arrive, so to speak, and when you do you've got to be really careful because you'll be in a very precarious position, because after you achieve the *thing* that you think that you've set out to do, you're going to have to ask the question, "Well, what am I going to do with this now?"

"What am I going to do with this position?" "What am I going to do with this influence?" "What am I going to do with this title?" "What am I going to do with this glory? Am I going to hold on to it with a death grip? Or am I going to give it away?" "Am I going to follow after the example and the teaching of Jesus when he said, 'I've come not to be served, but to serve others.'?"

So, about five years ago, I went out west and I spent two-and-a-half days doing what's called a life plan. And some of you might be familiar with that. Others of you, maybe not. But basically you just sit in a room for two-and-a-half days with a facilitator and he just kind of maps out your life. He just talks about your childhood, the way you grew up, your family of origin, your calling in life—all of that. And you kind of put into chapters your past and then you paint a picture of the present, all with the aim of becoming super intentional about the future.

It's a really, really helpful thing to go through. It's also really scary. It was a scary thing when about half way through day two I kind of saw my whole life up on this board. And the picture that he had painted of the present, sort of took me aback in the sense that I got this glimpse of my family—so blessed by our kids—and the opportunities that God has given us and just the influence that our church has had and the effect it is making around the world.

And I kind of stopped and I told the facilitator, I said, "This really scares me." And he goes, "Why does it scare you?" And I go, "If you and I could climb into a time machine and go back in time and meet up with 21-year-old Aaron Brockett and show him this wall, 21-year-old Aaron Brockett would go, "Man. That's amazing. Do I get to be a part of all that by the age of 67? Like right before I retire?"

No, by the age of 38. And I said, "That scares me because I don't want to be Saul. That scares me because I don't want to make this about me. Where do you go from here? What do you do? I see so many..."

Very few of the leaders in the Bible finish well. Obviously, you just look all over the news; a lot of leaders don't finish well. And I go, "Man, I just want to really finish well." And he goes, "Well, are you saying that God's allowed you to scale your Mount Everest, so to speak, and now you don't have anywhere to go? And I go, "Well, I wouldn't have put it that way, but since you use the analogy, yeah, I guess so."

Here's what came out of the two-and-a-half days of a life plan. He says, "How about this. How about you spend the rest of your days just throwing down lines to other men and women, other leaders, and help them scale their Everest? How about you just make that your focus?"

And I appreciate the applause. And I want to be very careful here, that I don't make myself the hero of this illustration because, let me tell you, it ain't been easy. There are probably a lot of days when my attitude could have been better. And it's meant that I've had to give up some preaching opportunities that I really wanted to have and some leadership decisions that I really wanted to make all for the purpose of saying, "No, you make the decision." "No, you preach." "Now, let's see what you can do." "Hey, you want to be sent out to go plant a church or go start a church? Hey, man. We'll send you out."

There are days where I just go, "Man, Ryan Bramlett is so good and he's so powerful and his voice is like butter. He could just stand up here and read the newspaper and I would rededicate my life to Christ. I really would." Yeah, you contextualize that for you. What does that look like for you? See here's the question that we all have to ask ourselves, it's:

Am I making this too much **about** me?

Let me just give you a little clue on this. You are not objective enough to answer that question for you. You and I have blind spots. You've got to find some people who you know, love, and trust who will lovingly tell you the truth even if the truth hurts a little bit.

All of us are going to be tempted to make this too much about us. We're just human. We're sinners. We're all susceptible to it. And the minute that it seems that someone else is getting the glory that I really, really kind of secretly want, the attention that I crave or desire, the moment that somebody else I kind of feel is gunning for my job, he appears like he's got it all together... You know, your daughter-in-law, she just isn't paying attention to you as much as you think that she should, "She doesn't even ask my opinion." Right?

The minute that I make this about me is the minute I begin to lose influence in other people's lives that I could have had. So instead of loving God and loving people—no, no—I leverage God and I use people. And God goes: I won't play that game. And honestly, other people won't either. Saul just couldn't get it and his life and his leadership unraveled and it ended in an incredibly tragic way.

About 800 years prior to this there was another leader who needed to learn this lesson. His story actually ends on a much higher note. His name was Joseph. His friends called him Joey. The story is found in Genesis 37.

Joseph was a young man and he was incredibly gifted, and the thing is is that he knew it. He had this incredibly fancy coat of many colors that was a symbol of his title and his position. He enjoyed the glory too much.

He had this gift of being able to interpret dreams. And so one day, in a rather arrogant way, he comes in to where his brothers are seated around the breakfast nook and he goes: Hey, guys. I had a dream last night and I think that it means that one day I'm going to be greater than you and you all will serve me. What do you think about that?

And God's like: Bravo. You need humility. And so his brothers throw him into a well and they sell him as a slave into Egypt and he ends up locked up in an Egyptian prison cell. In fact, eventually his boss's wife would make sexual advances toward him, he's trying to do the right thing, she accuses him of sexual harassment and gets him thrown in jail longer. And you've got to think: Man, I've just been stripped of my glory. This is my life.

One day when he thinks he's been forgotten—his dad thinks he's dead—the Egyptian Pharaoh starts to have some troubling dreams. Some of his team comes in and they go: Hey, well there's this kid in your prison who is actually really good at interpreting dreams. You ought to talk to him. And so Joseph walks in, has no agenda, no aspirations for glory he's just completely humble. And he walks in and Pharaoh tells him the dream. Joseph then interprets it, goes back to his prison cell.

And it helps Pharaoh so much that Pharaoh promotes him to the highest rank in Egypt, the rank just underneath Pharaoh. And here's what Joseph does with his new-found influence and glory. He uses it for others. Egypt has this famine and Joseph employs his leadership skills and he benefits everybody else around him, even the very brothers who sold him out years ago.

What do we learn from this? Why would God take Joseph through this sideways path? It's because long ago:

Joseph had a great **coat**, but no **character**.

And God takes him through what you and I would go, “Man, that’s tragic. God has abandoned you, bro. You should become an Atheist.” And what ended up happening is he developed some character.

Now, at this point in his life he lost the coat, but he found his character. And sometimes when you lose the title and the influence and the position that you think you’re entitled to, what God is trying to do within you and me is that he is trying to form character within us.

See, the lesson we get from the life of Joseph is that God wants to do some things in you before he’ll ever do things through you. And there have been... Can I just tell you this? At the mid-way point of my life, as I look back, I’m so thankful that God has not answered every prayer the way I prayed them, because if he had I’d have no character.

The two things I have primarily prayed for are, “God, would you please get me out of this.” And, “God, would you please give me this.” And there were so many times when God was like: No, I’m not going to get you out of that and I’m not going to give you that. Why? Because, Aaron, I’m trying to develop some character in you so that you can handle the temporary role that I’ve actually blessed you with. If God had answered every prayer the way that I prayed it, I would have no character.

The thing that I want you to know right now is that the Bible is full of story after story after story of men and women who just had a hard time learning this because they were just human. And can I just say that that should actually comfort you and me?

Even Jesus’ 12 hand-picked leaders, they just couldn’t get this. I mean, they thought the whole time during Jesus’ earthly ministry, when Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God, they thought that Jesus was going to run for political office and that they would have seats at the table, that they would be in positions of power. That’s what they thought.

So they kept saying: Jesus, when are we going to do this? When is it going to go down? And Jesus was like: No, no guys. You don’t understand, “I’ve come not to be served, but to serve.” That sounds awesome, Jesus. That’s a great tag line, but when are we going to do this? And he’s like: Guys, you don’t understand. I’m going to march into Jerusalem and I’m going to lay my life down.

Jesus, you can’t go into Jerusalem. They hate you there. And he goes: Yeah, I know. I’m going to be arrested unfairly, tried unfairly, mocked, beaten, criticized, nailed to a tree. But make no mistake, boys. Nobody is taking my life. I’m laying it down. Don’t worry. Three days later I’ll pull off Easter and it’s going to be amazing. And they just couldn’t get it.

Mark actually spends a significant amount of time in chapter 9 kind of talking about all of this. One time Jesus is traveling with the disciples and he kind of hears the conversation in the back of the bus, he can’t fully understand what they are talking about, so he just asks them in verse 33. He goes, “What were you discussing out on the road?” I love this, “But they didn’t answer, because they had been arguing about which of them was the **greatest.**”

They didn't want to say. But the Bible tells on them. And there it is, when will this be about me? When will I get mine? When will I get the attention and the adoration and the affection that I deserve? So Jesus says, guys, "Whoever wants to be **first** must take **last** place and be the servant of **everyone** else."

See, true greatness is about serving others.

James and John, they just didn't get it because in the very next chapter, even after Jesus had said all of that, they pulled Jesus aside and they go: Hey, JC, can we have a little word here for just a minute? Keep this on the down low. We don't want the other fellows to know, because we don't think they can handle it. But we were just wondering, could we have the seats of greatest honor? Like seats one and two? We're brothers so we don't really care which one. It could be one and two, or two and one. It doesn't really matter. We'd just like to have the seats of greatest honor. Mom's in on it. She's totally cool with us asking you this.

And then Mark launches into this statement right here, "When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were **indignant**." I bet they were. You want to know why? They didn't ask. James and John asked first.

"So Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers in this world **lord it over** their people, and officials flaunt their **authority** over those under them. But among you,'" in the modgniK Kingdom, "**it will be different**. Whoever wants to be a **leader** among you must be your **servant**, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else.'" And then he brings us to the statement that we started with, "For even the Son of Man came not **to be served** but **to serve others** and to give his life as a ransom for many."

So can I just ask you today, what does this look like for you right now? Is there any area of your life that you are holding on to too tightly? A temporary role, or an ability, or a position that you just don't know what you'd be without it. It's become part of your identity. And to have it taken away, you'd be lost.

Here's what I want to do. I just want to give you two statements of application and three questions and then I'll be done. Here's the first statement. It's simply this:

Insecure people always make it about **them**.

They always make it about them. They say, "This is how I feel, this is what I deserve, this is how I've been wronged, this is what I've been missing out on, this is what you should do for me." Anyone know that person? Yeah, they'll probably be over for Thanksgiving so buckle up. And if you don't know that person, it might be you. We love you.

Here's the next statement:

Secure people stay **calm**, they stay **connected**, and they stay the **course**.

Here's what I mean by that. They stay calm, "Well, I'm not going to react to this right away. I'm going to be gracious. Even though I feel like maybe I've been treated unfairly, I'm going to stay connected, I refuse to isolate, shut down or be passive-aggressive. I'm going to continue to cheer other people on even if they are better than me. I'm going to stay the course. I'm not going to let this derail my week. I'm going to keep leaning in so that God might work in me and through me. And I'm going to continue to love God and love people."

And it is not going to be easy. It's going to confront your pride, and your ego, but you've got to ask what kind of a leader, what kind of a mom or dad, what kind of a person am I going to be? Am I going to be like Saul, who just had no room in his chariot for David? Or am I going to willingly serve others?

Listen. Jesus said: I want you to be good, no let's scratch that, I want you to be better, no—I want you to be great. And the way to greatness is not to take the things that you could and make it all about you. It's to leverage them so that other people are blessed and God is glorified.

Some of you are going, "Pastor Aaron, are you telling me I need to give up my title and my power, and my position, and my influence?" No, of course not. Jesus is, alright? Take it up with him.

The world clamors for all of that stuff. Can I just tell you that 2020 is going to be a tough year? It's going to be one of the nastiest, most divisive elections that our country has probably ever experienced. And we're going to need to remember this. We're going to need to remember that we don't power up, that we serve. We're going to need to remember to be gracious even when something pushes our buttons. The world clamors for power and position and title and I'm right and you're wrong. And Jesus goes: No, no, no, no, no. Not so with you. Not so with you. You live with a different set of Kingdom values.

And some of you may say, "Well, what do we get if we do this?" Well, this is what we get. We get a healthier you. We get a healthier marriage. We get a healthier family. We get a healthier work environment. We get a healthier church. We get a healthier community. That's what we get.

So, three questions. Here they are:

Am I making anything too much about me?

Can I **celebrate** others even when they have what I want?

Are you building God's **Kingdom** or your **platform**?

Jesus said, "I've not come to be served, but to serve." Let's take our cues from our leader and King.

Father, we come to you right now and we pray that this message could just not only be received by our heads but sink into our hearts and manifest itself through our thoughts and our actions and our words. It's tough. We will all struggle with this. We will never master it. But, God, I pray that you would help us to grow in it.

So, Lord, today I pray that if there are some here who just need to be comforted today because they are hurting, that you would comfort them. If there are some here today who just need to be humbled today, that you would humble them. That the application of this message would be tailor made to each and every individual. That they would hear and receive what it is that they uniquely needed to hear and receive by your Spirit through this teaching, because we need to be healthy, not for us, but because we want to glorify you and we want to love people well right into your backwards, upside down, eternal Kingdom.

We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.