

GOAT: Greatest of All Time | Unexpected Guest List

Aaron Brockett | Luke 14:1-24

All right, well I want to welcome all of our guests and first-time visitors at all of our campuses, whether you're joining us from our North campus, Downtown, West, our online crowd, those of you here at Northwest. I hope you guys are doing really good.

Several weeks ago, I had some visitors visiting from Germany. They actually planted a church there about three years ago in East Germany. They're doing amazing things.

They wanted to come over and spend a little bit of time with us, and so I was kind of taking them around, showing them some of our campuses, and we were going to go to dinner and have a conversation. So before heading out to dinner, we stopped by my office to get something, and so they went back with me.

They were standing in my office and they were looking at all my books. Those of you who know me well, you know I love historical biographies. I just will get somebody who made some significant difference in history. I just love to read their story.

So I've got all these historical biographies, and I wasn't really thinking this one through. My friends are from Germany and I had a biography on my bookshelf on Adolf Hitler. They pointed it out and they said, "Aaron, why do you have a book on Hitler?" It was really awkward there for a minute, and I was like, "I'm reading it for a friend."

They were really good-natured about it. They let me off the hook. They started laughing and they said, "Ah, that's okay." They said, "After all, he was, I guess, an effective leader," and I was just like, "Well, effective maybe; great, no." There's a difference between the two.

And if you're just now joining us for the series, that's what we've been talking about in this series with the funny name called GOAT. Many of you may know that that stands for Greatest Of All Time, and it's an expression that we use when maybe we're having a conversation, or a debate, around who the greatest athletes of all time are.

Now, it's pretty safe to say that most of us, me included, will never be the subject of that conversation, but all of us, regardless of who you are or what you do, I think all of us desire to be great in the sense that we want to make a difference with our lives. Would you not agree? Like we want to know that the eight or nine decades that we have on this planet that we're doing something meaningful and significant. We want to touch people's lives. We want to do something great.

The question though that we're wrestling with is how can I be great without it becoming all about me? And that's really kind of the issue. How do I go big without getting a big head? How do I attempt something significant without allowing my pride to get the best of me? And is it possible for me to be humble and, at the same time, attempt greatness?

Jesus would have a lot to say about that. He would say: Absolutely yes. You just need to get the order of it right.

As Christ followers, and I'm not going to assume that everybody listening to this right now would call yourself a Christ follower, but yet I think you would still agree with this statement that those of us who call ourselves Christians or following after Jesus, we should be some of the best employees and employers, we should be the best roommates, the best coworkers, the best tippers, the best family members because we are living our lives in response to the grace that's been given to us.

We should be some of the most humble people on the planet and yet, at the same time, we should be aspiring to do something great and significant with our lives. One of the ways that we say it around here is we want to be humble and hungry, that we want to continue to lean in, we want to continue to allow God to work in and through us, but we want to be humble.

So how do humility and greatness work together? That's what we're kind of sorting out in this series, and Jesus' half-brother, a guy named James, would say this in James 4:10. He would say, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor."

Peter would say something very similar. In 1 Peter 5:6, he says, "So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor."

Both of these passages say something very similar about how humility and greatness work together. God simply says: I need you to take on the posture of a servant. I need you to humble yourself and to get low and then—really it's an act of faith—trust that at the right time I will be the one who lifts you up.

Now I don't know if any of you can share with my struggle, but it's not that hard for me to humble myself. The challenging thing is to stay humble. Anybody with me? Because I can humble myself, but then, after a little while, I wonder if anybody is noticing my humility. And if I don't feel like anybody is noticing, then I try to let you know how humble I am. I end up self-promoting. That's what happens. It's not hard to get low; it's hard to stay low.

So we get low and we humble ourselves, and we let others go first and we take on the nature of a servant. After a while, we're like, "Well, I kind of feel like I'm becoming a doormat. I mean, nobody's really seeming to notice this. It isn't really seeming to pay off. God, when are you going to lift me up?" And God says: At the right time, which usually is never your time, and would you just trust me in this?

It's far, far better to humble yourself than it is to be humbled.

Jesus had so many incredible things to say about this, and that's what we're trying to walk through in this series.

Last week, if you were here, Jesus told a parable from Matthew chapter 20, the parable of the unfair employer, and I actually walked through what prompted the parable.

See, many times we miss the meaning of the parables because we don't know what prompted them. It wasn't just story time for Jesus; there was something that happened in real life that then prompted Jesus to tell a story because stories speak to the heart in ways that oftentimes propositions don't.

Well, in Luke 14, we see another parable that Jesus tells. It's a parable that might be familiar to many of you. It's called the Parable of the Great Banquet. If any of you have ever attended something called the great banquet in maybe a church or somebody invited you to it, this is really the basis for it.

But many times, we don't necessarily look at what prompted the Parable of the Great Banquet, so I want to look at that together. If you have a Bible or a Bible app, go ahead and meet me in Luke 14. If you don't, these passages that I'm going to walk through I'll put up on the monitor beside me.

But here's what's going on in the first six verses of Luke 14. Jesus gets invited to a Pharisee's house—it's a religious leader—for a meal.

Now, this is just a little tip for you. This is a tool for you to put in your toolbelt for Bible study. It's that anytime Jesus gets invited to a religious leader's house for a meal, things always go sideways. Always. It never turns out very good. It always gets uncomfortably awkward because there's always an agenda behind it. Jesus knows the agenda because he knows the condition of our hearts, and Jesus is not afraid of conflict. He always goes right at it.

So look at verses 1 and 2. It says, "One Sabbath day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, and the people were..." This is key. "... the people were watching him closely." Because it was a setup. Here was the setup. "There was a man there whose arms and legs were swollen."

Now the condition that this guy has is something called dropsy. It's a heart or a liver malfunction in which the body takes on excess fluid to the point that you would swell up. It was very, very painful and it was very socially ostracizing. This guy's in a lot of pain both physically and emotionally, and he is not an invited guest; he is bait.

They heartlessly take this guy and they bring him into this meal on the sabbath because they're trying to set Jesus up in a trap that he can't get out of because if Jesus heals the guy on the

sabbath, then they can say, “Well, Jesus broke the law.” If Jesus doesn’t heal him, they can say, “Well, Jesus doesn’t have a whole lot of compassion.” It’s a trap.

So Jesus knows this and so Jesus asks the Pharisees and the experts in the law—I love this—he goes: Hey guys, I got a question for you. “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the Sabbath day, or not?” Because as we all know, God can’t be bothered on Sundays, and so Jesus says: I just want to know is it okay for me to heal this guy on the sabbath? It’s exactly what they’re trying to trap him into doing? And it says, “When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man and healed him and sent him away.”

Man, I love Jesus. That is just so amazing. This is the equivalent of what he’s doing. He’s saying: Hey guys, I just want to know is it against the rules for me to run at the swimming pool (as he is in a full-on sprint)? Is it against the rules for me to bring in outside food and drink to the movie theater (because I do that all the time—just smuggle in the snack bag).

He basically brings this guy over. He goes: I know what you’re trying to do. Hey guys, is it illegal for me to do this? He’s picking a fight, and the guys all stand there. They’re just like stony silence. They don’t know quite fully what to do with this, and so in verse 5, Jesus says: Hey, if you had a child or if you had something valuable, like an ox, that fell into a well on the sabbath, would you not reach in to get them out? And they all just sort of stand there flatfooted.

These guys are just as coldhearted as the all-day workers that we looked at last week from Matthew chapter 20. So even though they were watching Jesus closely, Jesus is watching them closely, and so he turns the tables on them.

Look at verse 7. “When Jesus noticed that all who had come to the dinner were trying to sit in the seats of honor near the head of the table, he gave them this advice: ‘When you are invited to a wedding feast, don’t sit in the seat of honor. What if someone who is more distinguished than you has also been invited? The host will come and say, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then you will be embarrassed, and you will have to take whatever seat is left at the foot of the table! Instead, take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host sees you, he will come and say, ‘Friend, we have a better place for you!’ Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests.’”

And then Jesus says something very similar to what he said last week. He says, “For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Now I want you to get the picture of what’s going on. Jesus has been invited into this lunch or this banquet, and their tables were not like what we have today, all right? They didn’t get this table at Restoration Hardware where y’all sit up to a seat where it’s about chest level. Their tables were about six inches off the ground and it was shaped like a horseshoe. There were seat cushions around the horseshoe, and you would recline at the table and you would eat with one hand.

This is part of the reason why they would wash each other's feet before a meal, because your neighbor's feet would be in your face. Very unappetizing as you eat a meal.

So that's what was going on. The most important person in the room, usually the host, would sit at the head of this horseshoe table. Then the next-important person would sit at the right, the next-important person would sit at their left, and then it would go back and forth all the way down to the lowest seats of honor.

So Jesus walks into this banquet and he notices that people are jockeying for the positions of highest honor. So you got one guy who takes a little red Styrofoam cup and he writes his name and he sets it down to save his spot. Then somebody else comes and moves the cup and flips over the seat cushion to save their seat. Some guy takes his fork and licks it and then sets it down; nobody's going to sit there.

Jesus just kind of notices that all this is going down, and he says: Hey guys, can I give you some advice? And this is more than just an etiquette lesson; Jesus can see the condition of their hearts and he knows that all of this angling for position reveals that when that happens, like the only person that you're really paying attention to in the room is yourself.

I mean, it can happen all the time. It can very easily happen in church where we just sort of walk into the room and we kind of wonder, "Where am I going to sit and what's my experience going to be like and who am I going to know and is anybody going to say hi to me?" And what ends up happening is that when we're just primarily thinking about how we are going to be received or how we are going to be respected, then it makes us blind to the condition of other people in the room.

So Jesus says: Hey man, when you walk into a room, don't just automatically assume that you're the most important person in the room; just automatically take the position of a servant. And it's always a win-win because what'll happen is people will respect you for doing it or it just might be that the host will say, "Hey, why don't you come on up and sit in the seat of higher honor," and then you actually are honored in front of everybody, but if you take the most important place, that's just going to end in either people losing respect for you or you being publicly embarrassed.

This application is so true for us as a church. I just want to continue to reiterate just how important it is that when we come into a place like this that we come with an others-first mentality, that we don't just sit back and say, "Hey, I wonder if anybody's going to say hi to me?" but we actually proactively go and say hi to others.

If we come in and the worship service has started and the lights are dark and you notice somebody in the aisle that can't really seem to find his seat, don't just sit there and go, "Well, I hope the ushers do their job." Become an usher. I right then and there ordain you as an usher, all right? (If that's the word. I don't know what that is.)

So you just go out and you just automatically start helping people find seats. You just automatically assume that it's somebody's first weekend, because I'm guaranteeing you it's somebody's first weekend, and you begin to just roll out the red carpet for anybody that you meet and you take on the posture of a servant and you lose yourself in that. If you do that every single weekend, your experience here will be far more enriching than if you just come with yourself in mind.

Jesus goes on in verse 12. Then he turns to the host and he says: Hey, I actually need to call you on the carpet on something. When you host a lunch or a banquet, don't just "invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you."

So in Jewish society, meals were the primary forum where business deals got done. Not much has changed. So what would happen is there would be a host who would invite people to a meal, but it wasn't just out of the goodness of their hearts, it was "who can I invite that'll actually help me get ahead?"

Jesus says: Hey, when you do that, just make sure that there are moments and times when you actually have a meal not for what you can get out of it but for how you can bless other people, and so he says sometimes you just need to invite people who can't ever do anything for you in return.

Could you imagine being the host of this dinner party right then and there? It's like, "Hey, wait a second! We brought you here to put you on trial. I'm not on trial." And I love this. Somebody sitting around the horseshoe notices this tension in the room and look with me at verse 15. It says, "Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, 'What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet in the Kingdom of God!'"

There's always somebody sitting around the table trying to spiritualize everything, isn't there? I would love to know this guy's Myers-Briggs personality assessment because my guess is it's somebody who can't stand conflict. He sees Jesus is just going at this guy. It's getting tense, and so somebody just goes, "Well, won't it be great when we all go to heaven?"

And Jesus is like: You know what? I'm really glad you brought that up because, as a matter of fact, the Kingdom of God is like a banquet. And then he launches into his parable. So all that was setup for the parable.

Here's what Jesus says. Here's the story. "A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations." Many. "When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, 'Come, the banquet is ready.' But they all began making excuses."

Here were the excuses. There were three of them. “One said, ‘I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.’” Really lame excuses.

Have you ever invited somebody to go with you somewhere and they blow you off and they’re trying to not make it look like a blow-off but it’s really a blow-off? That’s what’s going on here. I mean, come on. Who buys a house sight unseen? “Hey, I just closed on this house. I should probably go check it out.” Who buys a car and then says, “Well, later we’re going to go test-drive it.” That’s what they’re doing. They’re trying to come up with an excuse not to come.

The third guy maybe has the most legitimate excuse, but I don’t know. The third guy goes, “I just got married, so I can’t come.” And you’re like, “Oh, well we totally get that.” It looks like a good excuse, but I don’t know if it really is. I mean, it’s sort of like he’s throwing his wife under the bus there. I mean, what bride wouldn’t want to get dressed up and go to a fancy banquet?

So he’s basically saying that there are all these excuses that are coming in. In verse 21, “The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, ‘Go quickly...’” Notice the urgency behind that. “Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.”

So this invitation to this great banquet has gone out and there are these excuses that have come back and the master is offended. There are a lot of no-shows. So he changes the plan and he says with urgency: Hey, go back out and hit the streets again and you invite anyone that you can.

So we get the impression that a few came, but look at verse 22, “After the servant had done this, he reported, ‘There is still room for more.’ So his master said, ‘Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full.’” And then he offers this warning. “For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.”

That’s the parable. So what does it mean? Well man, we can spend all day just kind of unpacking that parable and just all the principles that come from it. Let me just leave you with three applications from this parable. If you’re taking notes, these would be the things to write down. You can take your phone and take a picture of the screen beside me so that way you can think about it later.

Here’s the first one: The invitation to our father’s banquet is really, really urgent.

Now in the parable, so you know, the master who hosts the banquet, that represents God. The servant who goes out to invite everybody to come, that represents Jesus. In fact, when Matthew tells this parable, he adds a little detail. He says that those he invited actually murdered the servant who invited them, which is just a clear connection to Jesus.

Then those who have been invited, that's all of us, and the banquet represents heaven. The banquet represents the Kingdom of God.

Now I don't know what comes to your mind when you think about heaven, but for a long time I had it all wrong. I don't know if you think heaven is just one long, never-ending choir practice. How many of you have honestly had that perspective before where we're all just wearing adult diapers, sitting on puffy clouds playing golden harps? If that's your view of heaven, that ain't it. Who wants to do that for eternity?

The kingdom of heaven is better described as—in fact, one of the most common analogies of heaven in the Scriptures is—a party. How great is that? You want to know one of the reasons why we all love parties so much? It's because God loves parties.

The very first public miracle that Jesus would ever do was at a party. It was a wedding banquet and they ran out of wine. Jesus was like: No, we ain't shutting this party down. Let's go and get this party started again. So he turns the water into wine.

So God loves parties and he says: Listen, the Kingdom of God is everything that your heart has been longing for that you can't satisfy here. So heaven isn't like well one day God's going to beam us up to someplace in the universe called heaven. No, actually God comes and he restores this place. He undoes what sin has messed up and he restores it to what it was fully meant to be. He says: The Kingdom of God is coming. The Kingdom of God is your greatest heart's desire. The Kingdom of God is a banquet in which you come empty and God makes you full.

(In response to clapping, Aaron says, "Thank you but you're messing with my momentum.")

So the servant sends out all these invitations and they make these like lame excuses. "Well, a banquet. That doesn't sound all that great. I mean, I got some property I gotta go check out." "That sounds fantastic, but I got some oxen I have to ride." "I've got some relationships. These relationships actually mean a little bit more to me now."

"I'm too busy trying to get full here, God, to come and be filled." That's what they're saying.

So now the master urgently says to the servant: Man, go fill this table. God's going to fill his table with or without you and me. He says: Go fill this table with people who have room—room in their schedules, room in their priorities, room in their souls. Fill it with open people. Fill it with humble people. I don't care who they are, what they look like, where they live, what their past is. I don't care if they're wearing the right clothes. All I really want is people who are willing to come and empty themselves so that they can be filled.

This is the heartbeat behind our church. This is why we do what we do. It's why we'll never stop. We will never circle the wagons, so to speak, and say, "Well, I think we've done enough. I think we're big enough. I think we've reached enough people. I think we've started enough

campuses. I think we've started enough churches. I think we've sent out some of our best leaders enough; I mean, it just hurts too much. I think we're done. Let's just settle down and let's just do church."

No, the master is throwing a party for people who he loves and he hates empty seats. Eternity is long and time is short, and so the invitation is urgent.

Here's the second word of application that I want to leave with you: Change is really, really hard—I think many of us would probably agree with that—but it keeps us on mission, in our lives and in the church.

Did you notice in the parable that the master, when he sent out the invitation and it came back with these rejections, he very quickly changed the plan and he said: Okay, I sent you out into the primary streets and they rejected it, so now go out into the country lanes. You know the roads that are all just numbered? Go out and hit the hedges, hit the bushes, and find anybody that you can find. And the master was willing to change so that his house could be full.

I don't know who originally said this, but somebody once said if you're going to attempt something significant, you have got to have a plan. If you're going to achieve something significant, you have got to be willing to scrap the plan and to discern when you need to make the appropriate change in order to stay on mission. And that's the key. We never change just for change's sake. You always make a change so that way you can stay as effective as you can towards the mission that Jesus has given us.

There are a lot of churches that can very easily slip into maintenance and lose the mission and we never want to do that.

Now, tradition and nostalgia and comfort and preferences, those aren't bad things, but when they trump mission, then a change needs to occur.

Many times, we have to say, "Okay, now why are we doing this again and is this really effective? Is this really inviting as many people to the banquet? Because if it's not, then we need to be willing to move on from that method and we need to be on mission.

It kind of reminds me of the newlywed couple who gets married. They're spending their first Christmas together, and they don't have a lot of money. So they go out and they buy a ham at the store. She starts preparing the ham and she takes out a knife and she cuts off both sides of the ham, wastes all this really good meat.

He gets a little bit irritated with her. He's like, "Honey, we don't have a lot of money. Why are you wasting all that meat?" She's like, "I don't know. This is just the way my mom always made ham." And he's like, "Well, call your mom and ask her why she did that."

So she calls her mom and she says, “Mom, why do we cut off both sides of the ham?” She’s like, “I really don’t know. It’s just the way that my mom did it.” And she’s like, “Well, why did grandma do it?” She says, “I don’t know. Let’s call her.”

So they call grandma and ask her. She says, “I don’t really know why we did it that way. My mom always did it that way.”

Great-grandma’s no longer around anymore to ask her, so they pull out great-grandma’s recipe book, and in the margins next to the recipe for ham, she had written, “I didn’t have a pan big enough. Had to cut off both sides of the ham.”

So what began as just a very practical thing turned into tradition that a couple generations down the line they didn’t even know why they were doing it anymore. That’s a funny story and yet it happens all the time in church and it’s not funny, that we end up getting sidetracked from what it is that God has asked us to do and to be as a church.

You know, God is not against change. In fact, he talks about it all the time. In Isaiah chapter 43:19, he says, “For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?” See, that’s the question for all of us. Are we discerning enough? Are we living in the Spirit enough? Are we on mission enough with God that when he presents something new we don’t miss it?

He says, “I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland.”

If we’re going to continue to invite people to the banquet, we’ve got to be comfortable with change.

I want you to know this: Part of my responsibility around here is to spend a lot of time in thought and in prayer and discerning and asking God, “God, where are you leading us as a church?”

In fact, my team all the time reminds me that I need to celebrate more because my head is constantly like a year down the road because I’m such a visionary. And yet, what I want you to know is I will never make a change just for change’s sake. Whenever I make a change, it’s because I want us to be as effective as we can with the mission.

And I also want you to know this: Sometimes I don’t get it right. And sometimes I don’t communicate it very well. In that case, then I’ll always be the first one to own up to it and say, “Man, I’m sorry and let me redirect,” and that’s why this is not a one-man show. That’s why I’ve got a team of people around me and elders who push back and sometimes say no, because God moves collectively through us.

I just want you to know my heart. I want as many people to get to the banquet table as possible. And if I discern something that's keeping people from getting there, we're going to change it.

Here's the third and the final thing: I need you to be all in. I need you to be all in around here, on the mission that Jesus has given us. I wanted to share this application point with you before our church sort of breaks for the summer, all right?

It's May. It's wedding season. It's graduation season. Next weekend, Memorial Day weekend will be the lowest-attended weekend of the entire year. I'm already buckling up for it. I know that some of you are going to split and do vacations and we'll see you in August.

So I know that's going to happen, and so I wanted to get this in front of you now so that you can be preparing for the fall and what it is that God might do in and through our church.

In fact, I want to ask something. I want to be somewhat bold in this. If you, right now at all of our campuses, if you have accepted Jesus at Traders Point, if you maybe rededicated your life to Jesus, if you maybe perhaps grew up in church but this is actually the church where you started to grow spiritually, or maybe this is the first church that you've ever been engaged in, would you just be willing, at all of our campuses right now, to stand to your feet? Just really quickly, just stand to your feet.

Look at that. Isn't that amazing? I don't know what it looks like at the other campuses. A lot of people here at Northwest. That's incredible! Thank you so much for that!

That's been scary for me every single service because if nobody stood, end of sermon.

I need to be reminded of that all the time. And what I would simply say to you is that now it's time for you to pass that on to others. If this is the place where you met Jesus, you started growing, you don't just keep that to yourself; you turn and you begin to serve others. You turn and you begin to invite others to the banquet table.

So what does that mean? Well, I just want to encourage you to get engaged in some way. Now listen, I know that it's challenging to get engaged in a big church. If you are an introvert like I am, it's even especially challenging because it's very difficult maybe to build relationships with people. Maybe you feel invisible in the room. It all comes through relationships.

When I say get engaged, I mean just build a relationship with someone. Just with someone. Begin to serve somewhere, jump into a group somewhere, begin to be generous somewhere, get in on mission somewhere.

Every time that you come onto one of our campuses, just be on mission and say, "God, who is the one person you want me to cross paths with right now who I can encourage to come to my father's banquet table and get filled?" That's all you need to do. It's coming externally focused,

looking around at others, not sitting back and saying, “Well I hope somebody will come say hi to me,” but you actively go and you say hi to somebody else.

In between services here at Northwest, I had a lady walk up to me and she just walked right up and she had tears in her eyes and she just simply said this. She didn’t say hello, she didn’t tell me her name, she just said, “Can I find hope here?”

It caught me a little flatfooted. I was like, ...stuttering...”Yes.” I was like C’mon. Spit it out, Brockett, and she’s looking at me. And then she said this. She goes, “I’ve been the kind of person that has just sort of flown under the radar most of my adult life and I’m learning that that doesn’t work.”

Maybe that would be somebody listening to this right now. It’s easier for you to fly under the radar. It’s easier for you to sort of be anonymous. And I get that. I’m telling you that doesn’t work. You have to find yourself in community somewhere.

I want to speak to our online crowd, those of you who are watching online. I think it’s great that technology affords us to do that, but I want you to know why we do online. We don’t do online to replace this; we do online to supplement it. We do online primarily for those people who are far from God, would never want to set foot on a campus for all kinds of reasons, and it’s a great place to start in your spiritual journey, not a great place to stay.

If you have sick kids at home, if you’re traveling, you can’t get to a physical location, I get all that. But every now and then I’ll have somebody come up to me and go, “Man, we just think the online’s so great, like Facebook live and Traders Point live is so great. I mean, we just like to watch you at home in our bed with our pajamas and our coffee. It’s just fantastic,” and I’m just like, “Ahhhhhhh!” You know? It’s like, “That’s not what it’s meant for!”

And here’s the primary reason why. I’m not trying to guilt you if you’re at home right now in your bed. Well, maybe a little. But what I’m primarily trying to say is who are you serving? Like if you’re just watching at home, you’re not interacting with other people. Jesus always grows us in community, not separate from it.

I know some of you may be like, “Well, I tried a group and it was horrible, man. Those people are high maintenance and somebody kept never showing up, and that one person like really betrayed me,” and I just want you to know when did we ever get it in our minds that a group had to be perfect? Groups aren’t perfect because they’re filled with people.

Jesus had a group and look how it went. Just think about that for a minute, all right? I mean, none of his group could stay awake with him all night to pray. They were always jockeying for the greatest positions. They weren’t taking this humility thing seriously. They heard Jesus preach the sermon; they weren’t applying it. And Peter bailed on Jesus when he was arrested.

Then you got the whole Judas thing. Here's the thing about Judas. Jesus knew that Judas would betray him and he invited him to be part of his group anyway.

God will use the most difficult people to grow your faith and to develop your maturity. I want to encourage you to lean in and to be all in here.

Here's another part of what that means. When you show up every weekend, are you showing up expecting God to move and speak in your life? Or are you coming in maybe distracted with the week, which I totally get?

Hey, I want you to know that every single weekend when I get up here to preach, I never fully know what's going to happen. I prepare. Preparing is sort of like putting the firewood in the firepit, but I can't ignite it. The Holy Spirit does that. And sometimes he doesn't. Sometimes I'm up here all by myself.

Sometimes it surprises me. Like last weekend. I was in London and I got back and I was jetlagged and I didn't have very much time to prepare a sermon. I was really underprepared actually, and I got more positive feedback about last weekend's message than any I've preached all year long, and I'm like, "That's not fair!"

And I've had a number of you come up and say, "You know what? You should preach jetlagged more often. We like you better jetlagged," and I'm just like, "Is that a compliment? Because that doesn't feel like a compliment."

What I want you to know is every single weekend I'm going to put myself in a position where I'm just going to say, "God, would you speak."

So the question is are you coming to whatever campus you're attending anticipating God might speak? I don't even begin to presume that every single thing that I say up here you think is great. It doesn't need to be. If there's just one thing that God pushes into your heart through what is taught, then the whole time to prepare has been totally worth it.

I want to conclude our time together with a quote from D. L. Moody. Listen to what he writes. He says, "I firmly believe that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and self-seeking and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Spirit will come and fill every corner of our hearts; but if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and self-seeking and pleasure and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God; and I believe many a man is praying to God to fill him when he is full already with something else. Before we pray that God will fill us, I believe we ought to pray that He would empty us." That's what humbling means. "There must be an emptying before there can be a filling. And when the heart is turned upside-down and everything that is contrary to God is turned out, then the Spirit will come. God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves."

How tragic would it be for us to be outside of the doors of the banquet starving to death with a dinner invitation clutched in our hand? Humbling yourself means emptying yourself so that God can fill you up. That's what it means to be great. That's how Jesus defines greatness. And that's how your life will change and the world will change.

Let's pray.

Father, we come to you right now so grateful for how brilliant Jesus is as he teaches and as he models for us humility and greatness.

God, I pray that each and every person in this room would be challenged and convicted just as I am, but also comforted and encouraged to lean in and to trust that when we humble ourselves you'll lift us up.

God, I pray that our church would be filled with a group of imperfect, broken, sinful people who are just simply willing to gather here week after week after week and empty ourselves so that you can fill us by your Spirit. The world desperately needs it.

The world is searching around for answers right now to school shootings and the mess in politics and scandals and everything that's going on in the world and everything that's broken at home. We're constantly searching for answers. And the answer is that we would stop chasing after what it is that we think would make us full and we would focus on emptying ourselves so that you can fill.

Meet us in this space and this place as we lift our voices to you. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.