

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

AWAKEN TO PERSPECTIVE | ASLEEP

AARON BROCKETT | OCTOBER 22, 2023

Video of Gary and Brenda Hessell

Gary

My name is Gary Hessell. I work for a local office supply dealer.

Brenda

I'm Brenda Hessell. I am a semi-retired dental hygienist. But more importantly a mom and a Mimi of nine.

We both grew up in the same denomination. However, when I was a teenager in high school, I heard the gospel and the Good News of Jesus for the first time that meant something to me. It was very personal.

However, in those years after, I didn't really make a change. But through all of that time I just had a hunger for something that I really didn't know what it was.

Gary

I would say that I knew nothing about a relationship with Jesus. I felt like I had to be good but I didn't know if I was going to be good enough. I was searching for something more.

When Brenda started going to Traders Point, I was against it. It wasn't for me. I felt like if I went I was turning my back on my religious heritage that I grew up with. When I walked in it pretty much blew me away because it was exactly what I didn't expect.

I started hearing some of the truth that I had never heard before and the application.

Brenda

I literally was sitting on the edge of my seat. It was like I was hearing things for the first time. And the Bible became alive.

When you know what the truth is, then you start looking at the world through that lens, whether it's my time, my children, my work, my service, my ministry—it all has a new purpose and that purpose is to bring glory to the Lord.

Gary

I felt like I needed to get involved with something bigger than just myself. I wanted to serve and to give back to other people just because God served me.

I started to want to give financially. It was hard. It always is hard because there is always something else you can find a way to spend money on. But prior to that, it was mine. I started to understand that this is God's money. God owns it all and that I needed to give back because God has given so much to me.

Brenda

My purpose wasn't about me anymore. Jesus really became the most important part of my life and so that changed everything.



I think when I look back on the 35 plus years that we've been a part of this church, I fall on my purpose as Matthew 28 when Jesus tells His disciples, "Go and tell and I will be with you always." So it's not just up to us. He's just asking us to go and tell.

At Traders Point we go and tell all through our city and through the world. And that's what is so exciting to me, it's that we're doing it. We may be doing it differently than we did 35 years ago when we first walked in the door, but we're still teaching the truth of who God is, what He did for us, and how much He loves each and every person.

Gary

I get excited now that I'm one of those old people that we saw when we first started. And I see these little kids running in church every Sunday. They are so excited to be here. And knowing that these little kids are going to be sharing the truth and they're going to be loved and they are going to know Jesus...

Brenda

I think a challenge right now for us is our age because we're heading toward retirement years. And sometimes there is this mentality of, "We've done it all. We get to kick back and relax and we don't have to do much anymore. We just get to watch and enjoy."

Gary

I think we both feel excited to find out what great adventure God is going to put us on. Rather than the tendency to say, "Well, we're done. We've given financially. We've served, all of these things. So we're just going to sit back and take it easy now," I'm more excited about finding out what God has in store for us. I don't know what that is. But we want to be really involved in the kingdom.

We will not retire from kingdom work.

Brenda

We just want to continue on this journey with what we can: time, treasure, talent whatever it is to pour into the next generation and those people who haven't walked through the doors. It's why we do whatever we do because Jesus loves us so much. We want other people to know that too.

Aaron

Hey, give it up for Brenda and Gary. Wasn't that so good? So good. Brenda and Gary are two of my favorite people on the planet. And to be able to hear their stories is so encouraging to me. And I love what Gary said there toward the end. I don't want you to miss. He said, "We will never retire from kingdom work." Man, that is so, so good.

And so I just want to encourage you with that and welcome you whether you're joining us at one of our locations or online.

If you've got your Awaken guidebook go ahead and grab it and find page 62. That's where we are going to be together today. And if you don't have one of these, you can stop by and get one at the hub on your way out.

For our online family, you can go to vision.tpcc.org and you can download this electronically. And if you've never had a chance to look through this, today is your first day to be here, later today when you look through this, what you'll find is just details



about our vision initiative, group content, a place to take notes, and this commitment card.

Every week of this series I've just been asking you to put this in a prominent place where you'll see it every day, maybe this is where you drink your coffee in the morning, where you do your reading, your reflecting during the day.

And this isn't one of these cards that you look at once and then kind of check the box and be done. This is something that I really want you to allow God to just sort of wrestle with you about.

That's how Lindsay and I want to use this. Here's how I would say it: Use it as a devotional guide and couple it with this question, "God, what does it look like for us to be awakened in this season? What does it look like for us to take a courageous step of faith and be bold? God, what does it look like for us to put You first and best?"

There is a date that I want you to circle on your calendars. I hope that you can be here, Saturday, November 4. It's something we're calling Advanced Commitment Night. This is going to be at the Northwest campus, but it's for everybody—whatever calls Traders Point home at all of our locations.

I'm even hoping that there are some people online who will get in the car, get on a plane and be here for that weekend for Advanced Commitment Night. It's going to be a time where we are going to pray, we're going to worship, we're going to celebrate, and we're going to commit together.

I just think that it's going to be a special evening and a historical one in the life of our church. And when I say historic, I mean I'm just imagining that images from that night are going to make their way to a history wall one day in the life of our church and I don't want you to miss it.

If you've got a Bible go ahead and find Matthew, chapter 6. Matthew, chapter 6 is where we're going to be today. We're going to study several passages together, but they are direct quotes from Jesus, Himself. It's so, so rich.

As you're finding that passage, if you've been in our church for any number of years, you've likely heard me tell this story before, because it's one of my favorites. But there are a number of you who haven't heard it before. Even if you have heard it before it's good for another laugh. Alright?

Several years ago I was standing in my office looking out my window (by the way, I have this really glamorous view of our parking lot and a cornfield. It's amazing. You should see it.) So, I'm standing there looking out the window between meetings. I'm just doing some thinking, reflecting.

And I see my wife, it's the middle of the day, and she's walking out of the front doors of the church toward the truck. It's not uncommon for her to be here, but I wasn't expecting for her to be here. I didn't know she was here.

And so she's walking away from me, and as she normally does, she looked good. So I picked up my phone and I said, "Hey, babe. Looking at you right now. You look amazing today." And I sent a little kissing emoji or whatever.



I sent that off to her and she texted me right back. And she said, "Well, thank you. I appreciate that. I'm at home right now. Who are you looking at?"

Have you ever had one of those moments where time slows way down. And here was the dilemma. My heart is beating out of my chest. My adrenaline is flowing. So I go back to the window and I look again. No, I'm not going to do that. I'm kind of stuck in this moment.

And it seemed like an eternity. But in reality it was probably just a few seconds. She texted me back, one word, "Gotcha." What makes that story even better is if you know my wife personally. I was, in that moment, I was... All my senses came to life. I was full of adrenaline pumping.

That's what we're talking about in this series. What does that look like for us to do that spiritually? We've just been getting really curious together as a church family. Are we asleep, spiritually speaking? Are we awakened to the voice of God, the things that He wants to say to us and the things that He wants us to do?

So, we're just recognizing that the older that we get the more we realize how quickly time flies. Isn't that true? And just how precious the moments are in front of us.

And we've just been looking at these words from Jesus every single week from John 10 where Jesus said... By the way, if you've ever wondered what God's intentions are for your life, listen to the voice of Jesus, because Jesus is God embodied.

So Jesus says, "This is God's intention for you." He said, "I've come that you may have life and have it abundantly." It's this idea that it's this fulfilled kind of a life.

"I'm not going to leave anything on the table. I'm just going to wring out every last ounce of potential that I've got in this life. I'm going to be fully awakened, presently in the moment. I'm not going to let the past rob me. I'm not going to let the future rob me. I'm going to be awakened right in the moment."

And I'm just trying to really hone in on that even in my own life.

So, we just got back from fall break a couple of days ago. We've been taking our kids, ever since they were little, to this place in southwest Missouri called Branson, Missouri. Big Cedar Lodge is there, Table Rock lake, Silver Dollar City—we've just done all of that stuff since they were little. And it's kind of like a family tradition now. Our kids love it. They look forward to it.

But they are getting a little bit older and we're realizing it. Our kids are 21, 19, 16, and 11. Man, I can remember going to Silver Dollar City with them when they were little kids. And now that they are getting older it's just hitting me, "How many more of these do I have left with them?" You know?

So this year I was like, "You know what? I'm going to be fully present, fully in the moment." And we went to Silver Dollar City. Now, here's my thing about amusement parks. I'm not against them, I'm just not really for them. It's not that I don't love having fun at an amusement park, it's just that I don't like taking out a second mortgage on the house to stand in line. Right? It's like I'm paying somebody to stand in line. That's how I look at it.

Usually at about 4 or 5 o'clock I'm done. I'm tapping out. I'm ready to go. My family usually knows that. This year my kids came up to me—they send my 11-year-old to ask the tough stuff. They know that I can't say no to her.

So they came up and they go, "Hey, we really want to stay 'til closing. We really want to stay until after dark and ride some rollercoasters after dark." Now, normally I'd be like, "Nope, we're out." But this year it was like, "You know, I don't know how many more of these I've got left with them. I'm just going to live right in the moment."

I got on a rollercoaster with two of my youngest daughters. And we caught this image. I brought a picture of it. Those are my two daughters down below. The poor kid in the red sweatshirt has no idea thousands of people are looking at him right now. I feel sorry for him.

But what you need to understand is that I am so tired in this moment. I'm like ready to go to bed. But I'm like, "I am going to lean in. I am not going to miss this moment with my kids because I want to wring every last ounce of it."

This is what Jesus is saying to us in John, chapter 10. Man, don't miss the moment. Don't miss the moment. Man, if the church would just wake, if we would just wake up. And I don't think that this is any accident. I'm hearing from so many of you who are saying things like this to me. You're saying, "I had no idea how much I needed this series until we got into it. I had no idea that I was actually asleep spiritually. I had no idea that I was kind of in this slumber and God is beginning to wake me up.

Right now we can look at... This seems to be colliding with just the reality that we've come to recognize just how broken and messed up our world really is.

It doesn't take very much to be reminded of that. You can be reminded of that every day, 24/7. You just open up your phone, you turn on the apps, you look at the news channels: CNN, FOX, wherever you worship.

Well, that just went over everybody's head.

So, you kind of watch this. You kind of hone in on it. And here's what can happen when we look at the wars going on in the Ukraine and Israel, we see the economy, we see injustice, and we see social issues—we see all of this stuff just spinning out of control. And people on the extremes of every issue. Nobody seems to be able to find common ground. We look at this and here's what happens—fear and anger flow to the surface. We are so fearful and so angry. And we tell people about it on social media.

Fear and anger are natural emotions, they are just not always helpful. What's underneath fear and anger is grief. Here's what is grieving all of us regardless of what we believe, regardless of you being a Christian or not a Christian, regardless of you being left leaning or right leaning—here's what we're grieving: This world is broken and not as it should be. And all of us know it.

We look at it and we're like... Have you ever just found yourself going, "Man, who in the world is going to fix this?" And I think God kind of looks at us and goes, "Ahem. Hey man, if the Spirit of God is living within you, go look in the mirror." He's going, "You are my plan A. I want you to awaken to this moment, the world is broken."

So, we've got to understand this, when God sent His Son 2,000 years ago to live the life you and I could never live, die the death we deserved to die and He went into a grave and He walked out of a grave—that wasn't a cool trick.

That wasn't God going, "Tada. You can be forgiven of your sins and one day when you die you get zapped out of here and go to heaven." That would be reducing the gospel message.

When Jesus walked out of the grave, here's what was happening. He was declaring that He is King and now His kingdom is coming. So, what He says to you and me, if the Spirit of God is living in us, we are saved from something for something. And we always forget that for part. We fall asleep to it.

And God says, "Listen. I want you to live as ambassadors in a foreign nation. This world is not your home, but the kingdom of God that is coming."

God is going to redeem and restore this fallen world and put things to right that have gone wrong. So what the world needs to see, they need to see that in us—the way we live our lives, the way we handle our resources, our disposition.

When it comes to things like fear and anger, how do we handle all of that? What does the world see in you? Does the world see a spirit of fear and anger or does the world see your King and His kingdom coming? And does that then create an appetite for that kingdom?

It's kind of like this. If you've never been to Italy but you spend time with a group of Italians and you just see how joyful they are and their culture and the language and the food—oh the food is so good—and then you go, "Oh, man. I really want to go to Italy."

Same kind of thing. When the world gets around Christians, and they see our language and they hear how we talk and our disposition do they say, "Oh, man. I'm really interested in the kingdom of God," or does it turn them away?

Guys, this is why Christians who get wrapped up in fear and anger is such a travesty to the kingdom of God. This is why Christians who just blend into the values of the rest of the world is such a travesty to the kingdom of God. This is why Christians who fail to walk the talk—hypocrisy—is such a travesty to the kingdom of God because we're not representing our King and His kingdom very well.

So, this is what we have been talking about when it comes to Awaken. And our passage, our anchor passage, is Ephesians 5. I'm going to read it for us one more time because this is where the vision comes from—the Awaken vision. Paul writes and he says:

"But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore," that word therefore is an application word, "it says, 'Awake...'"

So, if you want to know where we got this word Awaken that's it. This passage. Ephesians 5.

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' Look carefully then how you walk," some translations say, be careful how you live, "not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time," you've got to be fully awakened and present in the

moment. Why? "...because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Ephesians 5:13-17 (ESV)

So on week one, just to recap with you, we said that the way for us to be awakened is we've got to first recognize that we're asleep. Last week we said, "Okay, the way to wake up is to walk by faith." Instead of waiting and making sure that we have a false sense of control, making sure that everything is going to be okay, and then step out—that's not faith.

But actually going, "You know what, God? I'm going to relinquish control. I'm going to trust that You are sovereign and that You are a good God. And You've made promises. So, I'm going to actually step out in faith and I'm not going to give You some of my leftovers, I'm going to give You first and best." That was last week.

This week here's where we are going if you are taking notes. When we are awakened, here's the result. The result is that we have a new set of lenses by which we view all of life. We've got a brand new perspective on everything once we've been awakened.

This is what Jesus is driving at in Matthew, chapter 6. I hope I've given you enough time to find it. Matthew, chapter 6, starting in verse 21. Jesus says these actually very familiar words. He says:

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21 (ESV)

Now, I'm just going to go out on a limb and say that's not the first you've heard that verse. If you've been in our church for any length of time you've heard me say it. But maybe it's not even in our church. Maybe you're relatively new to Bible study. You've likely heard that verse or read it on a coffee cup or on a bumper sticker or something. Now, here's the challenge when it comes to familiar verses. And I'm actually speaking from experience here. We stop listening to them. Oh, we hear them, but we stop listening. They almost becomes like white noise. They becomes a box that we check, "Oh, yeah. I've heard that verse. I've heard sermons on that verse. I've led a small group Bible study on that verse."

It always cracks me up when I run into some of you in the lobby and you're like, "Hey, what are you preaching on today?"

"John 3:16."

"Oh, I know that." You just kind of discard it. "Oh, yeah." Check the box.

We kind of discard what Scripture says of itself, that it is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword. Meaning that the Spirit of God is actually breathing through the text, actually applying it in fresh ways in your spiritual journey. Man, don't ever write off a familiar passage.

And as we look at a passage, if we were to read it with fresh eyes, kind of pretending like we've never heard it before, it almost kind of reads a bit counter intuitive, doesn't it?

You almost have to do a double take whenever Jesus says this you're like, "Wait a second. Did He say that wrong?" I almost think that Jesus would say, "Where your heart is," that's the idea of where your interests lie, where your passions are, where your concerns are, "then that's where your treasure will be also." That seems to make more sense.

But actually, the Greek word shows that this is a valuative statement and that Jesus means what He says here. In fact, this is another way you could say what Jesus says. You could say this, "Find out where your treasure is, and you'll likely find your heart." Or, maybe you could say it this way, "Wherever you'd like for your treasure to be, go ahead and send your heart there."

It's the idea that the way Jesus says this is as if your treasure and your heart are connected with a thin fishing line wire. From a distance you can't detect it. Up close you can see it. Wherever your treasure goes, your heart follows behind it.

Now, look back at the verse just before this, because what Jesus says offers a little bit of context. He says in verse 19:

"Do not lay up for yourselves," lay up is this idea of saving or storing. So He goes, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth," if you were here on week one, I gave that illustration of the dot and the line, that would be the dot.

So Jesus would say, don't store up for just for the dot, "where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal..." Matthew 6:19a (ESV)

Man, that's just a good reminder that our stuff is just stuff. Have you ever gone into a garage or a basement or an attic, wherever you keep your stuff and you open up a storage bin and you start rifling through it and you come across that old palm pilot. You come across that flip phone. It doesn't even turn on anymore.

It takes you back. Like remember when you had to save up for that thing or you brought that thing home in a box and it was so cutting edge, so amazing and now the thing doesn't even turn on. It is completely obsolete.

All of us have likely had somebody break in and steal something. We've had something stolen from us. Man, our stuff is just our stuff. This is what Jesus is saying.

You can't take it with you. It's why you never see a U-Haul behind a hearse at a funeral. And then He goes on and He says this in verse 19, "But what you can do is lay up, you can store or save."

"... for yourselves treasures in," where? "heaven," that's the line. That's the kingdom of God, "where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." And then He says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19b-21 (ESV)

This is another way of saying that if you're a Christian and you're having a hard time living a kingdom minded life, you've got to ask yourself, "Where am I investing my treasure? Where am I laying up for myself treasure?"

Did you know that there are more Scriptures that caution you and me about over saving than Scriptures that encourage us to save.

Now, there are Scriptures that encourage us to save. Mostly they are found in Proverbs where it just says a wise person will leave an inheritance for his children's children, which means you've got to budget and save and invest wisely for the future.

But there are more passages that warn us of over saving and over accumulating. So passages like 1 Timothy 6, Luke, chapter 12, Matthew, chapter 6—our passage today.

Now, the other question that we have is like, “Okay. Well, how much is too much? How do we know we’re laying up too much treasure here on earth?”

Let me give you an equation and a question. So if you’re taking notes, here’s the equation: 10, 10, 80. So the Scriptures say when we have resources that in faith that is where we start—not where we end up, where we start. It’s to just return 10 back to God. And then we roughly save about 10 percent for the future and for emergencies, and then we live on, we’re blessed by, we’re generous with the 80.

So: 10, 10, 80. That is a good rule of thumb. If you’re just starting off in life you’re just trying to figure out a budget: 10, 10, 80. If you’re kind of midway through life and you’ve gotten off the rails a little bit, come back to that principle: 10, 10, 80.

Now here’s the question. Have you ever looked around, regardless of how much you have or make, have you ever looked around and go, “Where did all of this stuff come from?” And it usually happens when? Every time you move.

You are like, “Man, I moved into this apartment a few years ago and it only took 10 cardboard boxes. Now I’ve got to get 20 cardboard boxes to pack up all of this stuff and move out of here. Where did we get all of this stuff? It’s just by nature that we begin to accumulate stuff and I don’t even think we do it intentionally. It just has a tendency of happening.

I did a little research this past week. And all of this is just confirming this observation. And I think we all know this. Honestly, we just—most of us—own too much stuff and it’s robbing us of life. Here are a few surprising statistics about clutter that help us understand how big of a problem accumulation has become. Real quickly I’ll just go through these stats.

Did you know that:

- There are 300,000 items in the average American home
- The average size of the American home (square footage) has nearly tripled in size over the past 50 years
- The United States has upward of 50,000 storage facilities—more than five times the number of Starbucks.
- 3.1% of the world’s children live in America, but they own 40% of the toys consumed globally
- The average American throws away 65 pounds of clothing per year
- Currently, the 12% of the world’s population that lives in North America and Western Europe account for 60% of private consumption spending, while the one-third living in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only 3.2%
- Americans spend \$1.2 trillion annually on nonessential goods—in other words, items they do not need

And I would add, eventually end up in a box.

Jesus goes on in verse 24 to say this profound truth:

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

Now notice the definitive He uses there. He doesn't say the odds are likely you won't serve one or the other. No, He says it's an impossibility. You cannot serve both God and money.

It's important to understand what Jesus is and isn't saying here. What Jesus is driving at is perspective, the lens by which we view life. The lens by which we view everything. And He's not saying that it is bad to have money.

There are actually two extreme thoughts, two extreme theologies around this. One would be what we might call prosperity theology. And this is the one that I think probably the vast majority of us, at least those of us listening to this, would be leery of. This is like the health and wealth, name it and claim it, God wants your bank account full and you driving a Bentley idea.

But here's the other side what we would call poverty theology. This is the idea that money is bad. You shouldn't have any of it.

I've actually met people before who are like, "I hate money." And I'm kind of like, "Well, good luck with that," because a necessity of life is that you've got to get a job. You've got to earn a paycheck in order to meet essential needs and to be a blessing and to be generous toward other people.

So the answer isn't prosperity theology and it's not poverty theology it's recognizing that money is a great servant but a horrible master.

When Jesus says you cannot serve both God and money, this is the question of, "Where does my sense of identity and safety come from?" The late Tim Keller put it so well. He would say this, "Money isn't your idol; money reveals where your idols are." *That's such a profound truth.*

Oftentimes we kind of let ourselves off the hook when it comes to idolatry or idols. We read that and we're like, "Well, that was for Bible times. They melted down gold and precious metals and they worshipped them. We don't do that any more so we don't have an idolatry problem."

Yeah we do. Here's what an idol is. Our idol is probably not like a little gold object. Our idol is anything we find our identity in or our sense of security in. And that could be any number of things.

Practically, friends, this is what is called worship. Whatever you find your identity in, whatever you find your sense of security in, that is an idol. And actually our hearts are idol factories.

Romans, chapter 1 says the big problem with the world is that we worship creation over the Creator God. What is that? We're finding our identity and our security in created things over Creator God. That is an idol.

And money, more than anything else... It's the reason why Jesus talked about money more than any other subject in the Scriptures. I said money, not giving. He talked about money

more than any other subject because He knows that our money reveals where our idols are.

Now, I just want to get really transparent with you. I never want to have this position that because I'm standing up here on this platform that I've figured it all out. So, just do as I do. I would hope that you would know my heart, to know by now that I'm a fellow struggler and I'm just one hungry person trying to tell other hungry people where to find food.

Here's what happens. When it comes to certain sermon series, God has a tendency to take me to the matt on it as I'm preaching it.

I shared this at Northwest Vision Night. I don't think I shared this with any other campus but I'll tell all of you today. Here's how it shows up in my life. You can make the application for yourself.

When I was a kid, 5th grade, 11 years old, my dad's business got upside down. He was under water. And we ended up losing everything. We lost our house. We lost our cars. We lost everything—like zero. We had to reset.

I remember that time very specifically as an 11-year-old boy. Watching my parents go through that—I didn't say much. I didn't talk much. I was just reflecting. But I remember very vividly thinking to myself—I went outside in the back yard and I said, "I will never let this ever happen again. I will make sure that I have enough. I'll make sure that I provide for my family one day."

What that led to was an over control of circumstances. Honestly, I'm just going to call it what it is. It's an idol. I'm trying to control circumstances.

Now, the healthy part of me, "Okay, let me earn a good living and provide for my family and save for the..." There is nothing wrong with that. When I start to try to control, get this false sense of control, I know I'm drifting.

I'd love to say that was a problem for me way back when. Yesterday. Okay?

Yesterday we came back from fall break and it's the middle of the afternoon. I go out on the back deck and I'm kind of running the budget numbers and I'm trying to assess the damage from fall break and how I'm going to pay off Silver Dollar City.

I'm looking at all of that and I open up our bank account app. Anybody with me in all of this? No. Okay. You're just going to leave your brother up here.

So, I open up the bank account app and there is this imaginary number, the line of idolatry, where when the bank account balance is above that—it's random for me, but if it's above that I'm like, "Whew, we're good." Falls below it and I'm like, "Oh, no."

My wife knows that I'm wrestling with this whenever I start saying things like this, "I'm going to have to start working a side hustle. I'm going to get a job at Chick-fil-A. I'm going to have to work this thing out right." And I started to panic.

So, yesterday. That was happening to me yesterday. And right in the middle of it I pick up my iPad and I go, "Well, I better review my notes for tomorrow." Ha, ha, ha. Wow. Okay.

I say all of that to simply say this. If I ever say anything up here that steps on your toes, just know the Holy Spirit has already crushed my feet. I'm in this with you. And I recognize how much it can become an idol. And, man, I'm telling you, guys, it can become so sinister.



Idolatry is such a slippery thing. And it oftentimes pops up for me even in places I least expect it.

When I go to lunch with a friend and when that time of the lunch comes where the waitress comes over and asks the question... You know the question? "One check or two?"

I conveniently take a drink right in that moment, because I don't want to speak too quickly.

You know? Because either way, you say, "Two," you're going to look stingy. You say, "One."

"Oh, you were planning...?" "Yeah."

It just pops up and I continue to wrestle. It's like a weed. I need to continue to weed my heart.

I wish Jesus was done here. But He's not. Verse 25, He's clearly reading my email:

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns," in other words they don't have a 401K, "and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

Then He asks this question. And I think there's a little bit of hurt behind it.

"Are you not of more value than they?" Like, don't you understand how valuable you are to Me? "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"

Matthew 6:25-27 (ESV)

In other words what He is saying here is, "Man, you can be worried and anxious about all of these things, is it going to change anything? You can't add anymore to your life. Don't you know that I'm in control? I'm sovereign. I've given you these promises and I'm actually waiting for you to redirect your worship to Me."

Now, He's not telling us... He's certainly not saying if you've got some anxiety, you've got a little bit of worry... He's not just saying, "Hey, stop that." No, what He is saying is He is drawing a distinction between having an anxious feeling and being anxious. Having a worry that pops up, and being worried.

Well, what's the difference. One is a very natural emotion. It just means you're human. The other is a decision. The other is a decision to stay worried. When you stay worried, here's what you're doing. You're just trying to control everything and that is an act of worship. We're focused on the exact opposite of what it is that Jesus has asked us to be focused on.

Even right now... Could I just ask you this? Right now, everybody across all of our locations. Close your eyes, unless you're listening to this later in the week and you're on a treadmill or driving, don't do that. But like right now if you're sitting and safe, close your eyes. I just want you to do this simple little thing. What are you worried about the most right now? I just want you to visualize that.

My guess is that it's a challenge. The real difficulty of that is narrowing it down to one thing if you've got one thing and then you are like, "Well, there are three or five or 20 other things." You can open your eyes if you haven't already.

Here's the deal. Some of those worries that you just thought of are relatively minor, maybe even silly kind of worries.

Others of you, maybe you have much more significant worries that you're not quite sure what to do with. Maybe you're worried about a cancer diagnosis and the following treatment, how all of that is going to go.

Maybe right now you're worried about your kids. If they are little, what kind of a world are they going to grow up in? If they are older and they've already moved out, you're like, "Man, they are making decisions right now that just break my heart and I can't really do anything about it. I feel all of this shame and guilt. As a parent, what could I have done differently? I'm worried about that."

Right now you're worried because of some potential lay offs or some cut backs at work due to the current nature of the economy. And you're not quite sure what this does to your savings or what it does to your retirement.

Or maybe you're worried right now because you and your spouse are just not on the same page spiritually. It's part of the reason why you're here today and your spouse is not and it's breaking your heart.

And you're looking at all of this going, "Man, I'm so compelled by being awakened and I wish my spouse could share this with me. How are we going to get on the same page and make a significant faith commitment if we just don't see eye to eye on all of this? I'm worried about it."

Maybe right now each of those things that you're kind of thinking of, listen. Those are legitimate. Those are significant.

I think if Jesus were eyeball to eyeball standing in front of you His eyes would tear up with you and He would comfort you and say, "Man, I totally get all of that." And then He would say, "Would you just please hand it to Me? Would you please just let go of that? Would you please stop trying to carry that around? By worrying about that you're not going to change anything."

So what is the answer? He gives us the answer in verse 33. Look at it with me. He says this profound truth that oftentimes we don't really know what to do with. He says this: *"But seek first," There's that word again. This is a matter of priority. "...seek first the kingdom of God," the line, "and his righteousness," then here's the promise, it's actually written as a promise, "and all these things will be added to you."* Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

In other words, you won't miss a thing. In fact, you get an opportunity for God to bless and provide for you. I think we can read that and go, "Okay, what does it mean to seek God's kingdom first and what does it mean that He'll add all things to me?"

Here's a visual that has helped me and I think it will help some of you. We've got two jars and the goal would actually be to get the content of both jars into one.

So, the sand here would represent all of these things in the passage. This is everything you're worried about. This is your bank account balance, your mortgage, kids' college, retirement –all of the stuff that you are tempted to control.

This canister of these big rocks represent seeking first the kingdom of God. Living for the line over the dot.

Here's the challenge. We've got to get all of these into one canister. Here's how many of us choose to operate. You know that this has sort of become an idol and you're trying to control things.

[Aaron begins placing rocks on top of the sand]

You're like, "God, let me make sure that all of these things are taken care of first and then I'll gladly live for Your kingdom, God. I'll gladly pay attention and invest in the big rocks."

Here's the problem. Clearly they don't fit. There is just not enough room.

[Aaron begins putting the rocks back in their original canister]

Here's what Jesus promises. He said, "If you would just prioritize Me first, if you would just seek My kingdom first, put the big rocks in first and live by faith, then I'll add all of these things unto you."

[Aaron begins pouring the sand over the rocks]

We see that it fits all into one category. This is how the math maxes in the kingdom of God. It feels counter intuitive. But God is saying, "I want you to trust Me in this."

Last week we talked about two brothers in Genesis, Cain and Abel. This is what Abel's bucket looked like [the canister filled with rocks and sand]. This is what Cain's bucket looked like [the empty canister].

Abel said, "I'm going to put first the kingdom of God," and God was please with that, added all of these things. Cain said, "God, I'm happy to give You something. I'm just going to give You some of what is left over."

So, we said that the principle of the first all through Scripture is when you put God first you're actually declaring what theologians call the preeminence of God. Meaning that He was and is and is to come. Basically, when you're giving God first and best, you're just aligning your life with the truth of that reality, God's nature.

And just because He isn't first in your life doesn't mean that He isn't first in the universe. He is preeminent.

God is actually saying, "I just want you..." Here's what happens. When you do that you're just inviting Him into everything else so that He can do what only He can.

I love how Paul puts it to the Colossian church when He's talking about the preeminence of God. He says this, He is referring to Jesus:

"He is the image of the invisible God," in other words, we cannot physically see God, but we can see Him in the person of Jesus.

And Jesus is, "the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV)

So, when you're seeking first the kingdom of God you are trusting in a God who is before all things. It is through Him and for Him and by Him—He holds all things together.

Here's the gut check level question. Is Jesus the One who fills in that blank or is it something else? For many of us, what can happen is everything is by our mortgage to our mortgage through our mortgage for our mortgage. Or everything is by our kids to

our kids through our kids for our kids. Or everything is by our financial security and retirement through that and by that and for that.

And all He is saying is that whatever is in that blank, just take it out and just put in the person of Jesus.

Guys, I want to tell you that right now we are in a season in the life of our church that is unlike anything that I have personally ever experienced in my life and personally never experienced here. I'm just watching God beginning to wake us up and to recognize that we could actually change some things. We can move the needle if we're fully awake.

So, guys, now is the time for us to live in such a way that the rest of the world can see our King and His kingdom coming. Right now is the time for us to speak a blessing over, and to call out, and to equip the next generation. Now is the time for us to come alongside of vulnerable children and families, foster and adoption families in need.

Now is the time to bless our city. Now is the time for the church to leave the building and to infiltrate all through the city, representing the kingdom of God. Now is the time for us to make a difference.

Now is the time for us, not to sit back and go, "Well, I guess we did it. We served. We gave. We were the recipients of somebody else's generosity in a previous generation." No, now is actually the time for us to say, "What will the church of tomorrow look like? What kind of a difference can we make for all of eternity?"

I have up here—this runner's baton. And when I arrived here 16 years ago, actually 16 years ago this month, I had a private meeting with my predecessor, a guy by the name of Howard Brammer, who served here for 24 years as lead pastor, and a group of elders. They handed me this baton in a private meeting. And they said, "Aaron, we're just handing this to you. This is your leg of the race. Run well."

And it meant a lot to me. It still does. I've actually got it, it's in my office. And every time I look at it I'm like, "I'm not worthy to carry that thing." And the second thing that I think is simply this, "This thing is awfully heavy."

And I know it doesn't look like it. I'm so strong. I couldn't pass that up. That was not in my notes. But it just came into my mind.

Here's the thing. This thing is really heavy and the reason why is because I'm talking about, not the physical weight of this thing, but what it represents. It's a huge responsibility to serve this church. It's one that I recognize every week. I'm not worthy of it, I don't deserve it, I don't want to mess this up.

So, can I just share this with you? Can I just, figuratively, say, "Hey, would you help me run this leg of the race? Would you help me carry this baton?" Let's run this leg of the race well. Let's be awakened to what it is that God wants to do in us and through us.

I refuse to freak out in fear. I refuse to succumb to anger. I actually want to be a joyful, kingdom minded man of God and I want to invite you into that as well.

You know what? I know this is what your heart wants. Back at Easter we did that Easter survey. One of the questions was: What content would really help you in your spiritual growth? I use the answers to those questions to put together sermon series every year.

Do you want to know what one of the top three responses from you all was? “We want to hear a sermon series on discovering God’s purpose, plan, and will for our lives.” Guys, this is it. This is it.

Some of you are like, “I’m not called to full-time ministry.” No, no, no. I didn’t say that. Regardless of what you do for a living, regardless of your age, whether you are a boomer, or a Xer or a millennial or a Gen Z, it doesn’t matter. Regardless of whether you are male or female, regardless of your giftedness, regardless of any of that. Regardless of whether you feel like you are worthy or not.

Part of understanding God’s purpose and plan for your life—here’s step one. To walk by faith. To begin to live for the kingdom of God, not just this world. And then God begins to answer the other questions specifically.

I think most of the time when people ask the question: What is God’s purpose for my life? They want God to send a detailed voice message telling them specifically who to marry, what job to take, what state to move into—all of those specifics. God wants you to live by faith first and then He begins to answer those questions specifically.

But you’ve got to step out in faith first and you’ve got to recognize I am here not to live just for the dot, but for the line. So let’s wake up together and do that together.

Father, we come to You today. We’re so grateful that You have offered us hope in the midst of a hopeless world. God, forgive us.

Forgive me when I get too consumed with present circumstances or the problems of this world or my own insecurities and idols of the heart. God, forgive me when I try to control things that I cannot control, nor should ever control.

I want to acknowledge Your sovereignty over my life. I want to seek first Your kingdom trusting that I’ll never miss out on anything because You promise to add all of these other things.

God, would You give us the right perspective and the right set of lenses to live for You in this hurting world. We ask this in Jesus’ name. And the awakened church says: Amen. Amen.

