August 16, 2020 Notes

The Gospel of Luke | I Didn’t Ask for This

Ryan Bramlett | Luke 4:31-44

Come on, can we celebrate Shaq right now and his group? All that they are doing. Shaq, if you’re watching right now, incredible. And he’s 100 percent right. Who you surround yourself with—it matters. And if you’re watching today and you are thinking, “That’s what I want.” Or, “I don’t know if I’m ready for that.” Or, “Is there a spot available for me?” There is. You can go to:

tpcc.org/groups

and someone from our team will follow-up with you this week. Don’t put it off, alright?

So, that’s a big one. And then also before we get rolling today, we have to start by celebrating what God has done this past week. So, I want you to lean forward a little bit, wherever you are watching from and get ready for this, because this is no small thing. The past week, we had 25 people get baptized! Twenty-five people made the decision to give their lives to Jesus and start following him. This is unbelievable.

We heard all kinds of crazy stories of people getting baptized in pools, and just doing whatever it took. So, if you’re on the other side of this and you got baptized this week, just congratulations, it’s the biggest decision you’ll ever make in your life and we just want you to know we’re here for you.

As far as today goes, Traders Point Online, wherever you’re watching from—we even have a few of our team members in the room today—so welcome everyone. Yeah, we have a few clappers in here. But what we’re going to be doing is continuing in our series through the gospel of Luke, that we’ve titled *Settled in Spirit*.

And a gospel is what you’ll see in the beginning of the big section of your Bible that says New Testament. And there are four of these things that kind of kick off what we call the New Testament. The gospel according to Mark, according to Matthew, according to Luke, according to John. We have four of them.

And maybe you’ve read them and maybe you have a hard time kind of figuring them out. It seems like one focuses a little bit more on this, or this one says this, or this one leaves it out—what is that all about?

As I was thinking about it this this week, I think a really good way to think about it is to think about *The Last Dance*, alright? So the MJ documentary that just came out a little bit ago, if you watch it, it will kind of put the gospels into perspective, because it could have been titled the gospel of Michael Jordan, the good news of MJ, because what they did was, they went back and they interviewed eye witnesses, they interviewed players he played against, played with. They interviewed coaches and even reporters.

And what was fascinating, if you watched the documentary, was everyone described or focused on something different about Jordan. Even if you look to the exact games, the same seconds within that game, each player highlighted a different thing. This is what they remembered, and this is how they told their story through it.

It’s the same thing with the gospels. And I love what Aaron has been saying in the last two weeks. The gospel of Luke is really the gospel for skeptics, for people who are kind of on the outside, because that’s who it was written for. Luke, this physician, takes on this project to write down the detailed account—what he says in the beginning is, “I want to give this to you so that you can be certain.”

I don’t know about you, but being certain about something sounds pretty nice. And especially at the time when this was being written. Jesus—his message that was controversial, it was so crazy, it was absurd, that most people, they heard it, they believed, they wanted to believe, but in the back of their minds they were thinking, “Could this really happen? Is Jesus really who he said he is. The stories that I’ve heard, are they true?”

And what Luke does, is he writes all of this down and he says, “Yes, it’s all true. You can be certain of this. Take it to the bank. And the good news is that there is even more. It’s actually even better than you think it is. And here, take a look at this detailed account.” And that’s what we are going to be looking at today. We’re going to pick up in Luke, chapter 4, starting in verse 31.

If you have a Bible you can flip or scroll there, but if not, no worries, everything will be on the screen next to me. But, as you flip or scroll there, I’m going to give you too much time to get there as I set up the background of what just happened, because it will make what we read today make a whole lot more sense.

In Luke, chapter 4, what’s going on is Jesus is beginning his teaching ministry. He’s stepping up in these Synagogues, these religious buildings, and he’s beginning to preach and teach. And how you start is really important.

I know a thing or two about this. I actually used to be a substitute teacher for a little bit. And maybe some of you are like, “How many jobs have you had? Every time you get up there you talk about working somewhere else.” And it’s true. I’ve a done a lot of things for money, okay? It is what it is. I said what I said, alright?

But I was a substitute teacher. And I can remember how the whole thing kicked off. First day on the job. I show up in the office. And they tell me where my assignment is going to be. I go up to the room, and I’m sitting there in the chair waiting for the clock to strike, ready for that bell to ring.

And, what’s the first thing you do as a new teacher? First thing? You write your name on the board, right? Like, I can remember all of my teachers first day, that’s what they did. They went to the chalkboard and in perfect cursive they wrote their names. That’s what I was going to do.

So I mapped it out perfectly. As the bell is hitting, I’m walking up to the board, but this school was advanced. They didn’t have chalk boards, alright? They had dry erase boards. As I’m walking up there—I get there and I go to write my name, not in perfect cursive though, because I’m a millennial and I’m the worst—but in large print, Mr. Bramlett. And I put a line underneath it, just to let them know that I mean business.

But as I strike the line, the class is losing it behind me. They are laughing. And I turn around and I think of the most teachery thing I can say, and I said, “Hey, could someone explain to me what is so funny?” And this sweet little girl in the front row raised her hand. I said, “Speak, child.” And she said, “That’s not a dry erase board.” I said, “I beg your pardon?” She looked at me, “Um, that’s not a dry erase board.” It was a smart board.

And just to make it painfully clear for everyone watching, and everyone in the room, what I did was just took a marker, it would be like me writing my name on this screen right now. Everyone in the back of the room would be very upset. It’s the worst start that you could possibly have in teaching. But I was so embarrassed that the first thing I said was, “It’s actually both.” I said, “It’s a smart board and it’s a dry erase board, obviously your teacher didn’t know that yet.” And then I took a quick break and told the teacher in the hallway, “Hey, I just ruined the whole thing.” That’s how I began my teaching career.

Jesus, on the other hand, lucky for him he was teaching before smart boards, so he didn’t run into that problem. But at the same time, Jesus is doing something different. Just like me writing on computers with markers, he was doing something different—something that no one had ever seen before. And that’s what we’re going to see as we pick up in verse 31. Take a look at this:

*“Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there in the synagogue every Sabbath day. There, too, the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority.”*

Now, just to set this up, it’s really that last word there that kind of differentiates Jesus from everything else that was going on. And it’s that last word there:

authority

It says that Jesus was teaching with authority. He was teaching with power. He was introducing something new—that was a big thing. They had teachers. They had Rabbis. But everyone was just explaining what had always been explained. But when Jesus stepped up, he said, “I actually have something new to say,” which was very different.

If you can even think back to your teachers, when I was a teacher for that year, I was not there to present any new information. I wasn’t like, “Hey, kids. I’ve been working on this new math theory, let’s try it out today.” No. It was, “Please excuse my dear Aunt Sally.” That’s what we were working on. That’s what I was going off of—the classics.

But Jesus, he actually stepped up with authority, with power, and he teaches from the Scriptures and he says, “Hey, you’ve kind of got it a little bit off. You just don’t have enough of the information. But I’m here and I’m going to give you all of it.”

And he begins to teach. And if you were here a few weeks ago, Aaron was talking about this, that as he taught, he not only taught something new, he actually said that he, himself, was the fulfillment of all Scripture. He was the one who was going to come in and usher in this new kingdom of God. Pretty new, pretty powerful—and you need a lot of authority to say it.

Some people loved him. Some people thought that this was the best news that they had ever heard. Some people, a little bit more slow to change. They did not appreciate this message from Jesus. And by not appreciate it, I mean they tried to kill my Man, alright? They tried to assassinate Jesus for the way that he was teaching, they try to throw him off a cliff, but he steps aside, he gets away. And that doesn’t stop him, because, as we’re going to see in the Scriptures today, this is what he came to do—to preach. To tell them and to tell us what God is really like and what he’s about.

That’s where we are going to pick up today in chapter 4. Look at what happens next. After he avoids getting thrown off of the cliff it says:

*“Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—cried out, shouting, ‘Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus reprimanded him. ‘Be quiet! Come out of the man,’ he ordered.*

*“At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further. Amazed, the people exclaimed, ‘What authority and power this man’s words possess! Even evil spirits obey him, and they flee at his command!’ The news about Jesus spread through every village in the entire region.”*

So here’s the scene. Jesus is teaching, he’s in the middle of his sermon, and a demon possessed man starts shouting in the front row, “…shouting, ‘Go away! Why are you interfering with us?” Leave us alone.

Now, I don’t want to make today about demons and evil spirits, but Jesus does. And maybe that kind of throws you off as we started talking about demons and evil spirits like, “I don’t know if I can go with you there.” And I think the word, itself, might throw you, but I don’t think the concept really does, because whether you use demon or evil spirit or bad energy—there is something that I think a lot of us could rally around and say, “Yeah, there’s something there.”

Maybe you’ve worked through something that is really hard with someone, someone was going through something, and you could just feel it. It felt like something was opposing them. It felt like they weren’t themselves. And you couldn’t shake it.

Or maybe you’re coming out of the other side of it. You were healed of something and you can look back and you can say, “Yes, there was something there that was against me.”

And for us to really understand why Jesus came and all that he did, we have to get to this, as hard as it may be to hear or to understand, there are not only physical things that we see, physical battles, there is also a spiritual war that is going on. And you’ll see throughout Scripture that Jesus both healed people of physical problems, but he also healed people from spiritual problems. And the good news is that he is still healing people from both today.

But I want us to see in this, because it about destroyed me, I believe God gave me this. I can tell you where I was, 6:52 Wednesday morning as I was meditating on these verses this is what stuck out to me. The man didn’t ask for the demon to be removed. The man didn’t ask for the demon to be removed.

Just stick with me for a second as I kind of tell you what I mean by this. What would have happened in our context, we’re at church, a sermon is being preached, and a man just began screaming and shouting and saying, “Leave me alone.” What really just kind of wrecked me was that the man wasn’t there for healing. He didn’t show up because Jesus was there, and he thought that he could get this from Jesus.

It doesn’t even say he knew about this demon. Maybe he didn’t. Maybe he had lived with it for so long that he couldn’t tell a difference between where he ended and where the demon picked up. He just thought, “This is who I will always be.” But, but by just being there, by just being in the presence of Jesus, this demon couldn’t stand it. The man didn’t ask for it, but the demon couldn’t stand it and the closer he got to Jesus he had to speak out, “Leave me alone.” And Jesus, how powerful he is, how powerful God is, is that by just being in his presence healing comes.

Here’s the truth. This demon trembled with terror in the presence.

Demons tremble with terror in the presence of Jesus.

We see this throughout Scripture. Whenever Jesus shows up and whatever comes into the presence of God, if it’s not of God, it can’t stand against him. It begins to speak out. It begins to fall over. It begins to be this controversy of, “Stop messing with me. Leave us alone. What part do you have to do with me?” Because they are terrified of what Jesus came to bring. And we see as he steps on to the scene, everywhere he goes they tremble at his presence. They can’t live there.

And this is why it is so important to be encouraged in this season and in every season—of how big of a deal it is to not stop connecting with God, but to remain in his presence. Because we need to be engaged now more than ever. Because as old habits try to come back, or new addictions start to come up, the only shot we have of defeating them is to bring them into the presence of Jesus.

And the Bible has all kinds of stories like this. If you just look at anyone who came into contact with Jesus, most of them didn’t ask for it. Most of them weren’t looking for him. But when they came into the presence of God, their lives changed. They were willing to give up everything for him.

The disciples, followers of Jesus, they weren’t looking for Jesus. They weren’t looking for a new life. They were trying to catch some fish. And Jesus showed up and he changed everything. And they sacrificed it all and said that there is nothing like being in the presence of Jesus. He’s given me what nothing else can give.

There’s another story of a woman at a well, who goes and she’s just in a horrible spot. So much baggage, she’s taking on this identity that’s not who she is. She wasn’t looking for Jesus. She was looking for water. But she comes face to face in the presence of Jesus and he restores her. He lets her know what her identity really is. It changes her life. Everything changes for her and she goes and tells everyone everywhere about who Jesus is and all that he has done.

Anyone here, anyone here get met by Jesus like, “I wasn’t even looking for God. I was just trying to live my life. I was just going through and then out of nowhere; I came into the presence of Jesus and I never wanted to leave.

This is my story. I wasn’t looking for Jesus. I didn’t even have demons that I was trying to fight. I didn’t have a void that I knew about. I was trying to go on a second date with a beautiful young lady. And she told me, “Do you know about Jesus?” Jesus the one who loves us. Jesus the one who came here and died for us. She told me this whole thing and just being there under the name of Jesus my whole life changed.

And it just brought me to this space of how important it is to stay close to God. Because what we’re going to see is this demon that he removes, and he heals this man is just the beginning. What we’re going to see in these next few verses, what I want us to hold on to, is that:

There is nothing God can’t cast out.

There is nothing that God can’t cast out. If you bring it into the presence of Jesus, there is nothing that can stand against it. Perfect love will cast out everything, even the tricks of the Devil can’t stand against him: shame, guilt, fear—none of that can live in the presence of Jesus. Because, what Jesus does here, he heals this man in the Synagogue, and as you can imagine, it gets people talking. No one just leaves that day quietly like, “Huh. What do you want to do for lunch? You thinking Panera? Great pick-two options they have over there.”

No. Everyone runs out like, “You won’t believe it. The guy, Jesus, the one who was teaching, that new teaching, he healed a man. I saw him speak. I saw a man fall. And I saw him healed in a moment.” And they began to tell everyone. They would go from village to village and tell everyone about what Jesus did.

And Jesus, in the meantime, goes back to this guy Simon’s house, and Simon’s mother-in-law, it pretty much looks like she is on her death bed. She has this high fever and Jesus walks into the room and touches her by the hand. She’s in his presence. She’s immediately healed. Not like starting to get better. No. In an instant she is healed, and she pops up from her death bed to making appetizers for everyone at this party: pizza bites, pizza bagels for everyone. And it’s all happening in a moment.

And then, as they are sitting there, it’s gone viral. Everyone begins to swarm. Everyone comes into the village looking for Jesus because they heard, this is the Jesus, this is the Son of God, this is the Messiah. And look at what happens next. It says:

*“As the sun went down that evening, people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed every one. Many were possessed by demons; and the demons came out at his command, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But because they knew he was the Messiah, he rebuked them and refused to let them speak.”*

This is incredible. And what I want us to focus on first, there is so much here, but what I want us to see is that line:

No matter what

No matter what. Everyone in the room right now, can we say, “No matter what.”? Everyone watching online, you’ve got to go to chat right now, type it in there, “No matter what.” No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed every one, no matter what.

And because… The reason I say this, the reason I want to say it out loud, the reason I want to type it into chat so that you can stare at it is because it becomes so quick to forget. We begin to buy into this lie that creeps in and whispers to us, “Not for you. Not for you. Your problems are worse. You are a little bit too far gone. You’re not like everyone else. Your problems are not their problems. They might be accepted, but for you? Are you crazy? If they knew who you really were, if they knew what you’ve really done, if God is really God, then you will never be accepted.”

And I know that this is a thought because I talk to people and I hear it come out. When I’m talking to people, and we get to that point in the conversation, “Hey, what do you do?”

“Oh, me? I’m a pastor and I preach,” which always goes over great. Usually people have zero hesitations, no questions, and just love me right where I am. No. Kidding. But usually what follows is, “Oh, man. Church? I could never go. I’m telling you if I went to your church the whole place would cave in. If I went to your church, that place would catch fire. I mean, if I went lightening…” Alright, I get it. The church would…

But I think we’re off. That’s what I always say. I think we have a different idea of who Jesus is and what the church is all about, because that’s not the God I know. That’s not the God that I’ve come to love. And that’s what I want us to do right now. Instead of just listening to the narrative in your head, the whispers that keep coming in of saying who you’re not and what God will or won’t do or how you’ll be accepted or rejected, I just want us to go to the source.

That’s what Luke is doing. That’s what we do every single Sunday. What did Jesus say? Does Jesus say that there is some kind of limit? Does Jesus say that there is a test? Does Jesus say you’ve got to do these things then maybe…? No! He makes it very clear. He says, “No matter what.” No matter what their diseases were, no matter what their past was they were getting healed. And today God is still doing the same thing that he has always been doing.

Can we celebrate that? No matter what. Can we celebrate a God who heals, a God who knows no bounds, a God whose grace extends to all of us, even when we’re not asking for it? Even when we just find ourselves next to him, he provides healing. This is what Jesus does. He does all of that. He provides the healing, he provides the forgiveness, he provides the salvation.

But even us, and I’m talking right now to people who would call themselves followers of Jesus, what about us? What do we do? And I love in this Scripture that it’s even foreshadowed of what the church will do as a result of what Jesus has done. Take a look at this:

*“…people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were...”*

If you’re wondering what it is that we do, as followers of Jesus, it’s that. We go to our village, we go to our city, wherever you’re watching from, you start there and you go and you find people and you say, “You’ve got to meet Jesus. I’ve got to get you close to Jesus. You’ve got to come to know about the love of Jesus. You’ve got to know how Jesus heals everyone. Just being in his presence will change everything. You need to know about him.”

And we remove any unnecessary barriers so that we can get him or her to a front row seat so that they can see Jesus, and meet him, and be changed by him.

I’m giving my life to this mission. And I can promise you there is nothing special about me. The only thing that I’ve got going for me is this:

I’ve seen too much.

I’ve seen too much. That’s what gives me the courage to stand on this stage. That’s what gives me the courage to go out and to have conversations. That’s what allows me to continue to point to Jesus because I’ve seen too much.

I’ve seen God work. I’ve seen God restore marriages. I’ve seen God take away addictions. I’ve seen God cure people of depression. I’ve seen God do things that only he could do. And I’ve been brought to this place where I’ve seen too much. You can’t tell me otherwise. So for the rest of my life, I’m going to spend it taking people by the hand and saying, “You’ve got to come and know Jesus. You’ve got to just be in his presence, because I’m telling you, there is nothing like it.”

Is there anyone here today who can say, “I’ve seen too much.”? You can’t tell me otherwise. God is at work. That’s what we do. Our opening line is not look at as us, look at me, our opening line is always and only Jesus. Here it is:

The best thing we can do as followers of Jesus is show someone the scars my Savior healed.

Somewhere along the way we lost this. And we’ve shamed this for Christian makeup. And this idea that I just have to pretend, that I’ve got to put some polish on then I can go out with this weird, creepy smile and fake it and that people will want to be a part of that. No one wants to be a part of that. No one needs something else to be fake, especially when we don’t have to fake it, when we seriously have something that is that good instead of the makeup.

Take it off. Show people your scars, “You won’t believe it. You won’t believe where I once was. But let me tell you, I was blind but now I can see. I was hurting but then God saved me.” “My divorce was going down, my marriage was going down to divorce, but then he came in and restored it all.” “I had this addiction that I couldn’t get past and then Jesus came, and he healed everything.” Show people where you’ve been and show people how far God has brought you.

I’m telling you. These verses, when I first read them at the beginning of the week it was like, “I don’t know if I’m going to have enough to say with these first few verses. But can I just say, I think God laughed in my face. There is so much here and in every part of Scripture.

But we’ve got two more verses for today. You guys good with two more verses? Two more verses to work through? What’s going to happen here is we’re going to see the how. Because what we’ve been reading is Jesus healing, Jesus doing these incredible things, but Jesus gives us this unbelievable insight as to how and why he is able to do what he does. And it’s an encouragement for all of us. Look at this:

*“Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. But he replied, ‘I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent.’ So he continued to travel around, preaching in synagogues throughout Judea.”*

This is fascinating. I mean it was just the most incredible day that the earth had ever seen. Jesus is healing person after person after person. He’s so connected to God. But yet, the next morning the first thing that he does after that healing rampage is that it says that he goes out to this isolated place, he goes out to be alone.

And maybe when you read that you’re thinking, “What is he doing out there?” He was going to pray. But what is prayer? He was going to be in the presence of God, because even Jesus knew how important that was. That’s where the power comes from. The lives that we want, they cannot come without it. It is not sold separately. As we follow God, we are going to have to remain in this space connected to him.

And you see this throughout Scripture. You’ll find Jesus in a lonely place, in a desolate place, in an isolated place all doing the same thing, setting everything else down so that he can connect with God and be in the presence of God.

What I want to ask you today is do you have that?

Do you have an isolated place?

Do you have an isolated place that you can go to?

You know, I spent the first part of the year reading through the gospels, the first four books of the New Testament that we were talking about. And I just read them over and over again, looking for something different, because usually I read them, and I look for what Jesus said. Call me crazy, it’s a book, but that’s usually the way I take these things. What do they say? What’s going on?

But this year I started reading looking behind things. Not just what did he say, but what did he do? What was the life that he lived? What were some of his habits? What were some of his rhythms, day in and day out? And this one stood out like crazy. He was always just getting away with God. He’s always carving out time. Even when the life around him is going crazy, he makes time for God.

And it brings us to a really good point:

We aren’t just called to believe like Jesus believed.

It’s something much bigger than that:

We’re actually called to live like Jesus lived.

So as we go through this, I mean, there’s a lot here that we can take in to say, “How can I be in the presence of God always? Not just in crises, not just when I hit rock bottom. What would it look like for me to seek the presence the God, not just stumble upon it? It’s amazing that God’s grace meets me when I’m not even looking for it, but what if I went looking for it? What if I situated myself there? How much more, then, would God do?”

And I’m telling you, one of the biggest gifts of COVID, and I know that’s a loaded statement, like, “What are you talking about, man? Have you been outside?” But one of the gifts of COVID was this. I was able to find an isolated place, and it was every morning in my house—well, in my old house. We sold our house this week and we moved in with my old roommates, and by old roommates, I mean my parents. Love you guys. So thankful for you.

But whenever I was going through this, especially when it first started, I would get up really early in the morning and I would go up to the attic and I had this window there and I would just look out and I would talk to God. And it would be silent. There was nothing to go along with it. I would just sit there. And some days he would speak and some days I would be frustrated. And I’m telling you, they were some of the best, most worst, times of my life—painful, some joyful. But I was connecting with God on a level that I had never connected before. And it happened through this—this isolated place.

And I know that’s hard. I know as I’m going through it, “It must be nice preacher man. You have an isolated place. Well, I have a life, okay? So I don’t have isolated places.” I get it. I have three very small humans in my house as well. And whether you have kids or not, you’re not just going to slip and fall into an isolated place. It’s something that you have to carve out. It’s something that you have to be intentional about.

But, I’m telling you, if we know this, if we know this for a fact—the demons shudder in terror in the presence of Jesus, if we know that his love cast out all fear, where else would we want to be? If we could get into this spot and start our mornings from there, nothing can stop us, because if the One who is in me is greater than anything in the world, then I’m starting off in a place that I can’t lose.

But I do want to put some disclaimers out there. An isolated place—first, and this one is pretty much for the fellas, the bathroom is not your isolated place. You cannot start this week, “Yeah, I know. I was in there a while, but that’s my isolated place. I was just in there talking to God.” No you weren’t, okay? Scrap that.

The second thing, we’re not thinking about this as an escape. This isn’t something that you’re running from; this is something that you are running toward. You’re going to be with God, to connect with God and the amazing thing is that you’re not alone, because I promise you every time you carve out the time, God’s Spirit carves out the time and he will be there with you over and over and over again. This isn’t something we escape from.

And this isn’t a call to live isolated, because maybe that’s the other message that’s going in your mind right now, like, “Everyone is telling me not to be isolated and now you’re telling me to be isolated.” No. This is about going to an isolated place for a very specific time so that we can be in the presence of God and so that we can hear from his Spirit so that we can be sent out.

That’s exactly what we see here with Jesus. Jesus went into this space, this isolated space, talked to God, connected with God, was in the presence of God and his first response as he came out was what? “I can’t stay. God is sending me. I’ve got my marching orders. I came here to do one thing and one thing only, to preach the gospel, the Good News. So thankful for your hospitality, but I have to go.”

That’s the same thing for us. We are going to be with God so that we can go out and to live for God. And what we want to do this week is just to challenge you. Challenge you to be in the presence of God every day. We want to give you two ways to do that.

The first one is this:

Identify an isolated place, and carve out 10 minutes every day this week to be alone with God.

Identify an isolated place, and I’m going to put a few more action steps on this. So, identify it, like I said you’re not just going to wake up tomorrow and it’s going to be noon and you’re like, “Oh, this is a great isolated place. Wow. I didn’t know about this.” No, so before you go to bed tonight, think about tomorrow. Think about where you’ll be and when you have to be there and then you’re going to have to carve it out. We don’t have extra time. It’s about you using the time that you have.

So carve it out and say, “I’m going to give 10 minutes of my day to sit in the presence of God, to talk to him, to hear from him,” and just watch how everything begins to well up, how demons, how evil spirits, how things that we’re struggling with—things we’re afraid of, get uncomfortable in the presence of Jesus. And then don’t just keep it on you. Tonight, before you go to bed, send a message to someone, and say, “Hey, this week every day I’m giving 10 minutes, I’m going to find an isolated place and I’m going to be with God.”

Maybe you’re thinking right now, I don’t have that person. I don’t have somebody I can send and say that to. Well, great. That leads me to the second point:

Join a group | tpcc.org/groups

This is what a group does, what Shaq was talking about—constantly encouraging you to be in the presence of Jesus. That as you are going through life you need people—I need people who are going to push me along and say, no, no, no—you’ve gone too far over there. You need to get back over here. You need people who are going to ask you, “When is the last time that you’ve been with Jesus? Oh, yeah, yeah. I know you serve. I know you do all of those things—when was the last time you were with Jesus?” Because that’s the most important thing that we can do.

And that is what we do every single week it’s at the core of it all, why we meet on Sunday. Why we do watch parties. Why we do groups. Why we talk about prayer. Why we have DBR, Daily Bible Reading, it’s all so that we can get in the presence of God, because it’s the only thing we’ve found strong enough to deal with everything that is out there.

And what I want us to do right now is just to end today the same way we want to begin this week and it’s just to be in the presence of God. So if you could, everyone in the room, would you stand with me? Everyone online, would you stand? And what we’re going to do right now is to connect. This is what worship is all about. This is what church is all about. This is what community is all about. Getting to this spot in the presence of God because we serve a God who is unbelievable.

We serve a God who heals even when we’re not looking for it. We serve a God who extends grace even when we don’t deserve it. We serve a God who came to be here, left heaven, lived a perfect live for me and you and then went to a cross, while we were still his enemies and said, “I’m going to die for them. I’m going to give my life for theirs.”

And then if we would believe in that, in that gospel, the gospel that Luke’s talking about, then Jesus said, “I’m going to go even further. I’m going to give you the power of my Spirit, everywhere you go I’m going to go. That nothing will ever be able to stop you. That I will be with you and you can bet on that, so that—not so that we can know more about God, not so that we can just put on makeup and pretend, but so that we can go out, so that we can be sent, so that we can take people by the hand and say, “You’ve got to know this Jesus. Let me tell you about all he’s done. Let me tell you about where I was and where he brought me. Let me tell you that he’s right there for you too and there is nothing that is going to stop him.”

And what we’re going to do right now in the presence of God is watch everything else fade away. We’re going to come to this spot with Jesus, in his Spirit, because we know that he makes the darkness run, we know that he stands in an empty grave, and what I want to say right now is no matter where you are, if you’re on the outside, if you’re a skeptic, Jesus is for you. Jesus is for the thief, the criminal. Jesus is for the addict, for the one who is trying to find that fulfillment, for the promiscuous, for the one searching for love. God is for you! God is for you! The one who is hung over right now, watching through one eye, wishing I wouldn’t be so loud. God is for you!

God is ready to send his grace to you. What we have to do is just say, “Yes.” To get into his presence and watch him do what only he can do. And I’m going to pray right now, that’s my prayer. I’m going to pray that God would show up. That we would turn, that we would respond.

If that’s you, responding for the first time, we’ve got a spot for you. Go to tpcc.org/Jesus. Someone from our team will follow up with you and talk about what it looks like to follow Jesus.

For all of us though, we need this going into this week. We need the presence of God. We need the demons to know we need the evil spirits to know that Jesus went to war with the Devil and smacked him on the wrist once, it’s not a contest, and that’s what we’re standing on this week. So if you would, would you pray with me?

God, we pray to you. We pray to you that under that name, the name of Jesus, demons tremble in fear. In the name of Jesus, that God’s perfect love would cast out all fear. In the name of Jesus, you would bring healing. In the name of Jesus, our Savior, you will bring us through this.

God, in your name this week, we’re going to carve out time to be with you, not to do anything, just to be with you, to hear from you, to experience your love so that we can go out, so that we can be sent, so we can tell everyone about this kingdom, of a God who’d leave heaven, who would die for humanity, who would send us His Spirit, whose done everything we need. God, we point to you and it’s in your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.