
Traders Point how are we doing today? We doing okay? It is always so good to be here with you guys. I just want to take a moment to welcome everybody at all of our campuses, anybody who is tuning in online, any new guests we have in the building today, we are so glad that you guys are here.

If you were here with us last week, maybe you remember our lead pastor, Aaron Brockett, saying that he and our teaching pastor, Ryan, are actually going out on sabbatical really soon. And you see me up here and you're like, "I thought that wasn't until Memorial Day. What happened?" I talked them into going a little bit early. It didn't take much...no I'm joking. I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

They'll both be back next week as we kick off a new series called Achilles. And you'll want to come back too as we kick off that series. Brockett and Brammer will both be back here for that series. So, we encourage you to come back as well.

Today, what we we're doing is we are wrapping up a series of messages that we are in. And we have just really been unpacking a story that Jesus told known as a parable. He told about farming. And He told this story to a big crowd. A large and diverse group of people from various backgrounds and ethnicities and occupations, different social economic status, all of them were very different.

Some were actual followers of Jesus, people who had given up their whole livelihoods to follow Him and believe in Him. Men and women who were committed to the cause. They were in.

There was another group of people who were probably skeptical about Jesus, maybe were a little opposed to Him and who were trying to take Him out. And then there were some people right in the middle who were neutral, indifferent they were just there for a good time and the free coffee. So, Jesus, knowing this, tells them a story.

But there is one thing that they actually all would have had in common. They all would have been familiar with agriculture. They lived in an agrarian society, meaning that they either produced their own food or they knew somebody who did.

So Jesus, knowing this, uses this familiarity to tell them a story about farming that draws them in. It can be found in Luke, chapter 8. So if you have a Bible or a device with a Bible on it. Go ahead and flip or scroll there. If you don't know worries, everything will be up here on the screen next to me.

We've been calling this series Dirt. And what we've seen is that there are a lot of things that come to mind when we think of the word dirt. Right? Some of us think about our kids, filthiness, mud, messiness. Others of us think about a garden or landscaping. For me, I think about a place—the hardware store: Menards, Home Depot, you name it.

Let me just say there are a lot of things that I'm familiar with and places that I'm comfortable in—hardware store is not one of them. It's not. Listen. I'm not ashamed of that. My manhood is not defined by how well I can navigate a hardware store, okay?

But last year when the pandemic first hit and all of us were confined to our homes, for some reason people, at least in my neighborhood decided to have a party at the local hardware store. I guess I didn't get the memo. But it was packed every single day. Maybe it was because it was spring-time, and everybody wanted to do projects around the house. Everybody flooded to the hardware store. So, I decided to join the crowd.

And let me just say that there is probably no more entertaining job than the associates who work at a hardware store who have to interact with people like me who come in and are completely lost, but we're trying to act like we're not lost. And they are so kind too.

I'm usually lost, trying to navigate around the store, looking at my phone at the product and looking at the store trying to move my way through. And they come up and are like, "Excuse me, sir. Can I help you find something?" And I'm like finally putting my pride aside and I'm like, "Yeah, man. I'm looking for some mulch."

And they are kind but they're kind of condescending at the same time. It's like, "Oh, mulch? Sure. Let me help you navigate out of our plumbing section and follow me all the way to the other side of the store to the gardening section." And I'm like, "You know what, man? Forget your mulch. I'm going to Amazon. I don't need that in my life."

No kidding, the first time I bought mulch they asked me a question that I wasn't ready for, "How much mulch do you need?" And I kid you not, this is my response the first time. I was like, "How much have you got?"

Like Kyle, you're not buying this from somebody on Craig's List, you're at Lowes bro. I don't know. That's the first thing that came to mind. They were like, "You know we only have a few bags left out here but if you follow me around the corner, I can hook you up." I don't know. So much pressure to quantify the right amount of mulch for your house. Nobody told me.

Some of you are laughing because you cannot identify with that. Landscaping is your thing. Maybe you grew up on a farm and so you're like, "I know all there is to know about mulch and dirt."

It's a completely foreign world, okay? But it wouldn't have been foreign to the people in this crowd that Jesus was talking to. They would have been very familiar with the language that he was using about farming, the contextual background—all of that.

So Jesus, in true Jesus fashion, uses what was culturally familiar to tell them a story about farming to draw them in and to connect with their hearts. So if you have a Bible, let's go ahead and look at what He says in Luke, chapter 8. You guys ready to go? Let's do it. Luke, chapter 8, starting in verse 4. This is what it says:

"One day Jesus told a story in the form of a parable to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear him:" This is what he says. "'A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the

birds ate it. Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture.

“Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!’ When he had said this, he called out, ‘Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.’”

So Jesus tells this story and then He pretty much just says, “Alright. That’s it. Good night. I’ll be here all week—maybe, maybe not. You go figure it out.” But the disciples were like, “Come on Jesus. You’ve got to break this down for us a little bit.” So for some reason He chooses to break this down to His group of disciples who were right there with them. Everybody else had to fend for themselves. Look at what He says in verse 11 as He explains it. He said:

“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God’s word. The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved.

“The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation. The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity.

“And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God’s word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.”

So just to quickly recap, we’ve been saying that the seed is God’s Word. That’s what Jesus said. It’s the Good News about God’s love and about God’s kingdom.

The soil represents our hearts. And Jesus says that as the seed is scattered, God’s Word goes forth, it falls on different types of soil. The seed though, what we’ve been saying is that the seed remains the same. God’s Word does not change, but the condition of our hearts—they do.

So over the past couple of weeks we’ve been breaking down each one of these soils to try to find ourselves in them. Jesus said there are some that fell:

on a PATH

This didn’t even make it into the soil. It just fell on a path and birds came and they took it away. The birds represent Satan who takes the Word away from some of our hearts. So Jesus is saying, “Sometimes the Word goes forth. It is preached. But if falls on deaf ears.” So encouraging to hear as a preacher.

He said there are some though that fall:

on some ROCKS

And there is some soil but then there are rocks mixed in with it and it makes it hard for the seed to actually establish roots down into the soil and get the moisture that it needs. And the moment temptation comes, we’re drawn away.

He said there are some that fall:

among some THORNS

This is a little deceptive because this seed does what it's supposed to do. It falls into the soil and it begins to grow the roots and it even begins to sprout some vegetation, some fruit. But then there are some other plants that Jesus said that are around them and they begin to choke them out.

And He said that these plants represent worry, and wealth, and the pleasures of this world. So what they do is they compete with God in our hearts and have a tendency to fight for what is most important and end up drawing us away.

And I don't know about you, but I've been able to find myself in each one of these soils as we have gone over them over the past couple of weeks. And I have really been able to identify in this season or in seasons previous areas of soil in my heart that really resonate with me.

And it's just like the Holy Spirit has been giving me some healthy conviction gut punches. And then Jesus comes up and gives me this spiritual hug. Because He wants me to know, "Hey, you don't have to stay in these soils. They were never meant to be permanent."

He actually said there is a fourth kind of soil that we can have and that He wants to help us to nurture. And it's the good soil. And as I was doing some research about good soil (that didn't involve me going to Lowes) I was able to see a number of characteristics that describe what good soil actually looks like.

The main one that stood out to me though translates so well into our spiritual relationship with Jesus. And it's this:

Good soil is a sustainable and consistent environment for growth.

I want to take note of that because we're going to come back to revisit that over and over again here in the message. Good soil is a sustainable and consistent environment for growth. And Jesus wants you to know that this is exactly what it should look like in our hearts.

Some of you may know how important this is. Maybe you have a garden, or you have some flowers around your house, and you have a little bit of a green thumb. You know how important it is to maintain an environment that is sustainable and consistent for the plants. It's a fertile habitat for the nutrients to be able to get to the seed.

So Jesus said, "Hey, if you want to produce a harvest, if you want to have some fruit be in your life, it requires good, fertile soil." And so if we want to be able to do this, we're going to have to know that good and fertile soil is actually visible.

I don't know if you know this, but you can actually identify what good soil looks like. And Jesus says that when you have good soil it will be evident because of three things. I don't know if you caught them in the parable when He was explaining it.

He said, "First, you'll be able to hear the Word of God." You will be able to hear the direction that He is giving you. You'll hear His voice. You're not just listening for the sake of listening. You're listening with the intention to hear.

Then He says that you'll actually cling to it. You'll hear and then you'll cling. And this has everything to do with obedience, right? It has everything to do with not just listening to what God says but actually doing what He says.

You know, shortly after this it says that Jesus' mom and his brothers actually come to visit Him. And they are trying to push their way through this large crowd. And somebody comes up to Jesus to tell Him that His family was there. And they were like, "Bro, your mom and your brothers are here." And Jesus was like, "Well, My true family are those who hear God's Word and obey it."

So we have to hear God's Word and we have to cling to it. And then He says, "If you do these things, you'll produce a harvest." This is all about God rewarding the obedience, producing something through us.

And He doesn't just say a harvest; He says a huge harvest, okay? And I think for many of us that sounds really nice. We like to hear about the harvest, but we don't want to cultivate it, because the cultivating is hard. Cultivating requires us to dig up some things, doesn't it? It requires us to unearth a few things in our life.

It forces us to look at some of the sinful parts of who we are. It forces us to look at our past and to see some of the experiences that we have endured, maybe some trauma. It forces us to get a little vulnerable and honest. It forces us to actually admit that we're not just good people who occasionally make mistakes. We are broken people who could only be put back together by the very hands Who created us.

And man, if this last year has shown me anything—in the pandemic—it's how broken I am. How selfish I can be. How controlling I can be at times. How much pride is in me. And God has had to dig that out of me. And He has to remind me that He refuses to share a space in my heart with things that don't look like Him.

So, I've had to dig that up and give it over to God. I've had to completely surrender some things to God, because He promises to produce a harvest in us. If we have this good soil, it will produce a harvest.

I think if we knew what the harvest is really about, then it would change our approach to a lot of things, particularly our relationship with Jesus. I think when we think of the harvest, we think of prosperity, we think of receiving something, alright? And I'm with you.

We think about some of our wants and our desires and some of our needs. And I'll be the first to say that I have to fight my flesh every single day because it tries to tell me that God owes me something, that because of what I do or because of some of my works, that I should be rewarded with some things.

But there's some wrestling that I've been doing just as it relates to what the harvest actually is. And it's forced me to ask the question, "What if the harvest is different, what if the harvest isn't really about receiving? What if the harvest is more about who you're becoming than what you're receiving?"

I think a lot of us have a tendency to turn Jesus into like a genie. “Oh, Jesus. If I could just... Give me this job. Just give me this house. Oh, Jesus. If you could just make these kids listen.” Just me? No?

What if the harvest is more about who you’re becoming in the process than what you are receiving? College students: what if the harvest isn’t you getting the dream job out of college? What if the harvest isn’t the promotion?

Singles: what if the harvest isn’t you getting married? Parents of adult kids who are married: what if the harvest isn’t you getting those grandbabies that you’re waiting for? All good things, but we can make them ultimate things.

What if the harvest is more about who we are becoming than what we are receiving? What if the harvest is about you falling in love with Jesus every day? Letting Him change your heart every day, and then letting Him use you to impact the people who are around you every single day. What if that is the harvest?

God says He wants to do some things in you. He wants to do things through you. He wants to place you in the midst of darkness so that you can be a planter.

In fact, right after this Jesus says, “Hey, nobody lights a lamp and just covers it up.” The lamp has a purpose. It’s a light that people are drawn to. And Jesus is saying, “That’s what the harvest is about. I want to shine a light through you so that people can be drawn to Me through you.” So He wants to draw people to us and that’s what the harvest is. He wants people to be drawn to Him.

So the harvest sounds good, but it takes some work. And we can’t do it without cultivating some good soil. So how do we get the good soil? Maybe that’s what you all have been waiting for. It’s like, “Man, you’ve been talking about all of these different types of soil. Just tell me how to get the good stuff. That’s the only reason I’m here. The only reason I came today.”

I hear you. But I think that you will be shocked to know that Jesus doesn’t say. That’s what wrecked me this week as I was studying for this message. I’m like, “He doesn’t even tell them how to get the good soil.” The disciples thought they were getting the inside scoop. But if you look at it, He tells them the results of having good soil. He says, “You’ll hear God’s Word, you’ll cling to it, you’ll produce a harvest.” But He doesn’t tell them how to have good soil.

And that had to be so frustrating. I thought it’s not that they were actually getting some information that would be helpful to them—it actually would. And I had to wonder why Jesus didn’t actually tell them how to get good soil. And I thought He actually did something more important—He showed them. He showed them with His life. He showed them with the way that He incorporated certain rhythms to His life. How He interacted with people who society had pushed to the margins. He showed through His character and how He was patient and kind with people.

I think what Jesus was trying to do, I think He was trying to show them that it’s not about doing, following Him is not about a checklist—and, oh man, we are good at checklists, aren’t we? It’s like for some of us, you give us a good to do list and you just leave us alone. We are set.

But Jesus is saying, "Hey, following Me is not about doing, it's about being." So how can we be? How can we take our cues from Jesus? That's what I want to do with the remainder of our time. What can we look at that Jesus was about? What was He like? How did He model being? And then how can we implement that into our lives, that we could have an environment that is sustainable and consistent for growth?

And the first thing that I would say that is super important is that we have to:

BE PRESENT

Be present. Sounds very simple. But it's not easy to live out. Jesus was very present, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well. He walked at such a pace that didn't seem rushed, but He had a sense of urgency about Him. And He wasn't distracted by people who were trying to get His attention and things that were going on around Him.

Which is very hard for us not to do, we are constantly being enamored by things that are fighting for our attention. And we can be easily distracted and drift away either because of distraction or disinterest.

Hypothetically speaking, all hypothetical, have you ever been on a Zoom meeting, maybe for school or for work. A lot of us are familiar with it over the past year in the pandemic. And there's a lecture going on or maybe somebody is presenting something.

And you just find yourself checking out. You turn the camera off, the audio is off now, and you've got a text conversation going with somebody else who is in the meeting too, but totally unrelated to what is going on. Maybe you're browsing social media. Some of you all are bold enough to be cooking and stuff during these meetings, folding laundry. All of that.

What happened? You became distracted or disinterested, one of the two. And the same thing can happen to us spiritually if we're not present.

But guess what? We have an enemy that is a master at getting us to be both distracted and disinterested. It's part of his MO. That's what he does best. If we're not careful we can find ourselves steadily drifting from being present.

But Jesus was always present. He was constantly getting into solitude with His Heavenly Father and exhibiting an open heart that was open to what God wanted to do in and through Him.

And I think what we have to do is we have to first identify some things in our lives that either help us become more present or that keep us from being present.

One of the questions that I've had to actually start wrestling with is one that has helped me during this season where I've have had to run it through a grid and pinpoint some things in my life and actually assess if it's helping me or hurting me when it comes to being present. Maybe I can share this with you, and it will help you too. It's simple:

Am I more present with or without _____

You fill in the blank. I can't do that for you. Maybe there are some things that you are more present with, all about being present with God and present with those who are around you.

Maybe some things actually help you to be present. Maybe it's small group. You put small group in here—99 percent of the time that will help you be more present.

That's an encouragement to be present with God, present with your family, present with your friends so that you can be aware of what's going on and then participate with Jesus and help Him to encourage them spiritually.

Maybe it's counseling. You are more present with counseling in your life, and you need to actually seek that out.

Maybe you swing your pencil to the other side and say, "Hey, what am I more present without in my life?" And maybe that the name of a person who is drawing you away during this season of your life and temporarily you have to disconnect so that you can grow and then circle back to help them.

I know for me, I'm asking that question during this season and social media has been a big one. Instagram will get me man. I promise. And I have to ask myself, "Am I a better disciple, a better husband, a better father, a better friend, a better pastor with it or without it in my life?"

And God is saying, "During this season, you're better without it." Because I can't produce a harvest if I'm constantly admiring the illusion of someone else's harvest—it's detrimental to my heart. So I have to identify what it is that is drawing me away.

Am I a better or more present disciple, father, husband, friend (you fill in the blank) with or without this in my life? Because presence is so key:

Presence is all about creating a space for God's Word and God's love to live.

Maybe if you've been tracking with us on social media, you've been seeing that we've actually been doing devotions that are pointing to certain rhythms that Jesus implemented into His life that can help us be more present, to be more engaged and involved with God and with those who are around us.

They are called spiritual disciplines. Things like fasting, and praying, and Scripture, and serving. These aren't just rituals. These are things that Jesus actually did in order for Him to maintain an environment that was sustainable and consistent. And we think that they can help us as well.

So we've got to be present. The second thing is we've got to:

BE PATIENT

Be patient. Nobody did this better than Jesus. What this reminds us of is that spiritual growth doesn't happen overnight. And I think that we know that subconsciously, but we try to rush the process so many times. Jesus was patient. The disciples were with Him every day for three years and they still made mistakes and said a lot of dumb things. But Jesus never reprimanded them for it. He was patient with them. He may have gotten a little frustrated with their lack of faith, but He never condemned them for not growing at the rate that was expected. He was patient.

And I think that a lot of us think we can air fry spiritual growth. We want it instantly and we want it to be good. I've air fried a lot of crazy things, especially during the quarantine. I'm

putting pancake batter in there, looking over my shoulder to make sure my wife isn't looking. You are like, "He is a terrible husband, he can't buy mulch, he can't cook. What are you good for?"

No, it's not instant. And in a society where we are so enamored with instant gratification, Jesus says spiritual growth is not always instant.

One thing I've identified about following Jesus is that it requires some waiting. And none of us like to wait. We are masters at creating opportunities for us not to wait. But Jesus says we have to be patient. Look again at what He says, actually, in Luke, chapter 8, verse 15. He says:

"And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest."

Following Jesus requires some waiting. And again, we are masters at not waiting. We will find anything to not wait. We will find the shortest check out line at the store. If we're coming to a stop light and there are some cars there, we'll find the lane that has the least amount of cars. Just me?

If I'm on Amazon and I'm scrolling through it could be a great product, great reviews but if it doesn't have prime delivery, I'm moving on. I need it in two to three days.

No. We need to wait. Jesus said we have to be patient because spiritual growth doesn't happen overnight. But waiting is not easy.

My daughter, one of her favorite shows used to be *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*. Parents of toddlers in the room probably know what I'm talking about. She recently discovered *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* though. And Daniel Tiger is a cartoon spin-off of Mr. Rogers, but she thinks Mr. Rogers is new. I tried to tell her, "No baby, Mr. Roger's has been around since the 60s."

"No, Daddy. It's new."

"Alright."

One day she was watching an episode of Mr. Rogers he takes off one cardigan and puts on another and changes his shoes. And the episode was about waiting. And what Mr. Rogers said is: waiting is hard. And he sings this little ditty, this little song, "I think it's very, very, very hard to wait." And Kendall is like, "I feel you Mr. Rogers, waiting is hard."

And she's adopted that. She's like using it against me. So any time her instant gratification isn't so instant she pulls one of those numbers. She's like, "Daddy, can I have some candy?"

"No, Kendall. Not right now."

"Waiting is hard."

"Daddy, can I go outside?"

"No, Kendall. Not right now."

"Waiting is hard."

I'd be like, "You know what else is hard? These hardwood floors. Sit down and face the wall, you're in time out." It's annoying.

There is some truth to that. I finally succumbed to that. There is some truth in that. Waiting is hard. Maybe you need to hear that too. You need to accept it and to acknowledge that waiting is hard.

But I want you to know that there's some purpose in the waiting. Waiting isn't just for the sake of waiting. God wants to do some things in you as you are waiting.

I don't know if you know this but actually when a seed is planted do you know it actually grows down before it grows up? The roots start to grow. Before you ever see anything on the surface there is already growth that is taking place down beneath the soil.

And the roots have a purpose. The root helps provide nutrients to the plant, but it also gives it something else. It gives it an anchor. It's there to support the plant for when it grows above the surface. It's a foundation.

And the same thing is true with our spiritual growth. While we are waiting God is actually doing some things in us. God is actually cultivating the soil of our hearts and giving the character that we need so that when we produce a harvest, we have the character that is needed to be able to sustain the fruit.

He's more concerned about our character over our competency because our competency, our talents and our gifts can take us places, but our character is what is going to keep us there. So as we produce a harvest, God is saying, "Hey, there is purpose in the wait."

And some of you need to hear that. As you're waiting, God is doing some things in you. So we have to be patient and we cannot lose heart. Which leads us the third thing. We have to be present; we have to be patient and we've got to:

BE PERSISTENT

This has everything to do with being faithful. And it may seem like those two things are mutually exclusive, being patient and persistent, but they are not. You can be patient while still being faithful. I actually love this definition of persistence:

Persistent is continuing firmly in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition.

And Jesus did this so well. There was so much opposition and discouragement that Jesus faced but He stayed to faithful to the mission and He did not waiver and it is what made Him the model for spiritual growth, which is obedience to God's will.

Eugene Peterson would actually call this a long obedience in the same direction—a long obedience in the same direction. That's what spiritual growth, that's what discipleship is all about.

And if we want to be able to see the harvest, we have to be able to be persistent, to stay the course even when it doesn't look like what we think success should look like.

And you know, as Jesus broke down this parable, I think that there was a particular reason that He did so. One of them is that He wanted them to know what spiritual growth actually looks like in their own lives, but He also wanted them to know, "Hey, you're going to be doing some planting soon."

He was telling the disciples, “Hey, you’re going out and you’re going to scatter some seed. And as you scatter some seed some of it is going to fall on good soil, other will fall on bad soil. But guess what? You cannot lose heart. You have to stay faithful to the mission.”

And what He was doing is He was re-orienting their picture of what success actually looks like. And I think He wants to do the same thing with many of us because in today’s world where so much of success is marked by hitting milestones and hitting metrics and getting the followers and getting the lives—all these other things, Jesus is saying, “None of that is what success is about.”

You know what success is?

Success is obedience and faithfulness to the last thing God told you to do.

Obedience and faithfulness to the last thing that God told you to do. And Jesus is saying that this is what success is all about as He’s giving information to the disciples.

Obedience and faithfulness—we have to be obedient and faithful during the planting process. That’s what persistence is all about. Because guess what? It is not our job to make the harvest grow. That’s the role of the Holy Spirit. We cannot make the harvest grow. Our job is to be obedient and to be faithful during the planting process, to be persistent.

And God says, “If you do this, I promise that I’m going to give you a harvest. There are some things that are going to be produced in you but also some things that I am going to do through you.”

So we have to be faithful. We have to be present. We have to be patient. We also have to be persistent because we know that we’ve been called to a mission. We’ve been saved from something for something.

I want to kind of talk to a few people who are either here in the room or at all of our campuses who are a little bit involved in what we have going on.

Group leaders: I know what it’s like to commit yourself to the mission and to be all in only to have one or two people show up on a weekly basis. I know what it’s like to pour yourself out hoping that you see fruit, but it seems like nothing is taking root.

Kids’ Ministry volunteers: God bless you. God bless you. There is a lot of planting that goes on in Kids’ Ministry and sometimes it seems like all that happens, planting and planting, and it may seem like you never see the fruit. And sometimes it may not happen until years down the line when these kids are in high school or college or adults. But your role is significant. You’re doing some planting and it’s valuable. Be present, be patient and be persistent. Keep showing up.

Maybe you are a parent who has adult kids and your kids have walked away from Jesus. It’s hard. And you’re starting to question everything that you did. Maybe you thought, “I did all of the things. I took them to church. I told them that I wasn’t perfect, but I did the best that I could to model Jesus before them and they still walked away.”

Be present. They need to know that your love for them is not contingent on them following Jesus. You have to stay involved in what they have going on and who they are. Be patient. It’s

not your job to grow the harvest. Keep praying. But be persistent. Don't lose heart. Don't lose faith. Don't lose courage.

Maybe you're a student and it seems like you're the only person at your school or on your campus who is following Jesus. And it's very hard. And you're doing all of the things, you started a ministry, you're inviting other students to church. You're telling them that you're not perfect, but you've encountered a perfect God who is starting to change you and you're doing all of the things, but it seems like nothing is taking root.

Be persistent. Keep planting. That's our only job, to plant. And people will come along side and water it and God will ultimately be the One who grows the harvest.

Maybe it's your marriage and your spouse isn't growing spiritually at the rate that you had hoped. Stay engaged. Keep praying. Be persistent. Keep serving. Our job is to plant.

You know, as I was preparing for this message—I often listen to music as I study or as I'm writing. And this particular time—I'll usually have some jazz or something going a little Coltrane or some Myles Davis, but this week I had a worship play list going. And there was a song that came on in this play list, one that I've heard countless times before. And it's actually become one of my favorite songs by Hillsong Worship. And the song is called *As It Is (In Heaven)*.¹

And the chorus of this song just wrecked me in a way that I've never heard it before. And it just washed over me. It says:

I know You love me.
I know You found me.
I know You saved me.
And Your grace will never fail me.

But this line is what hit me like a ton of bricks:

And while I'm waiting, I'm not waiting
I know Heaven lives in me.

And as I heard that I was like, "Man, how true is that?" I'm like listening to it in the car and blaring out the lyrics. I'm like crying and I'm at a stop light and people are probably looking over like, "What's he doing?"

I don't care. I'm like, "While I'm waiting, I'm not waiting." Because there is so much truth in that. It has everything to do with, "Hey, I know that Jesus is going to produce a harvest. I know that

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As It Is (In Heaven)

Ben Fielding | Joel Houston

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one day Jesus is returning. He's going to come back. But while I'm waiting, I'm not waiting. I'm not just sitting idle and doing nothing.

"I'm going to stay faithful to the mission. I'm going to keep my hands to the plow. I'm going to keep showing up every single day to stay engaged. I'm not checking out. I'm going to plant and I'm going to praise. I'm going to till and I'm going to trust. I'm going to work and I'm going to worship.

"I know one day Jesus is going to return and He's going to restore all things, but until that happens, I'm going to stay faithful. While I'm waiting, I'm not waiting, because hell is too hot, and eternity is too long for me to do nothing. My job is to plant, and God will grow the harvest."

And maybe you're here today and you're still trying to figure out this whole Jesus thing. Maybe you're not sold on it. Maybe you walked away from Jesus. Or maybe it wasn't even Jesus you walked away from; it was the church. I hear you.

But can I tell you that this very element of waiting, but not waiting is existent in our Heavenly Father? One of the most common words used throughout Scripture to describe Him is patient.

In fact, I love what it says in 2 Peter, chapter 3. It says:

"The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."

And that word repent means to have a changing of the mind. To be walking one way and to make an about face and believe God for who He says He is and believe Jesus for what He did and then begin to walk in a new direction. He's waiting. He's patient.

But He's not waiting in the sense that you are thinking. He's not waiting for you to get your act together before you can come to Him. He's not waiting for you to get all of your ducks in a row, do enough good deeds before He accepts you. Look, He already made the first move. He went to a cross to die for us while we were dead in our sins. The move was His and He already made it.

All we have to do is receive and just be and believe. He's waiting. He's waiting for your heart to soften and to accept Him. He's waiting for it to become a little bit tender, open to what He wants to do in and through your life. He's waiting.

But at the very same time He's not waiting, because He's chasing you down with everything that He has in Him. He's pursuing you left and right, not letting you get away. Letting you know how big and how magnificent and how sufficient His love is for you. And that's what He wants to wash over your life. And while He's waiting, He is not waiting.

And maybe some of you need to hear that today. You just need to receive. You just need to be. You stop trying to do and know that Jesus already did all of the doing. And while He's waiting, while He is being patient, He's not waiting.

I want to ask all of at all of our campuses to go ahead and stand. If you're online stand with us and get ready to worship and pray. I'm going to pray these things over us. I'm going to pray that God would allow these three things: to be present; to be patient; and to be persistent.

Pray with me.

God, thank you so much for this opportunity that we have to gather together as Your church. God, that we would see what it looks like to have good soil, an environment with sustainable and consistent growth can take place. And we know that that is the desire that You have for our hearts so that Your Word can be heard, that we can cling to it, and so that we can produce a harvest.

And, God, we know that as we do those things, You promise that the harvest will come. But we feel okay even if we don't see the harvest on this side of eternity. God, help us to be persistent in the process. Help us to not lose heart. Help us to not want to waiver. Help us not to want to throw in the towel.

Help us to stay faithful to the mission, because You've promised to complete the work that You've started within other people. Help us to be faithful to planting and plowing and cultivating so that You can do the rest, God. You are the only One who is worthy. Worthy of our praise. Worthy of our worship.

And all that we do is because of You, Jesus. And, God, we will exalt You. We will lift You up. We will give You all the praise that Jesus deserves in the process of planting. So, God, encourage us. Help us to stay faithful. Help us to love the way that You have called us to love. We ask all of these things in Your precious Son, Jesus' name. And the church says: Amen.