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Traders Point, how are we doing? It's good to be with you today. My name is Ryan, a teaching pastor here. I'm so excited you are joining us. We are one week away from Easter. This is a beautiful, beautiful season.

I just want to take a second right now though and let's all get around and celebrate. Can we show some love to our lead pastor Aaron Brockett? He's going to be here next week preaching the lights out day in and day out. That takes a lot.

So, let's come around him this week and pray for him. And then pray for our team as well. I've caught glimpses of what we're putting together for the Easter service, and I'm telling you it is going to be unbelievable. I can't wait to see all God does through that service.

But for today, we are in this series *Rally Cry*, where we're rallying around the areas of our lives that got hit the hardest. The way I want to look at today is this is the half-time speech moment.

There is really only one half-time speech, and it comes at different times. But here is what it is. It's the talk about why you are enough to win, why you have what it takes to go out there and make sure you leave it all out there and come out with a victory.

That's what today is. And what we're doing, is we are rallying around the church. Every week throughout this series we've looked at different areas: our relationships, marriages, and kids. Those are all by-products of a church. But today we're going to rally around that church. And a rally cry is a word, phrase, or idea that brings people together in support of something important or worthwhile.

Like I said, this is the half-time moment. We want to rally around the areas of our lives that got hit the hardest. I remember really the only big half-time moment I was in personally (I've seen a lot in the movies), I remember we were in a middle school basketball tournament. And we were getting destroyed.

The coach comes in, and it was obvious he had just watched a movie too. He comes in, grabs the bottles of Gatorade, and he slams them against the wall. That's as far as he got in the movie, because he had nothing to say after that. He just put his hands on his hips like, "Okay."

I knew then that I didn't belong there, because all I was thinking about was, "What are we going to drink for the rest of the game? It's hot out there. Yeah, we're losing. We're playing against Eric Bordon, in 10 years he's going to be in the NBA. We're not going to win. Let's take it easy. I'll go to the vending machine for everyone. Who wants water?"

But there is this moment when we rally together, we charge. And that's what today is. We're going to do it around this idea:

The Church

What is the church? Maybe you've thought that, maybe you've thought nothing about that. To you, maybe the church is just something you were raised in. It's a place that you go on Sundays.

Some of you are like, "I don't know how to get to lunch without coming here first." This is what we do.

Others of you, you're like, "Church is a space for confusion." It's brought you a lot of questions and wonder.

So, what we want to do today is to look at what is the church? So we can rally around her correctly, so we can promote her correctly.

One of my favorite ways the Bible talks about the church is as: Jesus.

### The Bride of Jesus

I love that picture. Here's the picture that comes to mind. Think back to your wedding, or maybe a wedding you've been to. You know that moment when everyone is sitting, but then the music changes. The doors swing open. And the bride steps in. Everyone stands to their feet.

As she walks down the aisle, she is beautiful. Everyone breaks their neck just to try to look over one another to look at the bride as she comes. This is the church. This is the response the church should provoke as she moves throughout the world. She is beautiful. And here is the question we're looking to answer today.

How can we help the world fall in love with the church?

How can we rally around this and live this out so that we are that Bride of Christ?

What is the church. And I want us to go all the way back to look at a way she is described. One of the first ways she is described, and maybe this is new to you or maybe it's not. But look at this. The first followers of Jesus, the church, which is just the body, the community of followers of Jesus, look how it was described:

### the Way

This group of followers, the way they were known was, "That's the Way." And look at it in Acts 22:4. It jumps out.

*"And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison."*

The Way. This was coming from Jesus where he was saying, "I am the Way, the truth, and the life."

There was this group of people who believed Jesus was who he said he is, and they lived accordingly. They followed God's way for their lives. And it began to change everything. It began to spark an uproar.

And when we look at it this way, when we see this body, this movement of Jesus was the Way, it begins to make a lot of sense when you look back to the teachings of Jesus and all that he was talking about.

Look at this. Think about what Jesus says when he stepped onto the scene in Mark.

*“The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!”* Mark 1:15 (NLT)

And maybe you read this, and there was only one word that stood out to you, and not because we highlighted it. But, it’s repent. And maybe that has a bad taste in your mouth because of the way you heard it. But here’s what that word means. It just means to stop thinking and living the way you’re living. Stop going the way you are going. And start living a new way.

And this is what Jesus would come up to people and preach. He was saying this Kingdom of God, this way of God, it is here. And you need to repent. Because the way you are going, the way you are walking, it only leads to death. It only lends itself to more and more problems. It is void of God. It’s pointless, don’t go that way.

Instead of hearing repent from a bullhorn, I see Jesus with his arm around people’s shoulders saying, “That’s the way that you’re going. That’s where it’s leading, and it’s leading to nothing good. But if you turn, and you start walking in this new way, this way I’m telling you about, this way that I’m trying to give you by my Spirit, this is the Good News.”

This is the what Jesus came to bring. He came to take all of us who are moving in the wrong direction, going the wrong way, and introduce a new way. I mean, this was his mission statement. Look at this in Luke 19.

*“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”* Luke 19:10 (NLT)

Physically? Just a bunch of people lost on a campsite? No. They were going, we were all going the wrong direction, with no way to find ourselves, with no way to find God.

And Jesus said, “No, no, I’m here to take all those who are lost, all those who are wandering, all those who are looking for answers, and I’ve come to provide them. I’ve come here to show the way of where we are going.”

It’s fascinating. This is what Jesus does over and over again. And even when we read this, where Jesus says, “I’ve come to seek and save the lost,” it’s attached to a story of a real person named Zacchaeus. And I want us to look at this story, because I think it shows perfectly what Jesus came to do and what he did over and over again. Look at this.

*“There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.”* Luke 19:2-4 (NLT)

I just want to break this down for just a second. A man named Zacchaeus, he was a chief tax collector. What this means is he was very rich. He was successful. And he had made a living off exploiting those around him. He was a thief, but he was living a really good life from a physical, earthly standpoint.

But there was something missing. There was something all that money was not bringing him. And there was something about the whispers and rumors about who Jesus was that caused him to do something pretty crazy.

It says he tried to get a look at Jesus, but was too short to see over the crowd. I too have been too short to see over the crowd. You know one of my favorite things to do when I get off the stage is to meet people in the lobby. And they say, "You know what? We thought you were taller."

"I thought you were kinder." Kidding, kidding, mostly.

But, look at this, we read stuff like this and I don't think we grasp the magnitude of it. This is a grown man running ahead, climbing into a tree. When was the last time you saw a grown man in a tree?

Imagine you went out this morning, you were getting ready to go, drinking your coffee, and you looked out and there was Zach, your neighbor, in a tree. That would be enough to stop and be a little worried. "Are you alright, bro? Why are you in a tree?"

But I'm telling you, if the Jesus you know and love does not have grown men climbing in trees to get a glimpse of how good he is and all that he's brought, we've got different Jesus's. We're talking about a different Savior.

This is the response. And once again, what does it remind you of? That bride. You would do anything just to catch a glimpse of it. And that's what Zacchaeus does to the point that he jumps up and climbs into a tree. "I have to be able to see Jesus. I have to hear about this new way, about all that he is bringing."

And Jesus sees him. And he says, "Zach, why don't you go ahead and get out of the tree? We're going to go back to your place." We don't know exactly what happens there, but we know the results of when Jesus meets Zach. Look at this.

*"Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, 'I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!'"*  
Luke 19:8 (NLT)

What happened? There was a man going one way, leading his life one way, and then he has this moment with Jesus where he does a complete 180. And the most important thing to him now, he's giving it away. He's giving it back. He goes from being greedy to being generous with this one interaction with Jesus when Jesus lays it out in front of Zacchaeus, "The way you're living, the way you're going, it will not lead to what you're looking for."

And over and over again, this is what we see Jesus do. Through his three years of ministry he goes to people, he goes to crowds. And over and over again he rescues them he heals them, he brings miracles. But what he is doing is providing a new way of life.

Like the Sermon on the Mount, probably Jesus' most famous teaching. What does he say over and over again?

"You've heard it said..."

You've heard it say, life was like this. You've heard it said, this is what you should value. You've heard it said, this is what brings happiness, joy, and fulfillment.

"But I say..."

There's a new way. But I say that because I'm here now everything is different. But I say this is what God is really like, and now plan accordingly. Now, stop going the way you were going, and start walking in this new life.

You see, Christianity is so much more than what we bring it down to. Christianity is not just a belief and the church is not just a place. Christianity is the way to eternal life.

And it's not a life that begins when we die. It's a life that begins right now because of what Jesus has offered, because of what Jesus has brought forth. We can live in a new way. When we live like this, when we look to Jesus and we look to the teachings of Jesus, and we look to the Spirit of Jesus, and we're guided by him, things begin to change. People begin to take notice. The church gets stronger, and stronger, and stronger.

And we've looked at what are the consequences of that. What does it look like when the church is the church and follows through? We saw it in Acts.

*"...And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved."* Acts 2:47 (NLT)

What I want us to look at is why. Why were people wanting to be a part of this thing? What was it about this new way of life that was drawing people in? It was the beauty of the bride. It made her stand out. People couldn't look away. When this church came to where they were, they were curious.

And there's this New Testament scholar Larry Hurtado, who actually looked at the early church. He points out five markers; five markers that made the church stand out.

Because you have to think about this, this is at a time during the Roman Empire, when this movement is trying to get going. It is trying to be stomped out. The first followers, they are being persecuted, they are being killed, they are being thrown into jail, and they are being thrown to lions.

Yet there is something about that where there is still a group of non-Christians going, "Yeah, but I think I want it. I want to be a part of that." Even though death was almost guaranteed, they said, "I want that." Why? What did they see? What was so beautiful about the church. He just names five, and I want to go through them.

The Early Church:

Was a multi-racial community

This was unheard of. You're thinking of a time where everything was so segregated. There were Jewish people, Gentiles, you were with your set, and you didn't cross any racial boundaries. You were you, and you stayed there.

But then, people started seeing a new group, a new way where there was this teaching that said, "No, no, no actually all are one in Christ. There is no longer Jew, Gentile, male or female, free or slave. They were all one in Christ, and stated living accordingly.

People started having some questions. "How are you able to do that?"

"Because of our God."

That was the first thing. The second one was this.

### Cared for the poor and the suffering

And not just their poor, and not just their suffering—they cared for all the poor and all the suffering. Once again, when the poor and the suffering were placed in the margins, you didn't associate with them. If you were born poor, you died poor. That was it.

If you were suffering, if you had a disease, you were pushed away. You were distanced. And then, there was this group who had a very different way of life. And they actually started going and caring for the poor.

And they started caring for the suffering. To the point that when these plagues would come and people were dying and everyone was running away, Christians were going forward. And they were taking care of them. Even when it cost them their own lives they cared for and they served the poor and the suffering. It was a new way.

The third one:

### Known for forgiveness and reconciliation

In a shame and honor culture, this stood out. Because if my life is built on honor, any time you try to attack me, any time you try to bring shame to me or my family, I have to attack back. I retaliate. I get even. You've heard it said.

But Jesus and his followers, they show up and say, "No, no, no there is a different way. We're actually going to be known for forgiveness and reconciliation. We're going to forgive those who have hurt us."

This frustrated them so bad (the Roman Empire) because they couldn't hurt them. They were unshakable. They would threaten them, beat them. They would even say, "We're going to kill you."

And they'd be like, "To live is Christ, to die is gain. Did you not see the new tee shirts, bro? You can't take us down." And they began to pray for the people who were hurting. They began to forgive those who had hurt them. And the watching world is going, "What is going on? How are you doing this?"

And look at number four:

### Committed to the sanctify of life

And this is more than just being opposed to abortion, because abortion was very dangerous so it didn't happen a lot. What really did happen though is children were seen as less than equal. There was something called infant exposure, where there would be these drop spots.

If you have a kid you didn't want, you would take them there and drop them off. Either they would die, or another group would come by and take them as a slave. But then there was this new group. This new movement, this way, who began to preach and teach and say, "Actually, men, women, and children are all equal."

And they not only preached it, but they would show up to these drop spots and take these kids and not raise them as slaves, they raised them as family. They adopted them into their family. This was a really new way of life, and it began to stand out.

And look at the last one:



## Offered a sexual counter-culture

Here's what that means. Within the Roman culture, sex was an appetite that was meant to be satisfied, specifically for men, men in power. You could take what you wanted, and if that power came to you, you had to bow down to it. It was nothing more than an appetite.

Until this new group started showing up and saying, "No, no, no, there is actually a different way. Sex is actually a lot different than that. It's not about taking, it's actually about giving. The only way you can do that is within it's proper context in a marriage between a man and a woman."

It was this idea that you can't give yourself sexually to someone until you've given yourself fully to them in marriage. And it was this upside-down way of thinking and living, this new path that Jesus had charted and set his followers on.

Nobody had seen anything like it. And what I just want us to see, these five, are these not still the five, the pressure points of our cultures and our communities, right now that people are trying to find answers to? That people are fighting over? If we could have one voice on these, if we could stand out and be known for these same things, we would make such a difference.

And this is what makes it so hard. When we begin to preach things like this and teach things like this, sometimes we hear people say, "You're just trying to respond to culture." No, we're trying to respond to a human problem, a problem with humanity.

The reason we respond when we do, is because we have the answer. It's a new headline, it's the same problem. We believe that because of Jesus we have the resolve, we have the answer.

This is what people are looking for, people who are far from God. They are not just looking for a room they can come into. They are not just looking for a good sermon, which we try to give every single week. They are not just looking for an incredible worship experience.

People are looking for a new way of life.

A new way of living. People are looking for a love that can meet them right where they are and address the questions and the emptiness. A love that can match the pain that they've experienced, the suffering they are enduring. And a love that can bring them hope.

What we get to do, we get to provide that. We get to stand in the gap and we get to see people and hear all their wants. We get to see the shouting, the pain, and the suffering. We get to come to them and say, "There is a new way,"

And we are the way. We are the ones who get to show people this way. We are the chosen instruments of God who get to bring people to him, to show that it is only by him that anything can change. That there is a love that exists, there is a love that can fulfill. And what we do is we give our lives to it, being the Way.

This is our mission as a church:

To remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus.

If there is anything extra, if there is anything in the way, anything that is stopping people from being able to turn and follow Jesus, we are a wrecking crew. Knocking anything and everything out of the way so people can come to know Jesus.

This is who we are. We go out day in and day out and strip the barriers. We make clear the way. We show the way. We show this new way, this new life God has promised and allowed us to live out by his Spirit.

To be on mission, do you know what this word means? To be sent. That's literally all the word means. To be on mission for his church is to be sent. And we are sent because Jesus was sent. As we are sent, we are following the same model God put before us with Jesus.

We're going to look at a prayer of Jesus in John 17. But I want to say something before I read it. Because there is a line here, and I don't want us to rush past it. Maybe you've spent a lifetime wondering, "Do my prayers reach God? Does God hear my prayers?"

And I think Jesus takes that thought and says, "I'm going to raise you one." Think about this. Not only does God hear our prayers, God prayed for you. Think about how wild that is and just let it sit, that God knew he was ushering in this new Kingdom, this new way of life. He knew that he was creating the church and he was going to send them out. And he prayed for us.

What he prayed for was unbelievable. Because he prayed for the thing that we would need more than anything else if we're going to stand out, if we're going to be the church. If we're going to help in this mission, this is what we need to be. Look at this in John 17:14. This is Jesus:

*"I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one." So we can't run, but we have to rally. "They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth."*

What does Jesus pray for? He does not pray that they would be really articulate and deliver powerful sermons. He does not pray for them to be successful. He says:

Make them holy

"God, you are going to send them out there like sheep amongst wolves. They are going to have this enemy. Keep them safe from the evil one. But God, make them holy. Make them holy just as we are holy."

That's what God's called us to be as a church—holy. I'll tell you the real bummer. Holy has been hijacked. And it is only, I believe, the work of the devil to take something as beautiful and pure as holy and make it a bad thing.

Maybe that's what you're thinking right now. "Holy? You don't know me. I can tell you I'm a lot of things, holy is not one of them." As we talk about being holy, that's maybe your thought. "I don't want that." Why? "Because I don't want people to think I'm better than them." That's not what holy is. But God prayed for us to be holy.



Instead, what we've done over the years is exchanged holiness for ordinary, believing this is how we'll reach a watching world. That if we can say that we're exactly the same and the only difference is we go to this place on Sundays, if that is the only difference, there is no difference.

But Jesus says, "I want you to be holy." Holy doesn't mean perfect, holy doesn't mean I'm better than you. Here's what it means.

I am holy = I have been set apart for a new life.

It means I was living one way, I was walking in one direction, I was doing the best I could with what I had available, but then I met Jesus. And Jesus spun me around and offered me a new life.

It means that of all the ways I could have gone, all the values I could have had, all the things I could have given my life to, I've decided on this one thing. And it is to follow Jesus with everything I have. And by his Spirit, I am being made holy. By his Spirit, I am being set apart because I have a very specific purpose.

I have a very specific calling. I am to bring light into darkness. That is the differentiator. That is why I'm different. I have a purpose, and I know my purpose and my Creator.

We are holy, and not just individually, collectively. We are a holy nation. Look at this in 1 Peter.

*"But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light."* 1 Peter 2:9 (NLT)

A royal priesthood, a holy nation, this is what we get to do and this is what we get to be a part of, how we reach the world. What is it that will cause the world to stop, stare, and stand to their feet? It is not money. It is not success. It is not popularity. It is holiness. We are called to be set apart for a very specific purpose.

And this is our message. This is our motto. We are made holy so that we can be Christians. This is what the word Christian means—we are little versions of Christ. It was used as a derogatory statement. These little Christians, these little Christs who run around talking like Jesus, looking like Jesus, acting like Jesus empowered by the Spirit of Jesus.

This is very important because our credibility is in our holiness. And that's a really big deal because of something Jesus says that we are all. It's not a question, it's not an option. It's not, "Can I see another list, a different one?" This is what Jesus said all of us will be as his church. Look at this in Acts.

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Acts 1:8 (NLT)

This is why it's important, because we are witnesses. We need to be credible witnesses. Have you ever had a witness who wasn't very credible? Didn't believe them.

I talked about growing up playing basketball. I had a lot of coaches who loved their kids, and who were coaches, but knew nothing about basketball. And it was really hard for them to get up and start talking or showing a drill or something.

“I don’t think you’ve ever done this before. I don’t think you believe what you’re saying.”

But for us, we are credible witnesses to the lifechanging work and the power of God within us. We are people who are saying, “I was going that way, and then Jesus offered me a new way. Let me show you all he has done within me. Let me show you the plans that he has for me. It is unbelievable.”

Here’s why that matters. Because, and maybe this is true of you too, I met a Christian before I met Christ.

This is kind of the way the game plan is set up. We are the church. We are the witnesses. We are the ones out on the front lines. And for you, the fact that you met a witness was either really a good thing or a really bad thing. For me, it was a really good thing. That’s why I’m up here today.

The person I met, I’d never met anyone like her before. When we met, the word that I would have used to describe her wasn’t holy. I didn’t have that word in my vocabulary. But the thought I had, the initial word I had was, “different.” She is different.

If this makes any sense to you at all, it was like the world wasn’t happening to her. The world was still crashing. The world was still spinning. The voices were still loud. But she was in the midst of it, and she was pure, kind, sweet, loving.

And there was something different about her. And I want you to hear this. When I met her, I wasn’t doing badly. I was doing well. I was doing all the things I was supposed to be doing. But I knew in that moment when I met her that it didn’t matter how much more of what I deemed to be good I got, I wasn’t going to get that.

I could get the degree. I could be successful. I could make a whole bunch of money. But it wasn’t going to lead me to what she had. What did she have? And then she told me. She had no Bible college background. She had no evangelism tracts. She offered her life.

I asked, and she told me, “The reason I am the way I am is because of Jesus.” And she told me about a God who would send his Son here to live and to die for me.

I couldn’t picture anything like it. I couldn’t wrap my head around this kind of love. But I believed. I believed that this was true. After she told me about who Jesus was, all he had done, and the impact he had made on her life, she brought me here to this room.

And I sat to the left of stage. And we heard over, and over, and over again about who Jesus was. And then I went in the baptismal tank and got baptized and gave my whole life to Jesus. And I was changed by a witness who stepped in and was living on mission for all that Jesus had done. And she shared that with me.

People try to get Christianity down to brass tacks. What is it? What do I have to do? What’s essential?

Here me when I say this. We talk about Christianity in the sense that salvation is free. Meaning, it was paid for by grace. We can't do anything to earn it. There's nothing we can do. God offered himself as a holy sacrifice to take care of that. But what we've been called to, it's very expensive. Do you want to know what it costs?

A life is what it costs.

A life of saying, "I'm no longer going to live that way. I'm going to die to myself." This is the language. "And I'm going to be resurrected to a new life with a new Spirit, new wants, and new desires, and new passions. And I'm going to live on mission for Jesus."

And I'm going to live and be a witness from Indy to Indiana and all throughout the United States. Anywhere I go, the Spirit of God goes with me. This is the task that is laid before us. We are the church.

So, how do we do that? How do we live a life of holiness? How do we take that word back? How do we reclaim the beauty of the bride and become who God has called us to be?

I just want to give us a few things everyone can do this week. What does it look like to live a holy life? We have to stop the lies. So, start every day with this:

Tell yourself every day, "I am not ordinary."

Start right now. Say it with me. Who are you? You are a masterpiece. You are worth moving heaven and hell for. You are worth everything to the God of this universe, the Creator of all things. He has deemed you a masterpiece.

You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. There is not an ordinary bone in your body, stop acting like there is. God has called us to so much more. To wake up every day and love what you do, even if you can't do what you love.

Do you hear what I mean? Love what you do, even if you can't do what you love. So much time is wasted waiting for the next season, waiting for the skies to part, waiting until we can get out of school, waiting until the next job.

Wake up every day and say, "Today is not ordinary." Bob in the cubicle, he is not ordinary. He is someone who was made in the image of God, and God has sent me here to be a witness and to show him the love of God. Today is everything, and I'm going to live like it is true.

And then, love the people you are with even if they are hard to love. And right now, if they are sitting next to you, don't look but know that in this season the greatest thing you can do is be a witness of God's love and lavish them with that love.

So, that's the first one. Do you want to live a holy life? You are not ordinary, tell yourself that every day.

Think progress not perfection

You know, a lot of times we have these big moments of faith. We come to God, we pray, we believe he is real, we believe he has called us. We get baptized on Sunday, and then by Wednesday we're like, "Hey, um, do you think I can come back to the church?"

"Why? Did you leave something?"

“No, I don’t think it took, man. I’ll be honest with you. I’m still struggling a little bit over here. Okay, yeah, I’ll be there.”

Progress, you have been set apart, is a lifelong process. That’s what this is. Where little by little, the life God has called us to, his will for your life, is sanctification. All that is, it’s the process of being made holy, which is the process of 1,000 deaths and 1,001 resurrections.

You had that big turn, where you’re turning to God, and then your life is just a constant turning. “I didn’t even know that was there. I’m going to lay that down, and turn to God. I’m going to give that to God,” over and over and over again.

But I do want to say this. There should be progress. It may not be perfection, but there should be progress. If you’ve been following Jesus for a long time, and there is nothing different, there is something wrong. The Spirit of God in you should be doing something extraordinary.

And Paul points to this. It’s not a new problem with us within our church. It’s always been there, that want to exchange the supernatural for the ordinary, the holiness for the ordinary. Look at the way Paul says it in Romans.

*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”* Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

You want to know God’s will for you? To be holy. I get conversations like this, “Does God want me to take this job or that job?” I don’t know, but he wants you to be holy.

“What is God’s will for my life?” Sanctification, he wants you to look more and more like him, more today than you did yesterday, more tomorrow than you do today. That is his will for your life. He wants to transform you and do a new work within you.

Here’s a question to ask as you go through this:

Do I look more like Jesus, or do I look more like the people around me?

And look at every aspect of your life, from work, from social media, to school, to home. Am I a reflection of the people around me, or am I a reflection of who Jesus is?

Am I following this old way? Am I following and just being conformed to those around me, or am I ushering in a new way? Am I standing out? Am I living a life of holiness? Because that’s what God wants to do in you and through you.

And we get to live this life holy and set apart. What does it look like to be set apart?

- Love people who don’t look like you.

This is what we get to do.

- Love people who can’t care for you.

What gain is it to help someone out or be there for someone who can immediately repay you? No, no, no love people who can’t care for you who will never be able to provide anything for you. Love people who look nothing like you.

- Love people who hurt you.

This is a tough one, especially within a really tough culture that looks to get even, that looks to settle the score. Love people who hurt you.

- Love people who can't protect themselves.

If you want to know what it looks like to be holy, you bring that same kind of love to people who can't protect themselves.

- Love people fully before you love them sexually.

And this goes in all of its forms. To say, "I'm not going to go with you sexually until I've gone there with you fully."

This is what the church can do. This is what will stand us out from everything else and anyone else. It transcends any cultural norms. It is more than you will find in a book. It is more than science advancements will ever bring to you. It is a way of life that will change everything.

And then just look at this and be honest and say this:

Where am I failing to live this out?

Is there an area of my life that I find it harder to live out? Is it harder to love people who don't look like me? Is it harder for me to love people who have hurt me? Is it harder for me to love people (and you fill in the blank)?

And then come and pray to God that he would give you that kind of love. That God would show you, transform you, and give you his very Spirit, and lead you through it.

And I just want to close today by talking to those of you who don't believe in God, who are far from God. I just want you to know who God is. And whether today is the day that you begin to walk in that new way or not, I just want you to have this.

God loves people who don't look like him. If you want to know who God is, God is above all things. He is perfect. He is the only one. And yet he found a way to love us even though we are so different. This is God.

God loves people who can't care for him. God has heaven and earth as a footstool. There is nothing you will ever be able to bring to him that he doesn't already have, but he loves you and cares for you and wants you.

God loves you even though you hurt him, even though you've sinned against him, even though you've turned your back, even though you've walked away 1,000 times. God is there with his arms wide open, ready to love you.

God loves people who can't protect themselves. This is what sparked the whole mission. That God would come here, become man, go to a cross for me and you. Because we could not protect ourselves, save ourselves from sin, from the death we were headed to.

And what did he do? He gave himself fully first. Jesus went to a cross for me and you. Gave his life, gave it all for you and for me.

And then he came down, and with the award, with what he got for conquering sin and death, what did he do? He offered it to me and to you. He offered it to the world and said, "Take this. I

have paid the sin, the debt. I've paid it all, and now you can walk freely in this new life I offer you."

It's a life that is there for all of us, a life you can accept, a relationship you can be today. God loves you.

And for the church. We should be the way. We should be walking in here every Sunday barely getting in thinking about all the things we did, all the ways we loved, all the barriers we removed. So that we can get into this space and get stirred up, so that we can rally around the things of God with the people of God. And then we could be sent out.

What I want everyone to do right now, at all the campuses and watching online, in this moment I want you to stand with us. Stand. Did you hear that? Did you hear the seats move and the feet hit the floor? Let's do that again, everybody have a seat. I want us to hear this. Open up your ears and hear it every single time.

Church, would you stand? Do you know what that sounds like? That sounds like that moment at the wedding, when everyone stands, when everyone stands for the coming of the bride. I want us to take that to heart. As we leave here, as we go, everywhere we go we are saying, "Here comes the bride."

Every single time we walk down this aisle, "Here comes the bride." Here come the ones who have been called out, the ones who have been sent, the ones who have been empowered by the very Spirit of God. Here comes the bride.

This is the hill we will die on. This is our mission, to be sent out to go and remove unnecessary barriers. To tell everyone, everywhere. To make disciples of all nations, teaching them and baptizing them, and leading them in this new way. This is what we're called to do.

What I want us to do right now is to pray, to pray to God that he would make room, that he would begin to empty us out little by little and set us apart, holy as we go. And as we go, the church goes.

Would you pray with me?

God, we thank you so much for today. God, we thank you for this moment in time. God, we thank you for your church. We are the church. That's the only time this place makes sense. This is not a hobby, not a belief, not a place that we go. It is a people.

We are the people. We are a royal priesthood. We are a holy nation. God, send us. Send us in your Name. Send us as your witnesses. Send us, as we are holy as you are holy.

God, we ask that in this moment we would make room for you to do what only you can do. By the power of your Spirit, we are raised to new life and we go. Jesus, we love you. Amen.