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Alright, well, I want to welcome everybody—those of you who are joining us physically and online, so glad to have you. If you have a Bible, I want to encourage you to find Psalm 42. Psalm 42 is where we're going to be today.

If this is your first time to be with us, we are in week 4 of a series of messages called *Let's Talk About It*. And, the big idea around this is that we all know we're in the middle of a global pandemic. How could we forget it? Everywhere we go, in person and online, all anyone can ever talk about is case counts, mask wearing, and vaccine distribution.

However, there is another pandemic that is going on at the exact same time that isn't being talked about nearly enough. And we've said that it is this:

#### Mental & Emotional Health Pandemic

Now, I'm not going to bore you with a bunch of statistics. I've thrown so many of those at you already. Please know, though, this is affecting one out of two of us. That's either you, or the person sitting next to you. That's either you, or somebody you know, love, or care for.

That's a lot of people. But the deceiving thing about mental and emotional health is that when you're the one going through it, it feels like you're the only one. It feels very isolating. We're not quite sure we can share it with other people.

Unfortunately, there is a reason for that. There has oftentimes been a stigma that is associated with mental and emotional health. I'm hoping we at least begin to change by talking about it.

Here's the thing. When one of us is suffering from a physical ailment of some kind, maybe a broken leg or a cancer diagnosis, people have a tendency to run in. They will say things like, "I'm so sorry. I've been through that before. What can I do? I'll be praying."

But when we admit that we're wrestling with a mental or emotional health issue, unfortunately people have a tendency to run away. And we're not exactly sure what to say, what to do, or how to fix it. But we don't need to fix it, we need to feel it.

If you are depleted mentally or emotionally, that is as real as a broken leg. I just want to say something to you today. It is not a sin to be sick. Here's what I know. Not all of us are going through the same thing, but everybody is going through something.

And we can just kind of air out whatever it is and what we are wrestling with so that we can find some healing and some hope. In fact, 1 John 1:1, it just promises us that if we can get that stuff out in the open we have an advocate through God the Father, who is Jesus Christ, who will receive us and bring healing. And he can redeem every broken thing that is within us. Aren't you glad to hear that? Aren't you glad to know that?

So, as Pastor Ryan and I began to put together this series, we built this series to help all of us be biblically informed about these issues, yet at the same time to be practically helpful.

At the same time, one of the things we want to do is we just want to help come along side you in whatever issue you are struggling with. We want to help you, and we want to help you help those you love. Go to this link, it's on our website.

[tpcc.org/care](http://tpcc.org/care)

There you're going to find a whole bunch of very practical resources as we come alongside you, to help you navigate the very real issues of mental and emotional health.

Now, I just want to say something to somebody who might be tuning in, or maybe you showed up at one of our physical locations for the first time and you're just brand new to the church.

Maybe you started joining us online when the pandemic hit, and you've just now come physically. Can I just tell you what kind of a church you walked into or tuned into?

I've been here for nearly 14 years. The people at Traders Point are some of the kindest, most gracious, encouraging, generous people I have ever met. I love this church.

And yet, with that said, and those of you who are part of our Traders Point family, I want you to clap when I say this, that way everybody knows you're in agreement and I'm not just picking on you, we are also some of the most jacked up people you'll ever find. Right? Isn't that true? Just give each other a high five.

We've got our sins and our struggles. We can be moody at times. We are a works in progress. We're all in process, and we're in good company with the men and the women who are found in the Bible. They had their struggles just like you and me, and God in his goodness, compassion, and grace included their unfiltered messy stories so that you and I would know we are not alone.

You are not alone. And there is nothing abnormal about you, and what you're walking through is common to so many people. You have a heavenly Father who loves you right where you are. Listen to me. Just as you are, mess, imperfections, and all of it.

And yet, here's the even better news, he refuses to leave you there. He loves you so much. He wants to get in there and help you process some things in your heart and give you a new heart and identity in Christ so you can find healing and hope.

So, let's talk about it. So far in this series, if you've missed it, we've talked about:

ANGER  
ADDICTION  
ANXIETY

You can go back on our website or on the app or YouTube and get all those messages.

Today, we're going to talk about this:

DEPRESSION

Since the pandemic started roughly a year ago, the symptoms of depression among us nationally, and I would image this is probably true globally, have tripled. And that's not very surprising to me.

Whenever it comes to depression though, there is a wide spectrum of experiences and emotions I think we have to be very clear about. In fact, the subject of depression might be one of the most misunderstood out of all the topics we're talking about in this series.

Here's what I mean. To feel depressed about something is just normal for most human beings. I think all of us know what it feels like to receive some bad news of some kind and to feel depressed about it.

So, if your girlfriend or boyfriend breaks up with you, that's depressing. If you didn't get the job you really wanted and interviewed for, that's depressing. These long, gloomy, dark winter days are depressing. You know, most years, if you're a Cubs fan, depressing.

But that doesn't mean you're clinically depressed. That doesn't mean you necessarily need the help of therapy or maybe medication. I think feelings of melancholy, that's just part of the normal human experience.

What I want to talk about today is depression. It is way more than a bad case of the blues. Just so we are on the same page, I want to show you how the Mayo Clinic defines it.

Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest.

So, it is a disorder. Now, you and I are very complex emotional and spiritual beings. There is a certain order to the way we are put together. And when we go through a loss, a trauma, or abuse of some kind, something gets in there and disrupts things, throwing them out of order and affecting how you feel, think, and behave.

It might even cause you to withdraw from day-to-day activities and in your darker moments make you wonder if life is really worth living. And when you are in the grips of depression it feels as if it will never lift, that you'll never be able to get out of it.

I remember several years ago our family went on vacation to the beach. There were all these signs that were warning of the strong undercurrent. And they just said, "Swim at your own risk. Be careful."

And of course, I was just like, "Ah, that doesn't apply to me." I went out and got a little too far out, and I could feel the current pulling me out. At first, I got a little nervous, and then I started to get a little more nervous. I'm starting to swim a little harder and I'm noticing I wasn't making very much progress in getting back to shore.

Here's the thing about it. I could see everybody. I could see my family on the beach having a good time. They were just not that far away, but I was in the grips of the undercurrent and it was scary.

You know, depression can feel a little bit like that. You're watching everybody else's life and it looks like they are having a great time on the beach. It's just right there. But no matter how hard you swim it doesn't feel like depression is ever going to let you go.

I want you to know today that there is hope. I want you to know today that you can get there. I built this message to be very practical. The reason why is because the drowning person doesn't need to know the Greek word for lifesaver, they just need you to throw them one.

Today I want to look at Psalm 42. Hopefully I've given you enough time to find that chapter. And I want you to know that most Bible scholars believe a guy named David wrote it. And David was an imperfect leader, but he was also described as a man after God's own heart.

David had all kinds of things in his life that didn't go right, and a lot of it was his fault. Many Bible scholars believe he writes this chapter. If you look at the top of your Bible right above Psalm 42, there may be words in italics that say, "Of the Sons of Korah."

The Sons of Korah were worship leaders in Israel. This doesn't mean they wrote this chapter. I do believe they sang this chapter. David writes it and it's written in the first person singular. It sounds like David.

Even more than that, many Bible scholars believe David writes this right after his third son Absalom rises up against him, trying to throw him off his throne and take his place as king. In other words, David's own son tried to kill him. I think that qualifies as a bad day. You think you've got family issues.

And this obviously caused David a lot of pain. If you read through the Psalms, many of which David wrote, you'll notice he struggled off and on through various seasons of his life with depression anyway.

I think when this happened, I think David, being moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote down his experience in chapter 42 for a couple of reasons. Number one, David writes this stuff down to process what he is feeling. That's key, and I'm going to come back to that in a moment. The second reason, I think is that David writes this down to help those of us who would go through our own bouts with depression know how to navigate back to a place of hope and healing.

So, look at verse 1. David writes these words that I think have oftentimes been misunderstood:

*"As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God."*

Now, maybe that verse sounds familiar because for years it has been co-opted by paintings in Christian bookstores, or it's on the side of a coffee cup. It's usually attached to an image of a beautiful doe that is drinking crisp water out of a mountain stream as the wind blows through the trees.

But when David writes these words, I don't think that's what he had in mind. I want you to get the image of parched, emaciated deer that is on the verge of death. David is saying, "God, I don't know if I'm going to make it." Look at verse 2:

*"I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?"*

In other words, God feels totally absent. "I don't feel his presence at all. I try to talk to him, but it doesn't feel like anybody is there. I go to church or I tune into church, and I hear the worship songs and even try to sing them. But I don't feel a thing."

Has anybody ever been there? And maybe you're there right now. And can I just look into the camera, whether you are here with us physically or joining us online? If you're wrestling with depression and you don't feel the presence of God, but you showed up anyway, I just want to thank you for your courage. I want to thank you for bringing yourself just as you are to this place where God might speak some words of hope and healing into your life. Verse 3:

*“Day and night I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, ‘Where is this God of yours?’”*

If you’ve ever been in the throws of depression, you might just have these tears that break out and you start crying and don’t even know why. He says, “Day and night,” meaning this is relentless. Meaning it’s never letting up. I want you to notice all the verbs that are found in verse 4:

*“My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers, leading a great procession to the house of God, singing for joy and giving thanks amid the sound of a great celebration!”*

What’s David doing? David is saying, “I remember doing all that. I remember I used to do all of those things. But not anymore. Happiness is just a memory for me.”

Somebody once defined depression this way: A lethal absence of hope. I remember what it was like to be happy, but I don’t think I’ll ever be happy again.

Now, look at verse 5. David switches gears and asks two very important questions. If you joined us last week, this is where I left off.

*“Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad?”*

Now, these are really important questions to ask, because for many people the emotional pain of depression is so great, and we don’t like pain, and oftentimes what we will do is we will seek to try to remove the pain without focusing where the pain came from.

We’ll try to sweep it under the rug. We’ll try to eliminate it. We’ll try to numb it. We’ll try to pretend it’s not there. Instead of asking, “Where did this come from? Why am I experiencing this pain?”

And this is so critical. Because if your first question is, “How can I get rid of it?” without asking, “Why am I experiencing it?” Then you’ll keep dealing with the symptom of the problem rather than the problem itself.

Let me see if I can try to illustrate this. If I go into the kitchen and there is a hot stove, and I put my hand on it, I’m going to feel pain. And the pain isn’t the problem, the pain is signaling there is a problem. The pain is signaling that my hand isn’t where it should be.

If my solution to that is to pull out some sort of numbing medication, maybe in the form of a shot, and I’m like, “Let me numb my hand so I don’t feel the pain anymore,” but I’m going to keep it right where it’s at, that’s not going to do me any good. In fact, that’s just going to cause more damage. The same thing is true emotionally.

Let me give you another analogy. If the check engine light comes on in your car, on the dashboard, that doesn’t mean you need to change the bulb inside the dashboard. If it comes on, that doesn’t mean you take a piece of black duct tape, like I may or may not have done when I was in college one time and didn’t have any money to fix it. I just covered it with a piece of tape. Problem solved. I don’t have to look at that anymore. The problem isn’t the light on the dashboard, the problem is under the hood.

Let me say it this way: Depression is the “check engine light” of the soul. It’s indicating there is something going on inside of you that you need to pay attention to.

This is why the question David poses in verse 5 is so important. He says, “Why? Why am I experiencing this?” And it’s important we do the same thing, because that way we are dealing with causes rather than just symptoms, roots rather than just fruits.

I want you to look back up to the top of chapter 42, right after where it says, “Sons of Korah,” you’ll notice there is another Hebrew word there. You probably didn’t know what it meant. It’s the word *maskil*. And *maskil* is just a Hebrew word that means this chapter was primarily meant to be used to teach, not just to inspire or motivate.

Which is interesting, because the Psalms, there are 150 of them, they are the prayer book of the Bible. And the Psalms have a lot of poetry. It’s almost as if you’re reading the psalmist’s personal journal.

So much of the time I just thought, “The Psalms are there to inspire and motivate me,” and many of them are. But this one was meant to teach. Well, teach what? Teach those of us who are struggling with depression how to diagnose it, and then how to navigate it so that way we can come to a place of healing and hope.

I want you to think of chapter 42 sort of like a checklist of sorts. And it lays out four potential causes of depression that I want to walk through, if you’re taking notes, so that you or somebody that you know and love can discern: Where is this coming from? Why am I experiencing this?

That doesn’t mean that you don’t need professional help of some kind, whether that’s a therapist, a counselor, or medication. I’m just saying that there are some things spiritually here that you can evaluate as well, in conjunction with maybe the potential professional help. Notice again in verse 3:

*“Day and night I have only tears for food...”*

Translation, he isn’t sleeping or eating. And if you haven’t slept for a while, and if you haven’t eaten for a while, then that is going to cause all kinds of havoc to your system.

Number one, if you’re taking notes:

Depression can be linked to something physical

I referenced this last week. You are I are a whole person. You cannot separate your emotional, spiritual, mental health from one another. All of those things go together. If one of those is suffering, it’s going to affect the rest of them.

And one of the things we see in this Psalm is David says, “I have some physical needs here that are actually causing some of the symptoms of depression I’m going through.”

How many here have ever been hangry? What is hangry? Hangry is, “I am so hungry, I’m angry.” It affects your mood. How many of you have ever had a date night totally ruined because you or both of you were hangry? And you got into a silly argument on the way to dinner and it ruined the whole evening.

Now, what is hangry? Well, I haven't eaten, so I'm going to get rude and impatient. And rudeness and impatience are spiritual, or you might even say relational issues, but they are triggered by a physical cause and therefore requires, at least in part, a physical response.

We see an example of this from a guy in the Old Testament named Elijah. He faced a serious bout with depression. The story is found in 1 Kings. Elijah is regarded as one of the most successful prophets in all the Old Testament. In fact, God does some incredible things through Elijah.

Despite all of that, he still wrestled with depression, even thoughts of suicide. And in fact, in 1 Kings 18, he squares off with the false prophets of Baal. It's one of my favorite stories in the Bible. If you're not familiar with it, or it's been a while, go back and read it later today.

Basically, he just talks trash with all of these false prophets of Baal, just completely shows them up and embarrasses them. He has this incredible victory. Ironically, right after this spiritual high, which is not uncommon, he goes through a bout with depression that just about did him in.

What triggered it, there was an evil queen by the name of Jezebel. She is not happy with his victory, so she threatens his life. She says, "You're going to die within 24 hours." Not a very pleasant lady. Part of the reason we don't name very many of our daughters Jezebel.

So, Elijah takes off. He runs a day into the wilderness. He lies down under a broom tree, totally exhausted. And, in the grips of his depression, he asks God to end his life. And God sends an angel.

Now, if you didn't know anything about the story, what do you think God sent the angel to say? And there might be all the Christian answers to that: God sent the angel to tell him that it will be okay; God sent the angel to tell him to pray more, or read his Bible. He didn't say any of those things. Look at what happens:

*"But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, 'Get up and eat!' He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again."*

There isn't one mention of Bible reading or prayer in that. He ate and he lay down again. The angel did that because he knew Elijah's physical exhaustion had led him to emotional depression. You can probably resonate with this, and so can I.

In fact, every week... I know the times of the week when I am the most prone to feelings of depression. Now I'm not talking about clinical depression, I'm talking about just the feelings of depression, that kind of emotional and spiritual slump you find yourself in.

And for me, most weeks it's like clockwork. It's Tuesday afternoon and Sunday afternoon. The reason why Tuesday afternoon is I've kind of gotten all my meetings done on Monday. Tuesday is just full-on study and writing, preparing for the message for Sunday.

And I try to get about 70 percent of the message done by the end of the day because I know that I've got a whole bunch of other stuff to do during the rest of the week and if I don't have at least 70 percent done, I'm behind. And I know that the discipleship team needs my notes, the production team needs my notes, and I need time to really marinate in it.

It's probably about 3:30 on Tuesday afternoon, when the coffee has all worn off and I push back from my desk and I look at the computer screen. I'm like, "Does this make any sense?" At this point, if it doesn't it's too late. I'm the worst preacher ever, I should just quit. All of these negative thoughts just spin in my mind.

The next time I know I'm prone to be depressed is after I preach the sermon on Sunday afternoon. It usually hits about 2:30 in the afternoon. The adrenaline has worn off.

I get up here, and whether I like the material or not, I light myself on fire and try to be as passionate as I can. I have a lot of emotional and spiritual conversations with people, praying with people. People have heavy burdens and loads.

I go home and the adrenaline comes down right around 2:30. Then I start to feel a sense of spiritual depression. It doesn't matter how good the day went, I'll get totally focused on the fact that I accidentally said fart at the 9:00 service. I just keep thinking on that, ruminating on that. "I'm just so stupid. I know the emails are going to come in."

Here's the thing. My wife knows this about me, so she'll just kind of check in on me. "Aaron, how are you doing?"

Men in my group know this about me. So, they'll just kind of text me. "Hey, how is it going?"

Sometimes, on Sunday afternoon I just need to order a pizza and take a nap in Jesus' name. And you know what? Maybe some of you do too. Sometimes the best thing you can do, and you probably thought you'd never hear a pastor say this, isn't to pray or read another Bible verse.

Take a nap. Slow down. Sabbath. Shut your phone off. Shut the TV off. Be quiet for a minute. Get a good night's rest. Because depression can oftentimes be connected to something physical.

Number two, if you're taking notes:

Depression can be linked to something emotional

Walk on down to verse 9:

*"O God my rock, I cry, 'Why have you forgotten me?'"*

Now here is the question I have for you. Do you think God had actually forgotten him? No. Do you think God was like, "Oh my goodness, David, I totally forgot you existed." No, God hadn't forgotten him, but it felt that way. And have you ever noticed that David's prayers in the Psalms are so honest and raw?

I mentioned earlier that the Psalms are the prayer book of the Bible. There are 150 of them, by the way. I've had a number of people come to me and say, "I just don't have very much confidence in prayer. I don't know what to pray. I don't know what to say. I feel really self-conscious." That's totally understandable. Just read the Psalms.

Let the Psalms become your prayer life. Let the Psalms teach you how to pray. One of the things you'll notice right away is how raw they are, how real they are. God doesn't want you to put on a performance. God wants you to bring who you are to the equation.



Have you ever been around somebody who totally talks normal until they start praying? And then it sounds sort of like King James. And they'll just talk normal and say, "Let's pray," and then they will start to pray and be like, "Dear sweet, heavenly Lord of hosts, we come to thee today thanking thee for thine bounty." And you're just like, "Did you hit your head? Why are you doing that?" You just need to be real. You need to come to God as you are.

Some of my favorite conversations are with people who are new to faith, and maybe they have been coming and showing up. I'll bump into them in the lobby or maybe at the store.

And they'll walk up to me and be like, "Pastor, last week, that was a hell of a sermon!" They are like, "Oh, I'm so sorry." I love that. Not because of the profanity, God will clean all that up later. I love it because of the honesty. They're just bringing God who they are. They're just bringing their heart to him just as they are.

I don't know where we got this idea that it needs to be a performance or all cleaned up. Many of the Psalms are not cheery. Fifty of the 150, that's a third of them, might be labeled as what we call Psalms of lament. That's the psalmist pouring out how he feels even if what he feels is not true.

He says things like, "God, it feels like you've forgotten me. God, it feels better not to follow you than to follow you." And then there are a subset of the Psalms of lament that get especially spicy. They are called the imprecatory Psalms. And this is David just venting. He holds nothing back. He just gets loose in the tongue.

He even says something like this, "Blessed are they who dash your children against the rocks." Whoa, David, I think you just took it a little too far. But God seems okay to include it in there. Why? Why is the Bible so raw in its prayers?

There is a reason why. God wants you to be real. Many times we fake it or pretend because sadness or depression, it's so uncomfortable. We want to avoid all those things that are really, really messy. But, even though sadness is uncomfortable, it's helpful. And God has given every one of our emotions to serve a purpose within us.

One of our family's favorite Pixar movies is that little movie that came out about six years ago called *Inside Out*. And if you're not familiar with the story line, I'll give you enough, not to ruin it, but to tell you what it's about.

It's about this little girl named Riley who moves with her mom and dad to a brand-new city. She is kind of going through all the emotions that we all do when we go through a big life change like that.

And there are five emotions running around inside Riley's mind: anger, fear, disgust, joy, and sadness. And the whole movie is about joy, who kind of seems to be running the show. She is trying to manage the other emotions, particularly sadness. "Sadness, don't mess everything up. Sadness, don't touch any of the memories, especially the core ones."

Ironically, by joy trying to manage sadness, she just creates a bigger mess of things and spends the whole movie trying to clean it up. And things only get better when joy realizes sadness was absolutely necessary for Riley. Only then do things get better for her.

You see, sadness gives us the gift of acceptance. You cannot accept a loss until you have grieved it. I shared with you last week, if you tuned in or joined us, that last summer I kind of went through a series of anxiety attacks. I'm sort of an achiever and a helper, and those things kind of went dark.

It wasn't until I realized that I wasn't going to achieve my way through the crisis until I grieved my way through the crisis. And I know there is somebody who needs to hear that today. I had the muscle to achieve, I needed to develop the muscle to grieve.

And when you experience a loss, a trauma, or an abuse, listen to me: You don't get over it. Somebody might have meant well when they said that to you. Somebody may have said, "Hey, just get over it," and they caused more damage than they even realized. You don't get over it. You grieve through it.

And until you grieve a loss, you get frozen in time and you'll spend the rest of your life responding to some sort of trauma, loss, abuse, or pain that happened a long time ago.

Let me say it another way:

Depression is often suppressed grief trying to force its way out.

And, with grief, you only have three choices. You can repress it. What's that look like? "Oh, it's not that big of a deal. I'm okay. I'll get over it." You can suppress it. "I'm just not going to think about it. Choose joy." Or, you can do what the Bible does, specifically in the Psalms, you can express it.

You see, if a loss doesn't come forward in your life through grief, it will eventually come out sideways in your life through depression. And so, you express it maybe with a professional therapist or a counselor. You express it with your spouse or your kids. You express it with a friend or somebody in your group. You express it to God through honest prayer and conversation.

Be as honest as the Bible is. Why? Because God wants a relationship with you. Because of that, he wants real prayer and not right ones.

Number three:

Depression can be connected to something relational

Look with me at verse 4:

*"My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be: I walked among the crowds of worshipers."*

In other words, what David is saying here is he's been cut off from the community of God. Here is what I want to do. I want to give you some good theology, and then show you how good theology always backs that up.

You see, the Bible says that you and I were created in the image of God. He has existed throughout time in the form of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now, most of the time we try to get our heads around that. How does that work? And we're sort of missing the point.

What we need to understand from that is that you and I were created in the image of a community. God is a we and not just a me. Therefore, you and I were designed to live as an us not just an I. And in isolation, extended isolation, eventually the check engine light will come on in your soul.

A few months ago, Gallup released this poll. They were monitoring the mental health from various population segments in America from 2019 to 2020. What they found, unsurprisingly, is that every single group of people they looked at had worse mental health from 2019 to 2020 regardless of ethnicities, age, political affiliation, or income.

In other words, everybody's mental health was down with the exception of one category. Can you guess what it might have been? People who attend church weekly. That was the only category that was up.

In fact, what I want you to notice is right under weekly it says, "nearly weekly, or monthly," which the average committed Christ-follower will say they will attend church 1.7 times per month prior to the pandemic. My guess is that it's now once a month, if that. So, nearly weekly or monthly is at negative 12. But if you came every week, positive 4.

Listen to me, that's just sociology. Please, don't ever tell me the church is not essential ever again. The only people who fared better were people who engaged on a weekly basis. Do you realize what that means? Everything, last year in our nation, that was bad was up. Divorce was up, addiction, anxiety, division, suicide, all up as soon as the church went down and we couldn't gather anymore.

This is why I want to encourage you, and I'm going to continue to encourage you to engage, whether physically or online. I want you to hear my heart. I shared a little bit of this last week, where we're at right now as a church family. Moving forward, we will be 100 percent physical and 100 percent digital. That's just kind of where we are. That's where we were already headed, the crisis has just accelerated it.

But I want to say this, and listen to me and hear my heart. Those of you who cannot join us physically right now for whatever reason, you've got a pre-existing condition, you're caring for somebody who does, you're just not comfortable returning yet, please note there is no judgement, we love you, we support you, and we'll always be here for you online.

But, there are others of you, and I just want to say this very kindly, you're using this as an excuse. And maybe you're out at the gym every day, you're at Costco, and you're living it up at the restaurants but you haven't come back to church yet. I just want to urge you, lovingly, to come back.

In fact, it's noticeably fuller at all of our campuses this weekend. I talked the three people this week who said, "Our first time back since March, and we're beginning to come back." Because I think the risk of non-attendance will eventually catch up with the risk of attendance if we stay disconnected.

So, listen to me, if you're still joining us online, and some of you have no other option because you don't live in Indy, I know we've got people all over the world who are tuning in online—can I just urge you to not have this going on in the background because I do not want to be Christian Netflix? Alright?

This is not about just producing spiritual content for you to consume as a consumer. We are not trying to grow a bigger church or a bigger audience. We are trying to make disciples, which by the way is extremely difficult. Jesus, himself had a hard time doing it because the 12 guys who followed him around, they didn't exactly get it either. But that's what we're after.

As much as it pains me to say this, because I work so hard on it, a sermon is not going to disciple you. It will help. But it's not going to make you more like Jesus. A program is not going to disciple you. Showing up and sitting in a seat by yourself in a room and just kind of taking all this in is not going to disciple you. Watching in your living room is not going to disciple you.

It is only when you get life on life, when you get real with people, and until you begin to walk with people. Groups are not an extra-curricular. They are the very core, the very backbone of what we do. Our goal is to get 100 percent of you in a group. And not for us, but for you.

I'm in a group. Can I tell you that it's refreshing to take off the mask and say, "Hey guys, here's what I'm struggling with?" These guys, they love me, they receive me, they give me grace, they speak truth into my life. They don't just say, "That's okay." They hold me accountable. And yet, they love me enough that they still listen to me preach on Sunday.

And they know all the junk I've got going on in my life. And listen, you need that too. James 5 says, "Confess your sins and struggles." Why? So others can kind of have a leg up on you? No. So that you can be healed. And so, we need that. Sins and struggles are like fungus that grow in the darkness and they die in light.

Next:

Depression can be connected to something mental

Last week, as we looked at the prophet Jeremiah, we talked about ruminating. And ruminating is when you get fixated on a negative thought. It's all this negative self-talk. You spin, and spin, and spin on it. What happens in depression is you get focused on something and it's like tunnel vision.

Somebody once said this, "When it comes to depression, you don't see things as they are. You see things as you are." You have a tendency to see everything through the lens of your depression. It is not passive, it is active. And it starts speaking to you.

Here's what I mean. The momentum of a few true negative things can lead you to a dangerously false conclusion. And we see this pattern in Psalm 42. David did this. David said, "I've been cut off from the land of my youth." True. "I lost the position I used to have." True. "My enemies mock me day and night." True. "God has forgotten me." False.

Elijah did the exact same thing in 1 Kings. Twice God asked him, "Why are you depressed?" And twice he responds with a mixture of truth and untruth. Elijah says, "I've been passionately committed to you." True. "The Israelites have rejected you." True. "They have killed your prophets." True. "I am the only faithful one left." False.

You see, the momentum of a few true things in his depression led him to a dangerously false conclusion. He wasn't the only faithful one left, in fact God corrects that right away. He goes, "Elijah, there are 7,000 people in Israel who haven't bowed to Baal. You're not alone."

Not only that, but at the end of the next chapter God is going to raise up another prophet, a guy by the name of Elisha, and he is going to give him a double-portion of Elijah's power, meaning the future of Israel will be greater than its past. And Elijah couldn't see it because of his depression.

And maybe you can't either. Even greater than Elisha, 800 years after Elijah's bout with depression, God would raise up the greatest prophet of all time, the GOAT, Jesus Christ. Who would speak truth to people, freeing them from half-truths, twisted truths, and full-on lies planted into our minds by an enemy with a name. His name is Satan, and he is very real.

And your depression might be doing some of the same things to you, mixing a few true negative things in an effort to lead you to a dangerously false conclusion.

And maybe right now your depression is saying things like this in your head. "This has been an extremely hard year." True. "I've made some mistakes and errors in judgement." True. "I've started up some old addictions and developed some new ones." True. "People can sometimes be so challenging to deal with and divisive." True. "This will never get any better. This is our new normal." False. "My spouse will never change." False. "The job is never going to come back." False. "Nobody likes me." False. "I'll never be happy." False.

Satan is the great deceiver and he often uses depression to deceive us. The momentum of a few true negative things might lead you to a dangerously false conclusion. So, what do you need to do?

This is why we need the message of the cross. The message of the cross breaks up the momentum of the falsehoods that are running through your mind. That's why I love what David does in verse 11. He interrupts his depression. Did you notice that? Go back and read chapter 42 later when we're done.

He interrupts it, and he starts speaking to it. He's like, "You've been preaching to me. I need you to sit down. I'm going to start preaching to you." And in verse 11 he says this:

*"Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God!"*

Now, do you think David felt that just yet? Likely not. But he knew it to be true, so he rehearsed it to break up the momentum of the negative things running through his mind.

Listen to me. In addition to potentially getting some professional help, you've got to talk back to your depression. You've got to do it like you would speak to a verbally abusive person in an argument. "You're going to be loud, I'm being louder. I'm going to shout you down."

Because, in this Psalm David looks back at the land of Jordan, Hermann, and Mount Mizar. In other words, those were symbolic of the tremendous faithfulness of God in his past. He said, "God, because you've been faithful in the past, I can have hope for the future."

Here's the great news for us. We have a far better mountain to look back on. The mountain is called Golgotha, the place of the skull, where Jesus died on a cross. And you say to yourself, "I am not alone. Gethsemane shows me that. And there is someone who cares. The cross proves that. My future is not dim. The resurrection declares that."

And that is why we gather every seven days to remind us of those truths, to rehearse those truths even when we don't feel like it, to break up the momentum of all the negative stuff that we experience all throughout the week. We are reminded of God's glory and his truth. And we are talking back to our struggles and our sins and our setbacks with the truth of God's grace.

And, that's what we're going to do right now as we sing this song. These are not performers on stage, these are fellow strugglers leading us back to the truths we need to be reminded of that break up the momentum of the negative things we personalize.

So, even if you don't feel it just yet, you seize it. You hold onto it for dear life and say, "I need this." And right now, if you're with us or joining us online and you don't have this, you can have it today. Maybe you're recovering from a bad church experience.

Maybe religion has not been your thing, and you're in good company because religion is not our thing either. Religion isn't about you trying to get to God. What God offers is, "I've already sent my Son to you. You just come to me as you are."

"I have some questions I don't have answers to."

Perfect. Jesus has the answers.

"I've got some stuff in my life that is really cruddy and messed up."

Perfect. Jesus doesn't wait for you to clean the crud, he says, "Give it to me and I'll clean it."

And you come to Jesus just as you are. Today you can step across that line of faith. Faith implies you don't have it all figured out, you don't have all the answers. And you say, "Jesus, I just trust you completely."

And wherever you are on your spiritual journey, you can text:

Jesus to 87221

Our team will follow up with you to talk with you just right where you're at, and help you discern what your next steps are.

For some of you, you need to be baptized. You've been putting it off. You've been putting it off because of the pandemic. You were going to be baptized last March, but then the pandemic hit. You still need to be baptized. You need to do it.

Some of you today, you just need to place your faith in Jesus.

Some of you are like, "I've drifted away from church. I've been one of those statistics and I need to come back. I need to re-engage online. I need to get into a group. I need to come back physically."

Whatever move that is, can you just take the next moment to discern, "What is it that God is specifically and tangibly and practically calling you to do with what you heard?" It's active, it's not passive.

Father, we come to you right now so grateful that your word is inspiring and motivating for sure. But it also teaches us. It's practical. Today God, I pray that for those of us in the throes of depression, or if we love somebody who is wrestling with this, that we might know how to

discern what is causing it so that way we know the way forward with compassion, mercy, and grace.

We just want to lean on you. We want the message of the cross to break up the momentum of the negative things that are fed into our minds on a daily basis right now.

God, I pray your church would rise from the ashes of 2020. That it would come back stronger and more resilient. What Satan meant for bad, you would turn it for good.

And you would propel the cause of the Kingdom of God forward, that we would be stronger as a church family, not weaker. That our better days would be ahead of us, not behind us, because of the cross and what Jesus has done. May we cling to that hope, God.

So, meet us right now in this auditorium, this living room, the car we are in, or the backyard we are sitting in. I pray we would have an encounter with you as we rehearse what we know is true about who we are, about who you are. We ask this in Jesus' name. If you agree with me, say Amen.