

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED | RED LETTER TALKS

AARON BROCKETT | FEBRUARY 25, 2024

Alright. Well, I want to welcome everybody gathered across all of our locations and those of you joining us online. Today we are kicking off a new series of messages called Red Letter Talks. So if you have a Bible, go ahead and find John, chapter 14. John, chapter 14 is where we are going to kick this off, it's the passage we're going to unpack together today.

Here, recently, I was reading about something about dumb laws that are still on the books in various states around the country. Apparently where this traces its origin is that at one point in time there were these laws that were made because of a series of events at the time. They were kind of forgotten about and times changed but the laws stayed on the books.

Honestly, I think there are many of these. Some of these are based in truth, and honestly, I think some of these are myths. You'll probably be able to see that as I kind of walk through this.

For example, in Missouri, which is the state I'm from, it's illegal to have a garage sale that lasts more than three days. I don't know, maybe this one is true because growing up in Missouri, there wasn't a lot to do. So, I could see that they would just keep their garage sale going. Alright? We don't have a lot to do.

In Louisiana apparently it is illegal to wrestle with bears. So, that's good to know. Not as an individual. You can't tag team it, not even as a group. Even if you think you can take the bear, it's illegal to do that.

I think this one is probably a myth, but apparently it is illegal to eat an orange in a bathtub in California, which is really unfortunate because I like some citrus refreshment while bathing. But that's illegal.

And in our own state, we can be proud of this one, you can't sniff glue with the intent to get high in Indiana. It's that attempt to get high part.

I think, actually, the way it reads is that you're not allowed to sniff toxic vapors of any kind including glue, and to quote, "...with the intent to cause a condition of intoxication, euphoria, excitement, exhilaration, stupefaction, or the dulling of senses." So, I guess for any other reason it's okay. But you don't get to do that. It's illegal.

Now, we can kind of laugh at that because those are dumb. Those are just dumb laws.



I don't know about you but I am totally okay with rules just as long as they make sense. But if they don't make sense, that's an invitation to break them. And I married somebody who follows all of the rules so that is fun.

For you, maybe you're here today (or there is somebody that you know) and maybe that's the way that you kind of view the Bible or the Christian faith. It's sort of gotten resorted to a bunch of rules or laws that, in your mind, don't really make a whole lot of sense. Or maybe at one time they made sense, but times have changed—2,000 years ago, that's a really long time.

And so, the idea of trying to know all of the rules and live by the rules is exhausting and it's just an invitation to feel like you don't measure up or that you've failed. So, you kind of equate what Jesus has come to offer as more additional rules and you don't really want to live by them, so you've rejected all of them or maybe you keep one foot in and one foot out.

And if that would be your interpretation of what it is that Jesus is offering, that would be unfortunate because that is a misrepresentation, it's a misunderstanding. He's not come to add more rules. In fact, in Galatians 5, verse 1 it says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."

Jesus would even say this one time. He goes, "Hey, My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

So, if that's the case what is it that Jesus has really come to offer? And what is it that is maybe a misunderstanding or a misrepresentation?

Today, we're going to jump into this thing called Red Letter Talks. It's going to lead us up through Easter. And what we're doing is we're going to look at some of the things that Jesus said.

We're going to go, as the phrase goes, straight to the horse's mouth to hear what it is that Jesus is truly offering and maybe what is a myth or maybe what is a misrepresentation.

In your Bible, whether you have a paper Bible or an electronic one, you likely have a section of Scripture that is written in red—mostly found in the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which are the biographies of Jesus' life. And then there are some red letters in the very last book of the Bible, Revelation.

What this is—these are not words about Jesus, they are not describing what Jesus said and did, these are the very words of Jesus.

So, we just want to take some time leading up to Easter to just sit and kind of marinate in His words. He says a lot and what He says is really deep and it's impactful.

One of the things that you will notice, if you're taking down a few notes as you read the red letters... In fact, I would encourage you throughout this series just to spend some time in the red letters, and you'll notice a couple of things.

Number one, just notice how many questions Jesus asks. He asked a lot of questions, which is kind of interesting.

There are a couple of things we could say here—if you really want to become a better conversationalist, learn to ask more and better questions. If you want to grow in emotional intelligence, ask better questions. That's kind of a lost art for many of us. Jesus was always asking questions.

Here's the thing that kind of blows my mind—He already knows everything. He's God in the flesh and yet He still asks so many questions.

The second thing you'll notice as you read the red letters is just the number of invitations He extends. He is always inviting us to things. He is always inviting us to check things out. He's always inviting us to some sort of action or experience because faith cannot be enacted without movement. So, He's always inviting us to something.

Another thing that I noticed is that Jesus resists the urge to try to figure everything out for us. He's okay with a little bit of tension. He's okay for us to kind of wrestle with some content. He's okay to let a rich, young ruler to walk away.

Another thing that I noticed is how many times Jesus would say things either to settle unsettled hearts or to unsettle overly confident hearts. He just knew what it is that we need to hear.

So, today we're going to look at something that Jesus says in John, chapter 14. I want to kind of set this up before we go straight through the text. I'll read what Jesus said and then try to offer some explanation to it.

In this passage Jesus, what He's doing here is He is saying goodbye to His disciples. He had 12 disciples and they'd been following Him around for about three years. Most of them were 10 to 15 years younger than Him.

They had left everything to follow Jesus. They left home and families and friends and careers. They put all of their chips in on the table to follow Jesus. And they thought they would be with Him for the rest of their lives.

He was talking about this kingdom and they were like, "Okay, any day now You're just going to usher in this kingdom and we're going to be with You to lead out in this kingdom. But Jesus is announcing to them in this passage some news that they really didn't want to hear.

He'd been trying to communicate this to them, but it just hadn't been getting through. But, He was basically saying goodbye in this passage. The next day He was going to be arrested and crucified. He was going away.

And so, John 14, is a passage for anybody who has ever felt like things are changing, it's a passage for anybody who has ever felt lonely or rejected or defeated. But one of the things that we're going to notice here is that Jesus also is going to invite us into something as well—a significant life purpose. It's all in this passage.

Let's start in verse 1. Jesus says to His disciples, and therefore He says to you and me today—these really powerful words:

“Don't let your hearts be troubled.” (NLT)

Anybody troubled by anything today? Here's His response to this. He's acknowledging the trouble, but then He was saying, “Hey, don't let your heart be troubled.”

He's going to say something really similar two chapters later in John 16. He's going to say, “In this world you will have trouble.”

Now, I think one of the things that we've got to first of all circle, highlight, or underline is that we've got to understand, “Okay, what does He mean by trouble?” Obviously, there are a lot of things that could get included or packed into that word.

There are a lot of Greek words that are used for this word trouble so this could mean, “Don't let your heart be frustrated, don't let your hearts be annoyed,” like little things that might be troubling you throughout the day. You know the ones.

But the word that He uses here for trouble is a different Greek word. So this isn't the idea, “Hey, don't let your hearts be troubled by the fact that you've got an unexpected bill.”

Or you got a speeding ticket. Or you went to Meijer and you're in a rush and you try to decide which line you're going to step into.

You've all done this. You look at the people in the line and you size them up—you stereotype them really is what you do, “These people look fast and those people look slow, so I'll go into this line.” And almost every time they let you down. It's like, “You guys were the fast ones but now you're going slow.”

Trouble. These little things that kind of add up.

But that's not the Greek word that Jesus uses. The word that He uses here is a word that connotes the highest levels of pain and anxiety. It's the same word that John used a few chapters earlier in chapter 11 to describe how Jesus felt when His good friend, Lazarus, died. And it prompted Him to weep.

It's the same word that is used in chapter 13 to describe how Jesus felt when another one of His disciples, Judas, betrayed him. So, this is a word that carries significant emotional weight.

Here's another way of saying what Jesus just said, "Don't let your hearts be kept up at night feeling overwhelmed by uncertainty." Any of you ever been there?

"Don't let your heart be broken into pieces when the person who you love walks away."

"Don't let your hearts be ripped into shreds when the phone rings in the middle of the night with the devastating news."

"Don't let your hearts be Spartan Kicked into a bottomless pit from the devastating diagnosis."

I don't know how you feel about any of that. I'm kind of like, "Okay, great. Don't let my heart... How do you do that, exactly?"

Don't let my heart be troubled. I don't want my heart to be troubled. I want my heart to be at peace. I don't want to fall asleep at night thinking about contingency plans for a future I thought was pretty well mapped out. How do I do that, Jesus?"

I'm just guessing that the disciples are probably thinking a lot like what maybe some of us are thinking today, "Okay, I don't want my heart to be troubled. You're telling me not to let my heart be troubled, so why don't You change my circumstances so my heart won't be troubled?"

"Solve my problems and then I won't be troubled by them. Make things better. Promise me that everything is going to be okay and that the road ahead is going to get a lot easier."

Just imagine with me, if you would, if I'm saying to you, "Hey, don't let your heart be troubled." What do you think I might be tempted to say next?

"Don't let your heart be troubled, everything is going to be okay." Isn't that what we say to our kids? "Hey, don't let your heart be troubled, I think things are going to get better. The worst is behind us. The best is yet to come."

That's not what Jesus says though. Look back at the passage. "Don't let your hearts be troubled," here's what He says:

"Trust in God, and trust also in me." (NLT)

What's He doing? He's saying in the midst of the trouble you've got to pay attention to where your focus is.

It kind of reminds me of when Peter walks on water and he's actually doing it. That's amazing. He's actually walking on water with Jesus and then he starts to sink. When does he start to sink? When he takes his eyes off of Jesus and looks at the trouble.

So, this isn't really a question for many of us. Trouble is not going away. On this side of eternity there is going to be more trouble that is going to come. There always is. In fact, it might even feel to you that trouble is beginning to mount.

Hold on to that thought for a minute because we're actually going to see how when trouble mounts, more opportunities and more of the Holy Spirit's power is made available to us.

But in the midst of trouble we need to ask ourselves, "Okay, this is actually an opportunity for me to put my trust in who or what I say I put my trust." Because when you go through...

You can tell me all day what you worship. And you can tell me all day and I could tell you all day where my confidence lies. But really the test of that is when I go through trouble.

When I go through trouble it actually reveals what I've been worshipping all along. When I go through trouble it actually reveals what my weight is being rested upon.

I'll never forget, in one of my early ministries, Lindsay and I were living in California and a young couple in our church got pregnant, they were all excited, it was their first child.

The baby was born with a birth defect. And the doctors said, "You'll probably have about a year with her." It was devastating news. The baby looked healthy, but she wasn't going to live past a year.

I remember having them over to our house and just loving on them. And I'll never forget that about six months into the child's life she passed away. I'll never forget getting that phone call on a Saturday morning. They lived in our neighborhood. She called me and she said, "Pastor, can you please come over? She passed away in the middle of the night."

I remember walking into that living room, "What do I say?" Sitting down next to this young mom as she is holding this lifeless baby... I'll never forget that she was holding her and you could tell she had been weeping. She had tears streaming down her cheeks. And there was this sense of resolve in her.

As I sat down, she was just looking straight ahead and she said these words that I've never forgotten. She said, "Well, I guess this is when I find out if I really believe what I say I believe."

It's easy to say that we're putting our trust in God when things are relatively trouble free. What do you do when the trouble comes?



Jesus invites us, in those moments... He doesn't promise us a trouble free life, but He does provide His accessibility and His power in the midst of the trouble that we face.

You can begin... Either way, whether you believe in God or not, trouble is going to come. So you begin to look at it as an opportunity to say, "I can go through trouble without Him, or I can go through trouble with Him."

And Jesus says, "Trust Me. Trust Me." Well, why should we trust Him? Verse 2 gives us a pretty good reason why. He says:

"There is more than enough room in my Father's home."

I love that. God has a lot of square footage. And He says:

"If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am." (NLT)

Now, I love how He rolls this out. This is a clear reference to heaven. I love how He describes it and we've got to do a little bit of theological work here to understand what He's talking about. If you go back to the garden and Adam and Eve, Adam and Eve are at home with God in the garden. And they became homeless when they chose rebellion instead.

Deep down inside, all of us know that we are homeless. Sin has made us homeless. And now Jesus says, "I am remaking that home. I am preparing a place for you."

I don't know if you've ever thought this, "What's Jesus doing right now?" Well, Jesus says right here in the passage, He's a general contractor. He is preparing a place for us. "Well, wow, man. When's it going to be ready?"

I don't know if any of you have ever built a house. Every time I asked my general contractor what was the answer? "About two weeks. Two weeks. Just a little bit longer."

"How much longer?"

"I don't know. When it's ready."

It must be some place. It's a mind blowing thought. Right now Jesus is preparing a place for you. You've got a home. You are being expected.

Not only you, but everybody who you know. People in your neighborhood. People who you work with. We've got to begin to think about it in that way. Jesus is preparing a place.

I love what it says in 1 Peter. He is not slow in keeping His promises. He's patient. He wants everybody to come to know Him. Why? Because He's preparing a place for them.

In verse 4 it says:

“And you know the way to where I am going.”

Man, I love Thomas’s response, because it’s so honest. He goes:

“No, we don’t know, Lord... We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (NLT)

I love that. Thomas is so honest. Some of us...

Have you ever been talking to somebody? He is talking about something and you have no idea what he is talking about but you don’t want to let him know that so you just kind of nod your head.

Thomas didn’t do that. Thomas is like, “No. Wait a second, Jesus. We don’t know what you’re talking about. We don’t know the way that you are going, we’re going to need to Apple map this thing, because we are 12 men, we’re just going to get lost. We’re going to drive around in circles for a few hours before anybody admits, ‘Jesus we need You to be clearer.’”

And so Jesus says, verse 6:

“Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.’” (NLT)

Oh, man. Those words will get you cancelled today. Those words will incite comments on social media. Because everybody is okay with whatever it is that you choose to believe just as long as that’s your truth and they have their truth. The minute you say, “This is the only way,” Both and...

So what does Jesus mean by this? Does Jesus mean that every other faith system is inferior to Him? Well, we could say that. But I think what Jesus is primarily driving at is not that every other faith system is inferior, it’s that every other faith system is irrelevant.

It’s an irrelevant thing to say in the sense that you have a debt that needs to be paid. He’s the only one who has paid the debt. Every other faith system...

And, by the way, even a system of faith that says, “I don’t believe in anything,” that is still a system of faith, because you can’t prove that. Even if you’re like, “I’m just going to do me and just try to be as good a person as I can,” that’s still faith.

I would even say, “Well, ultimately, where do you think this thing is leading and how much good justifies you?” It’s a guess. And every other religion and system of belief says, “Well, just do enough good things and then you’ll be good.” But how much good gets you in?

Jesus is extremely clear by saying, “No, here’s the debt that needs to be paid. Let Me pay the bill. I’m the only one who can do this.”

Now, C.S. Lewis unpacks this argument beautifully when he talks about this. He will say... I’ve heard some people complain that if Jesus was God as well as man, then His suffering and death lose all value in their eyes because it must have been so easy for Him to die on the cross.

And Lewis says:

If I’m drowning in a river and a man who still has one foot on the bank gives me a hand which saves my life, should I look back at him between gasps and say, “No, it’s not fair. You have an advantage. You’re keeping one foot on the bank.”

And then he says:

That advantage—call it ‘unfair’ if you like—is the only reason why he can be of any use to me. To what will you look for help if you will not look to that which is stronger than yourself?

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. Let me pay the bill. Let me reconcile you back to God.” And then He finishes out this passage with an invitation.

“If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”

This is why we... If you are kind of new to our church, and you’re like, “Why do you guys keep talking about Jesus so much?” That’s why. If you’ve seen Jesus, you’ve seen God.

You want to know what God is like? Look at what Jesus is like. You want to know what to say to hurting people like a tax collector in a tree, and an adulterous woman at a well? Look at what Jesus would say to them. Jesus is God in the flesh. If you’ve been with Jesus, you’ve been with God.

“Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ Jesus replied, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!’

“So why are you asking me to show him to you? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me.’

“Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do,”

That’s a reference to miracles. Now verse 12:

“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me,” that’s you all, “will do the same works I have done,”

If that’s not astounding enough, it gets better.

“...and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father.” John 14:7-13 (NLT)

That is astounding. And that passage has always kind of perplexed me a bit because I’m like, “What in the world is Jesus talking about? Is He saying that we’re going to do miracles like He did and even greater miracles?”

It could be a reference to that. I don’t know that that is totally what He is driving down on. I don’t think that Jesus is saying we’ll all of a sudden have these super powers if we believe in Him. I certainly don’t feel that way.

What does He mean?

This is a reference... One commentator put it this way. When Jesus says greater works, this is a reference to more people coming to know Him. This is the idea of... The technical word for this would be conversions, that more and more people would come.

You notice, back in the passage, He says that the Father is doing a work through Him. So He goes, “God wants to do a work in you and God wants to do a work through you. And you’re even going to be a part of witnessing even greater works than I have done.”

So, right after Jesus ascends into heaven, we have something called the book of Acts. The book of Acts is a history of the beginnings of the big “C” church. And one of the things that you will find is that there were more conversions in the book of Acts than there were during Jesus’ earthly ministry. Think about that for a minute.

So, on the day of Pentecost alone, more people became believers that day than in the entire three-year ministry of Jesus’ earthly life.

In Acts, chapter 2, Peter stands up and gives a much shorter sermon than Jesus gave on the Sermon on the Mount, and 3,000 people were pierced to the heart and gave their lives to Christ that day. Another 5,000 people a couple of chapters later.

That was a literal fulfillment of what Jesus is saying in our passage today, in John 14, “You’ll do even greater things than Me,” because nowhere in Jesus’ earthly ministry do we see 3,000 people responding to Him in one day.

So, today we’ve got to ask ourselves a couple of things. Jesus said, “Don’t let your heart be troubled.” Seems to me that there are more things to be troubled by now than ever. Would you not agree with that?

And yet He says in the midst of all of the trouble, “Keep your eyes fixed on Me and as you do, you will be a part of God doing a work in you so that God might do a work through you and you’re going to experience even greater things than these.”

Did you know that there have been more people who have become Christians in the last 120 years than in the previous 1,500 years combined? Primarily through technology and travel. So the gospel has begun to spread, we’re beginning to see that God is up to something big, and He’s on the move.

Right now we can... When we look at all of the trouble in the world, there are a number of responses that we could give to all of that trouble. Right now, a fearful world needs a fearless church. An angry world needs a peace-filled church. A panicked world needs a thoughtful church. A timid world needs a courageous church.

Instead of trying to wish for a trouble free life, recognize that the trouble is actually an invitation to step into this power that can only be done when you spend significant amounts of time with Jesus.

I just have to say, as we go into this week and as the year continues to unfold, there is going to be trouble that is going to come. And when you experience trouble, I want to step into this with you. Instead of trying to pray that God would remove the trouble, I want to pray that God will empower me by His Spirit, that we would invite His Spirit to come.

It's usually in the moments of the most significant trouble that we see God flexing the most. And what if there could just be more and more people coming to know Jesus by way of our faith and our courage? With the amount of trouble comes the amount of the availability of the Holy Spirit.

I just have to tell you; I see trouble on the horizon. At the end of this year we’re bound to face one of the most contentious, divisive presidential elections of our lifetime. It’s going to be a lot of fun.

And this is already... Any of you gone to Colorado and go white water rafting? You get into one of those boats and there is a river guide in the back and he’s trying to get you safely through the rapids.

Yeah. That’s kind of how I feel. Our church is a raft and I see the rapids coming up mid-November and I just kind of feel like I need to keep reminding us—not that we need to be passive around this, not that we don’t need to be passionate or involved or prayerful—we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

I saw this picture right after the Super Bowl. You probably saw it. Everybody was talking about it. Kelce yelling at his coach and you know... Somebody said, “That coach is every pastor during the presidential election.” And I just had to laugh.



I was just like, “Yeah, that’s right.” I’m like, “Man, you know, just thinking about all of this, I’m already thinking about trying to lead through COVID, I’m twitching. I have PTSD just knowing this is coming.”

And yet, at the same time, I recognize that there could be a real opportunity for us to be the church in the midst of all of the division, the anger, and the frustration that we know that we’re going to experience as a church. We don’t want to miss this opportunity. I just think that God is doing something right now.

I want to show you this graphic up on the screen behind me. This is a timeline of four of the last Great Awakenings that we’ve experienced going all of the way back to 1730.

So, I want you to see the pattern here. The first Great Awakening kicked off in 1730. God used a couple of young men named Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield to kick that off. It ended in 1740.

Fifty years later, the second one started in 1790, led by Charles Finney. It ended in 1850. Fifty years later the third one started in the 1900s with a young buck named Dwight Moody. It ended in 1910. Fifty years later God used another guy, maybe you’ve heard of him, Billy Graham, to kick off another Great Awakening. It ended in 1975. And then the 50 year mark from that is 2025.

Now, here’s what I’m not saying. I’m not saying, I’m not prophesizing another Great Awakening. I am saying isn’t it kind of an interesting coincidence that the last four Great Awakenings—you go all the way back to 1730—were in 50 year increments.

And if God continues to do what He’s done in the last several hundred years, then that means that quite possibly we could be in for another one right after this election, if our eyes stay fixed on Him.

I just get the sense that God wants to do something. I think that COVID, the pandemic, was God kind of clearing the deck a little bit, kind of bringing some things to the surface that He needed to deal with with His church, His bride, to get us ready for what He might do. Jesus says it straight up in this passage.

And I get a sense that God is at work, even in our church. I don’t know how many of you were at worship night on Thursday night, but it was unreal. I need to tell you that in my 23 years of full-time ministry, I don’t know that I’ve ever experienced a moment that powerful. I don’t think that I have overstated that.

I would say the first time we ever did spontaneous baptisms where we baptized over 250 people—right up there, and then Thursday night.

Coming in to that night I didn’t really know what to expect. I’d been traveling, actually. I had just gotten back in town. I really wasn’t a part of the planning of the night.



And so, I came in and I didn't even really, fully know what I was going to say. I knew I had part of the worship night where they wanted me to come up here and say something, but I didn't really know what I was going to say. That will instill a lot of confidence in you, I'm sure.

So, I'm sitting there and Landon kind of led us out with God talking to the prophet Isaiah in chapter 6. And I'm looking around the room and I was just seeing all of these young people worshipping their faces off. And it was as if God began to kind of stir in me. It was just like, "Aaron, bless them. Commission them. Call them out."

I didn't know what all of that was going to look like. My wife told me later, we went on a date Friday night and she was asking me how I felt about worship night, and she goes, "I could see that your gears were moving."

I was just trying to formulate all of this. I didn't know how it was going to go. And when I stepped up on this stage it felt like I was riding a lightning bolt. I just called out and asked anybody under the age of 30 who felt like Isaiah, "God, here am I send me, send me," to just come.

I thought maybe 10 or 15 might respond. It was several hundred. It felt like there were so many people coming forward that I was like, "Who is going to be left in the seats when this is all done?"

They all came down and filled the front, filled the aisles. It was a powerful, powerful moment in which I felt like the ground shifted under our feet, and that God wants to do something in this next generation. We want to be ready for it.

Guys, can I just tell you this? I was with a group of pastors last week from all over the country. And we just kind of went through—we were kind of encouraging each other. And we said, "Hey, how many of you are experiencing unprecedented numerical growth right now?" Eighty to 90 percent of the hands went up in the room. I've been meeting with groups of pastors for 20 years. I've never seen that.

We were like, "How many of you have baptized more people in 2023 than you've ever baptized?" Eighty to 90 percent of the hands went up in the room.

"How many of you have more people in groups than ever?" I was like, "This is amazing." In the big "C" church God is doing something significant across the land.

I just want you to see this, even in our own church since COVID. In 2021 we started regathering physically after the pandemic. You can just see the numerical growth [2021 – 6,114; 2022 – 8,104; 2023 – 9,346; 2024 – 10,003]. By the way, we're not just about the numbers, although I don't think numbers are bad. Numbers represent changed lives. There is a whole book in the Bible called Numbers.

We don't focus on growth... Yeah, some of you just—yeah.



We don't just focus on growth for growth's sake. No, growth comes by abiding and when you abide, He brings the increase. We're just trying to stay connected to Him. Healthy things grow.

We can see the next one, the number of baptisms just off the charts last year—almost double last year from where we've been in previous years [2021 – 381; 2022 – 421; 2023 – 735].

We're in our fourth session of Rooted and so you can see Rooted numbers [First Session – 734; Second Session – 684; Third Session – 455; Fourth Session – 740].

The only reason why it dipped in the third session is because we were in Awaken and we were in Awaken groups instead of Rooted. But it's jumped right back up with Rooted.

We've seen the number of first-time givers [2021 – 200; 2022 – 210; 2023 – 761] has just sky rocketed this last year—people buying in.

And then the number of YouTube subscribers [2020 – 2.5k; 2023 – 12.5k].

God is continuing to get His Word out.

I show you all of that to just show that He's doing something, He's stirring something up. And I don't want to miss it.

I want to, in the midst of the trouble, I want to fix my eyes upon Him and I want to take Jesus at His red letter words, that we'll do the same things that He did—even greater things than these.

That is in reference to partnering with the Holy Spirit to see lives changed for all of eternity. I want to be a part of it. And I hope you do too.

And when the trouble comes, when the division comes, we can get caught up in the rage of culture, or we can stand on solid ground and point people to the hope and help that comes in and through Jesus Christ.

So, as we kick off this series, and as we get closer and closer to the election this fall, man, we've got to stay close to Jesus.

Let's begin by doing that today by taking communion together as a church family across all of our locations. I just invite you to this, and if you're online grab something you can take communion with and join us in this.

Let's just do communion together first of all by taking the bread, which is representative of Jesus' body that He gave for us on a cross. And the juice, which represents His blood that covers and cleanses and atones for our sin.



Father, thank You for being the way, and the truth, and the life. We know that trouble is coming. We cannot live a trouble-free life, as much as we try. But, You've offered us something so much better than trouble-free; You've offered us solid ground.

So, keep our eyes firmly fixed upon You. We take You at Your red letter words that as the trouble increases, so do the opportunities for the power of Your Holy Spirit to work in us and through us. To see more and more lives changed for all of eternity.

God, we don't want to miss the wave that it appears that You are sending. Would You keep us close to You. We give You all the glory for the increase.

And it makes sense that the numbers would go up because the numbers of people going through pain and hurt are going up. We need You now, more than ever. So, we want to be ready.

God, we thank You that You use people like us to make a difference for all of eternity. God, here we are. Here I am. Send me. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody says in agreement: Amen.

