

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

IN THIS WORLD | EQUIP FOR BATTLE

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Man, I love the lyrics to that new song—we need a move of God because we're going to stay here until we have an encounter with You. That's what we desire. That's what we want—to commune with God, and an encounter with Him.

Let me pray for us right now.

Father, we come to You in this moment and I don't know how we're showing up here today, what we walked in here with. But for the next few moments You've got our attention.

We need a move of God. We want to have an encounter with You. So, would you please meet us where we are, but do not leave us there. Take us to where You are. We know that You have a fresh word for us today. We ask this in faith in Jesus' name: Amen and Amen and Amen.

It's so good to see you. I want to welcome all of our locations, those of you joining us online. Feel free to grab a seat and as you are grabbing a seat you can go ahead and grab your Bible. I hope you brought a Bible with you. Find Mark, chapter 2. That's our passage together today.

As we get going, first of all I just want to celebrate what God did in and through our church last weekend by giving you three numbers. Alright? The first number is 24,875. That represents our total attendance across all locations. It was just crazy, man. We had people sitting in lobby spaces at all of our campuses. It was Traders Point Hunger Games out in the parking lot. It was just crazy.

The second number 1,883. That is the number of difference makers across all of our locations that it took to serve. Hundreds of you showed up earlier in the week to clear the way, to get ready for the weekend. And many of you—you know who you are—served both Saturday and Sunday to make it possible. We couldn't do it without you. So, thank you. Thank you so much. We do not call you volunteers. We call you difference makers because that's what you are doing. You are making a difference.

Last number—I'm really excited about, 553. That's the number of baptisms. Come on, man. That's crazy stuff. We knew we had 100 going into the weekend. I was praying for over 300. I obviously didn't have enough faith. We saw over 450 people make that decision last weekend.



Get this, 39 percent of them were under the age of 19. Come on next gen. That's incredible. We even had several people over the age of 70, which I love that too. It was phenomenal.

Hey, I shared with you a few weeks ago that our leadership was praying and that this year we had a goal that we were praying toward of 1001 baptisms in 2025. The reason for 1001 is because there is always one more. And so, who is your one more?

Well, I just want you to know that after last weekend, after four months of 2025, we almost hit 900 baptisms already for the year. That's more than all of last year combined. And I'm trusting that we will actually go past 1001 this Friday at Men's Night because I'm going to be preaching hard. So, we're going to dunk a whole bunch of guys, I think, on Friday night. Hopefully. We'll see.

Well, I'm glad you're here. If you are a returning guest from Easter, welcome back.

If you've got a Bible go ahead and meet me in Mark, chapter 2. Today we are kicking off a brand-new series of messages called Battle Plan.

Now, I'm just kind of curious. I think I know the answer to this. How many of you feel, right now in your life, that you are fighting some sort of battle? Not like a physical battle with fists and weapons, but an emotional or a spiritual battle.

And I would imagine right now maybe some of you feel like you are fighting for something. Maybe you are in a season where you are fighting for your faith because you are in a season of doubt. And you actually see the faith of everybody else. And everybody else's faith seems to be escalating but yours seems to be going the other way. You are fighting for it.

Maybe you're fighting for your relationship with God. Like, "God, where are You?"

Maybe right now you're fighting for your marriage or a friendship. Maybe you're fighting for your kids or your purity or your sanity.

Do you ever feel like you are under attack and you're not really sure why or where it is coming from, but you feel it all of the way around you and it's like your head is on swivel. And the reason why is because you're in a war. You are in a battle within the greater context of a war—not a culture war, but a spiritual war filled with cultural implications. And that's important to understand.

Everybody knows that if you are going to win a battle, you've got to have a plan. You can't just go running on to the battle field with your eyes closed and your fingers crossed hoping for the best. That's a good way to step on a land mine and lose a limb, or your life. And that's what this is all about.



In fact, next weekend we're going to be talking about what this battle looks like on the job. What does it look like to follow Jesus and to honor God at work whether you work inside the house or outside the house?

Maybe you work at a job where it is kind of frowned upon if you talk about God. So, you are like, "How do I live for God in the marketplace?" I've had a number of you request this. So, we're going to talk about that next weekend.

Well, today I want to talk about what this battle looks like for us as a church. What's our plan moving forward in the world? In other words, what are we trying to accomplish, as a church, and what kind of church are we?

Now, if you've been in our church for a while this will just be a refresher for you. And maybe you need a refresher. You need to be reminded of why we do what we do.

Others of you, maybe you've not been attending very long and this is your first time so this is going to be brand new information for you as to where we are headed as a church.

And I believe that there is a fair amount of resistance coming against this message. I don't know if you can hear it or not in my voice, about 10 minutes ago, my voice started to go. The first two hours I was totally fine. I don't know what is going on right now. I'm going to preach really hard. So, hopefully by the end of this I don't lose my voice. But there is something going on.

I've been working on this message, a few of you know this, I've been working on this sermon for about 25 years. I started my first full-time pastor job in January of the year 2000.

We had just made it to Y2K. And all of you under the age of 25 don't know what I'm talking about. Google it. We thought the world was coming to an end and our computers were going to turn on us. It was going to be havoc. And we made it through.

The first week after that I started my first full-time pastor job at a little church in southern Illinois. I was the senior pastor. That's what they called me at the ripe old age of 23. God bless those poor people. They had to sit through so many awful sermons. I didn't know what I was doing.

Then we ended up, after a few years, moving out to California where we planted a church. So, we started a Bible study in our apartment, then we rented out a movie theater—we did set up tear down in a movie theater just inviting all kinds of unchurched people to this church. Man, if you ever want to figure out what is important in a church, go start one. You're just trying to figure that out.

Then, in 2007, God led us to Traders Point. I was 31 years old when I got here. And I had no idea what I was doing. And, honestly, I'm still trying to figure it out.



God has been so good to our church. Not because of the things that we have done, but oftentimes it is in spite of us. And I think that he has got so much more to do.

Now, I'm not sure how often you think about the mission and the vision of the church that you are a part of, but I think about it all of the time. It's in the back of my mind all of the time. I realize that some of you think I only work one day a week, and that's adorable. It really is.

But we've got a staff of nearly 200 people all working 40 plus hours a week, like the rest of you all, with the added element of the spiritual resistance and warfare that comes along with that, to accomplish the mission that Jesus gave us 2,000 years ago, in this cultural moment. We love to laugh together. We love to have fun. But we take it very, very seriously.

And we are not just playing church. We're not just trying to be religious. We're not just putting on worship services on the weekends or adding more programs. We're not trying to grow bigger crowds or platforms.

We have a mission and a vision that is literally a matter of life and death. People are dying every day only to face a Christ less eternity. And, man, we are not okay with that.

People are struggling every day, losing a battle to anger, addiction, or anxiety. I am not okay with that.

Marriages are blowing up. Young people are losing hope. Young women, right now, statistically, are deconstructing and leaving the faith while at the same time young men are craving and searching for truth. And if they can't find it from a pulpit, they will go to a podcast.

We have an enemy who isn't passive and he's coming after you and the people you love. So, we will not be passive either. And, as a church, we are advancing against the gates of hell.

Now, some of you are like, "Whoa. That's pretty abrasive talk. Advancing against the gates of hell, where did you get that?" I'm just quoting Jesus. Jesus says that He was going to build His church (it is His church, He's the one building it) and He says, "The gates of hell will not prevail against it."

Interesting terminology, because gates are defensive in nature, which means that hell is on the defensive. And He said that we are advancing. In fact, Matthew, chapter 11, verse 12 says:

"From the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven," how is it advancing? "...forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it." (NLT)

Now, that implies that there is resistance to the advancement of Jesus' Kingdom. Otherwise He would have said the Kingdom of God is thoughtfully advancing or it is



strategically or incrementally advancing. But it doesn't say that. It says that it is forcefully advancing because we have an enemy who is violently coming against it.

And, if God is doing something right now, and I believe that He is—I'm going to talk about that in a minute—then the enemy is not just going to roll over and let that happen.

I've said this before. The birthmark of every believer is a bullseye. And if a church is reaching people like what we've been seeing here over the last few weeks and months, then we know that we have popped up on Satan's radar.

I appreciate how so many of you, whenever I've bumped into you somewhere or you've sent me a message, you've just said, "Man, we are just so excited about what is happening in our church. We've doubled down on praying for you. We've doubled down on praying for the staff because we know that Satan is going to come against us."

Guys, if we've already baptized almost 900 people this year, expect more resistance. And it kind of excites me because that's what I see in the book of Acts. The book of Acts is the history of the beginning of the church and it was a series of revival/resistance, revival/resistance, revival/resistance.

Today I have never seen more people as open to the gospel of Jesus Christ in my lifetime. And I've also seen some of the greatest resistance I've ever seen in my lifetime. And it actually really, really excites me.

So, today I want to talk about our mission and our vision and our strategy to move Jesus' Kingdom that is coming forward and I've got a few exciting things to kind of roll out to you today.

More importantly, I want you to know that God has a place for you in His mission. There is no such thing as professional Christians and amateur Christians. The call to Christ is a call to serve.

Now, you might not be serving Jesus full-time in a vocational ministry. And I don't think that most of you should. But, you are called to serve His Kingdom coming wherever your sphere of influence is. There is no such thing as the peanut gallery in church. There is no such thing as sitting in the stands watching the professional Christians do the ministry. No, you slap on your jersey and you get in the game.

In fact, you've got a jersey now. It was on your seat when you walked in. And that's not just like literally, that's like figuratively. God wants you to slap on His jersey and get in the game. You've got a role to play.

So, I want us to look at our passage today. This is the foundational passage for us as a church starting in Mark, chapter 2, beginning in verse 1. It says:

“When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door.” Mark 2:1-2 (NLT)

So, understand that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but He didn't grow up there. He grew up in this little seaside fishing village known as Capernaum, which sat on a hill overlooking the Sea of Galilee. And it is beautiful there. I got to visit Capernaum a couple of years ago when I was in Israel and it is this gorgeous little seaside town, Jesus' hometown.

And, in fact, I got to visit the ruins, the foundation of the house that we are going to read about in this passage. And it was so cool. If you ever get a chance to go to Israel go because it will change your Bible reading from black and white to full HD color because you're getting to see the things that you've read in the Bible.

Now, Jesus grew up in Capernaum but He's been gone. He's been traveling and He's healing people and doing miracles. And they all hear about it, so by the time word gets back that this hometown prodigy is coming home, everybody wants to see Him. It's a big deal.

So, Jesus goes to a house and He begins preaching and the house begins to fill up. Long before Taylor Swift broke Ticket Master, Jesus was packing houses. And every seat was filled. It even says there was no room outside the house.

Listen, man. The name of Jesus draws crowds. Jesus drew crowds all of the time in His ministry.

In the New Testament the church started off with an explosion of conversions. In Acts, chapter 2 thousands of men, women, and children gave their lives to Jesus once the name of Jesus was lifted up.

Now, this shouldn't surprise us. In John, chapter 12, Jesus says it this way. He says, “If I be lifted up, I draw all men and women unto Me.”

I love the imagery of that. It's as if Jesus is saying, “Hey, listen. This isn't super difficult. All you've got to do is lift Me up and clear out all of the obstacles that are keeping people from coming to Me and let me do the wooing. Let me do the drawing. And if you lift up My name, expect crowds to show up.”

And I believe that Jesus is drawing people right now. Eighteen months ago, I think it was on a worship night, I threw up some dates on the screen behind me of the four Great Awakenings. The first one started in the 1700s. And I just talked about how they were all started by young people.

At the end of the first Great Awakening 50 years went by between the first and the second, 50 years went by between the second and the third, the same with the third and

the fourth. And I said 2025 will mark 50 years since the end of the fourth Great Awakening.

And if you recall, I said I'm not a prophet. I'm not predicting the future. I don't know. But if God chooses to do what He's done the last four times, then 2025 is the 50th year. We're due for another one.

Now, we're four months into this year, I do not know if we are in a fifth Great Awakening. History will tell us. I will say this. It kind of feels like it—almost 900 baptisms after the first four months. We only baptized like 730 in all of last year.

After church last Sunday I was exhausted. I went home. I crashed on the couch. My phone was buzzing. And I opened it up—text messages from pastors all over the country—same story.

Every church where the Bible is being preached faithfully and Jesus' name is being lifted up consistently—record growth, record baptisms, record salvations all over the country, even in cities we might label as resistant to the gospel.

I think God is doing something. I don't know if it's a fifth Great Awakening. But I do know this. How tragic would it be if, let's just say five years from now, we look back and we say, "Yeah, that's when the fifth Great Awakening started, and we missed it.

"Man, I lived through the fifth Great Awakening and I didn't know it. I was so wrapped up in everything going on in culture. I was so focused on my own issues that I totally missed a move of God."

I believe that God has done some tremendous things over the last couple of decades in our church. And I don't think we've seen anything yet. I think He's got so much more for us in the years to come.

Now, when I first came to Traders Point I could not have imagined all that God was going to do. This church, as of right now, is 190 years old. This church has a rich legacy behind it.

I knew of Traders Point long before Traders Point ever knew of me. And it was one of these churches that I looked up to. I looked up to the former pastor that was here. So, when I got the call saying, "Hey, would you be willing to come and serve here?" I was like, "Man..."

People would ask me, "What's your vision for the church?" And here's what my vision was when I got here, "Don't kill it." That was my vision. Lofty goals, man. I was like, "I'm going to climb into the cockpit of that church and I don't want to nose dive it immediately into the ground." That was it. I was like, "I don't know what you're going to do here but I just came here wet." I didn't even know what I didn't even know.

And I remember we had just moved in to what is now our Northwest location, this building, and the church was maybe 1,500 or 1,600 people at the time—two hundred of them were kids. So, we had maybe 1,200 or 1,300 adults divided between two services in a room that seats 2,600. You do the math. The first service had like 30 people in it. And they sat all over the room.

And if I would have known then what I know now I would have been way more afraid, but I was too stupid to know. I was just like, “Here we go. This is awesome. It’s going to be great. It’s going to be great.”

I remember getting up here preaching on one of my first Sunday’s and after the service right down here—I’ll never forget it—this grumpy guy came up to me and he pointed his fingers right at my chest, and he said, “This room is ridiculous. You will never see every seat filled in this room—ever.” And I just wonder if he was here last week. I just wonder. The carnal side of me just wonders.

Now, listen. Please hear my heart. I do not say that with an ounce of pride because God has grown this church not because of anything we have done but most of the time it’s in spite of the things we have done that get in His way.

And there is a skepticism around anything that grows large, including, if not especially churches. And maybe you would be one of the skeptics. You would be like, “Yeah, that’s me, man. I’m a little bit skeptical of big churches.” And oftentimes for good reason.

But remember this—there is only one church, the church of Jesus Christ—the big “C” church. We’ve got little “c” churches in different cities and different towns around the world, different expressions of that church called to live out the purpose of God in those particular communities and cities—but one church.

And do you know what Jesus says of His one church? He calls her His bride. He says, “She is my bride.” She is imperfect for sure. But she is still beloved. And just like I wouldn’t want you talking trash about my bride, Jesus said, “The one you are talking trash about is His.”

I’m going to say this as plainly as I can so you know where I stand. Alright? Making a church grow big for the goal of growing bigger crowds and bigger platforms due to personal ego and pride—that is a sin, full stop. And rest assured, God will hold pastors/shepherds like me accountable for those motivations if they are there.

However, keeping a church small or talking bad about big churches or thinking smaller is more spiritual in the name of faithfulness, when maybe in reality you just don’t like change, hard work, or giving up your seat—that is also a sin. And rest assured, God will hold sheep accountable for those attitudes.

Man, for all of us, making church all about me, my preferences, my practices, my seat, the way I like to worship, my needs that is the most grievous sin.



Listen, man. Size is not spiritual. Big is not always bad. Small is not always good. Bad is bad and good is good. I've been in some wonderful smaller churches. Praise God for those churches. And I've been in some small toxic, unhealthy churches. Quite honestly, the reason why they are still small is because of the toxicity and un-health. I've been in some big, bad churches that honestly need to close.

And I actually think Jesus is doing that. Do you know that in the first few chapters of the book of Revelation Jesus addresses seven churches—and it's a word to all churches. He describes the churches like a candlestick with a light? Do you know how fragile that is? And Jesus says this to these churches, "If you lose your first love, if you forget why you exist, I will put your light out."

Guys, I'm telling you. Every church is a house of cards. And there are some epic legendary churches back in the 80s and 90s that I remember looking up to when I was growing up and some of them don't even exist anymore because they lost their first love.

So, big is not bad. Bad is bad. And what we desire to do is we desire to glorify God in all that we do, which brings up a really important question I need all of us to understand. It's this question right here:

What is the purpose of the Church?

I just want to ask you right now, how would you answer that question? Is the purpose of the church to meet your needs? Is the purpose of the church for you to grow spiritually? Is it to reach lost people? Is it for worship services? Is it to commune with God? Is it discipleship? Evangelism? Is it to meet the needs of the community?

Honestly, we could say yes and amen to all of those questions, but what is the most critical? What is the primary purpose of the church? And it's really important that we are all unified around the answer. I would say that there are three primary answers that need to be laid out in this order.

The purpose of the Church is to

Glorify God

Build up/edify/grow believers

Reach people and meet needs

The purpose of the church is, first and foremost, to glorify God. I hate to burst your bubble but the church is not here to meet your needs. It's here to glorify God and God alone because He's our audience, an audience of One. And the church is His. Jesus said, "I'm going to build my church." So, it's here to glorify God.



Number two in this order: build up or grow (a fancy word for that is edify) believers so that they can grow in their faith.

And then third, in this order: to reach people and to meet needs. And you've heard me say it already, several times, in that order, in that order, in that order.

The reason why I am stressing that is because order doesn't mean that any one of those is less important. In other words, we're not trying to pit discipleship and evangelism against each other; it's just that when you get them out of order then you are not properly equipped to do any of it.

I'm going to be getting on an airplane tomorrow morning to fly out east. And I'm already anticipating a little safety conversation that they are going to give me that I never pay attention to. You know what I'm talking about? Don't you just feel so bad for them? Neither do I.

But they are trying to point out... They are just trying to keep us safe, you know? And they go through the thing, "Hey, in the unlikely event of a loss of cabin pressure," what drops out of the ceiling? Oxygen masks. "Please secure yours firmly first so that you can assist others."

Now, which is the most important life, yours or the other? Both. What they are saying is, "Make sure you get the order right, because if you don't get oxygen you'll pass out. You both will die.

We can say the same thing about the church. We're here primarily to glorify God and then to build up the believers through expository teaching and preaching, which, by the way, I've just learned that when I teach verse by verse through the Bible two things simultaneously happen at once. I feed believers and I reach lost people because the Bible is living and active, it is sufficient alone to save and to build up.

I got three amen(s) out of that. Somewhere.

So, when we edify believers then we are equipped to reach people and to meet needs.

Now, listen. For some of you who are processing all of that right now, if the purpose of the church is only (I didn't say that) is to only edify and build up believers, the result can easily become spiritual pride, spiritual arrogance, spiritual legalism, that we're just here to go deeper and deeper. It's naval gazing. It's all about us—separatism.

It's the Pharisees who were saving seats and taking up the prime seats up front in this house. And we're going to read about them in a minute.

If the purpose of the church is to not only reach people—evangelism, that result can be an unbalance of truth and grace—syncretism. We avoid saying hard things because that's not nice or loving or we only respond to felt needs. I'm telling you that if we go that route, that eventually will lead to heresy, even if unintentionally.

See, if we forget that it is all for the glory of God... The reason why you should be a part of a church is to glorify God and God alone. The chief end of man is to glorify God alone. And if we don't do that then we'll forget our primary audience. We are not here to please man. We are here to please God.

So, if it's in that order, if God is our audience of One and we're faithfully teaching the Scriptures and lifting up the name of Jesus to build up your faith and equip you, don't be surprised if that church starts growing like wildfire as we reach people and bless our city.

Every now and then, as a pastor, people will come up to me and go, "Man, how big is big enough?" I don't know. But who am I going to turn away?

And last week there were a lot of people who couldn't get in to some of our campuses. I ran into a few of them out at the gym the next day and out at the grocery store. And they said, "Hey, how was Easter? We tried to come. We were stuck in traffic. We gave up. We turned around and went home and watched it online." I was like, "Ah." I am not okay with that. And if that was you, man, I'm so sorry. We've got to make room for more.

Listen, man. I am not about just growing a big church to grow a big church. I think sometimes people think that's all that pastors want to do. It is not what I want to do. Listen. The larger we've grown the more complicated my life has become. The larger we've grown it's just become a bigger pain in the neck. That's what it's been.

Listen. I'm not hanging a No Vacancy sign out front and then coasting for the last couple of fruitful decades of my life. And neither should you.

That was just verse 1 but I'm going to move a lot quicker because we have to. Alright? So, look at verse 2:

"While he was preaching God's word to them, four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat." (NLT)

Now, we don't know much about these guys. We don't even know their names. Their names are never mentioned. And I would imagine—I'd like to imagine—that they all grew up in Capernaum with this paralyzed buddy of theirs, and they knew about Jesus. He went to the school across town. And then they hear about Jesus healing people and they were like, "Man, we need to get our paralyzed friend to Jesus.

Listen. Paralysis is a big deal in our modern day, but it would have been a much bigger deal in the first century. It would have been a death sentence. This guy was completely dependent upon everybody for everything. They put him on a homemade stretcher and they get him to this house where Jesus is because they said, "We've been hearing that Jesus has been healing people. We don't know if it is true, but it's worth a shot."

So, they go to get their friend to Jesus, and by the time they get to the house, verse 4:

“They couldn’t bring him to Jesus,” why? “because of the crowd,” they’d already gotten their seats. “so they dug a hole through the roof above his head.” Why not? “Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus.” (NLT)

Man, I love the gospel of Mark so much. In fact, next year I think we’re just going to do a whole series through it. We’re just going to preach through the gospel of Mark. So, this is a little bit of a preview.

And if the gospels were movie genres Mark is the action movie. Mark is action packed. He includes the most miracles than any of the other gospel writers. It’s the shortest gospel of all of them. It was the first one to be written.

And Mark is a typical guy. He just doesn’t give you a whole lot of details. He just gives you enough, “Mark, how was your day?” “Fine.”

Each of the gospels starts off with the birth of Jesus. Mark just skips it. He just gets right to the action. And he’s the one who includes this narrative here and the way he describes it to us, he describes it so nonchalant. Like, “Well of course. The house is packed. So they just go through the roof.”

And can we all not agree that this is a little unhinged? If you were to go to a restaurant, put in your name, and they say it’s going to be a 45 minute wait, and you are like, “Ah, man. We don’t have that kind of time. You want to go up on the roof?”

Think about this for a minute. This is somebody’s house. It’s not theirs. This would have been destruction of property, they could have been sued. Maybe they were. Like, does home insurance cover this? What’s the deductible? Think about all of the questions here.

My guess is that out of these four dudes, one of them had the idea and the others were talked into it. That’s usually how it works. That’s like the visionary, the Enneagram 7, the life of the party.

It was like, “Hey, man. This is going to be awesome. It’s going to be great.” And I imagine the other three are looking at him like, “This isn’t very responsible. Can we just wait until Jesus is done preaching the sermon and the house empties out and we’ll catch a little bit of His time? That just seems a lot less expensive and dangerous and crazy.”

And there are a whole bunch of words that we can use to describe what they did. Bold comes to mind: compassionate, courageous, crazy, wreckless, extravagant. But here’s my favorite word—urgent. I think that is why they did what they did, “Man, we can’t wait.”

I love the fact that they were thinking about their friend and not themselves because I would have imagined they probably had needs that they needed to take to Jesus as well: maybe a bad back, a bum knee, or some work thing going on. They didn’t even mention

to Jesus what He could do for them. They were only thinking about their friend. And they weren't going to let anything stand in the way, even a roof.

Now, think about your friends. Think about your one more. Think about that person who is resistant to God. What would you do to get them to Jesus? Think about your co-worker of your neighbor or your family member or your prodigal son or daughter. And you are like, "I don't know how and I don't know when. How will that happen? But I know that Jesus is the answer. If I could just get them to Him."

They risked being misunderstood and criticized and canceled. And yet they do everything that they can to get their friend to Jesus. And as Jesus is preaching this sermon (get the visual in your head) large chunks of ceiling start falling down upon Him. He's got drywall in His beard. And at this point you'd think that the sermon is likely over. How is Jesus going to respond to the interruption of His sermon? Look at how He responds. Verse 5:

"Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.'" (NLT)

What an interesting way to put that. Jesus saw their faith not his faith. Listen. Only Jesus alone saves, but Jesus never saves you to be alone. And it took this community of friends and their faith to get their friend to Jesus.

You know what? Maybe your unbelieving friend needs to borrow some of your faith. And you've got so much faith you are like, "Man, I know that Jesus can change your life and I'm going to try to get you to Jesus."

And Jesus sees their faith and he looks at the paralyzed man and notice what He says. He says, "Your sins are forgiven." I would imagine this dumbfounded look came across these four dude's faces. They are like, "Uh, hey Jesus. That's nice and all. Thank you for doing that. But did You notice his legs? They don't work. Could You do something about that?"

I love that Jesus said that because, listen, here in a minute Jesus is going to meet his needs. He is going to heal the dude. But first He's going to forgive his sins. Understand that that's the most important thing.

The social gospel says, "Let's just skip over all of that sin stuff. That's judgmental and unkind. Let's not push our faith on people. Let's just meet their needs."

But that is not the gospel. That is not why Jesus went to a cross. Jesus went to a cross to reconcile you to God first, then He'll meet your needs. So, in verse 6 it says:

"But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, 'What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!' Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking." (NLT)

Hey, just a word of advice. If you are ever in a room with Jesus, don't think something you don't want Him to know. He can hear you. And they are so caught up in the protocol, they completely miss the power. And that's the deadness of religion. Instead of being moved by this man's life radically being changed, they are thinking, "You can't do that." So, here's Jesus response:

"He asked them, 'Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man "Your sins are forgiven," or "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk?" So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.'" (NLT)

Now, that's a mouthful. Here's what Jesus is saying. He's saying, "Guys, it's a whole lot easier for Me to say to him, 'Your sins are forgiven.' Because you can't necessarily prove that I did that. But it would be a whole lot more difficult for me to actually heal him. So, to show you that I have the authority to forgive his sins, I'm going to heal his legs." That's what He just said.

"Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said," verse 11, "'Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!' And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, 'I love this last sentence. "We've never seen anything like this before!"' (NLT)

Notice Jesus did not ask him if he wanted to be healed. He told him to be healed. He commanded him to stand up. The guy didn't stand up, he jumped up. And he took that homemade stretcher that he came in on, took it under his arm and walked out. And all it took was an encounter with Jesus that changed everything.

Now, what I want you to know is that this isn't just some story from back in the day. Because what Jesus did then He still desires to do today. Do you believe that? I want you to believe that. You need to believe that. That is the way it is in the passage.

And if that's the case, there are still thousands more paralytic men and women, paralyzed not just physically but spiritually and emotionally who need to be healed and set free by Jesus Christ. And we've got to make room for more.

Now, it is not all on us, meaning that there are other faithful, Bible teaching, Jesus loving churches all over our city and around the country. Man, I'm for them. If they've got their Bibles open, teaching Jesus, I'm cheering them on. I'm good friends with all those pastors across our city because I'm for them. And I want them to advance.

But God has called us to steward this flock and we've got to make room for more. And it is not just about us. And it's not just about our seats. And it's not just about our needs or our worship. People need an encounter with Jesus.

Can I just say this to you? There isn't anybody that I've ever met that isn't asking the question about their purpose in life. And maybe you're working a job right now, you love it. You are like, "You know what? I'm doing exactly what I've always wanted to do. I have

the job of my dreams. I'm living it up." Still, in the back of your mind you're thinking, "Okay, I've got to steward this. I've got to steward this. I've got to steward this."

Mortality rates are ranking in at about 100 percent. We're all going to eventually expire. And so these days that we have are precious. And God has placed you—who you are and where you are on purpose.

Think about of all of the moments in history that you could have walked this planet. Now is the time you are here. That's because God said, "I know what is going to be going on in that cultural moment and I want you to be a part of what I'm doing in this world."

Man, we get to be a part of something so big that God is doing. We've never seen anything like this before. It's a moment in history. Guys, can I tell you this? If we are in a fifth Great Awakening it's likely the only one of our lifetimes. And I want to maximize it now. I want to be a part of what God is doing.

So, I've got a few exciting things to roll out to you. We've got a fresh Mission Statement, and a vision, and a logo. So, I just want to share them with you and I want to give you the why behind them.

So, understand this. Our marching orders as a church come from Jesus Himself. It's called the Great Commission—Matthew 28. Many of you know it.

But Jesus would say this, "I want you to go," which implies the church is always moving, "and I want you to make disciples," which means we are not just trying to draw crowds, converts, or church members—but disciples, there is a difference—"and starting in your home town, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Surely I am with you to the very end of the age. You don't have to do this on your own."

That's the Great Commission.

Now, every church's Mission Statement should have that as the backdrop. In fact, if God ever calls you away from Traders Point or you move and find another church and you look at their Mission Statement and it doesn't sound anything like the Great Commission, leave because that's not Jesus' church. So, every church's marching orders is Matthew 28.

But the way that we choose to state the Mission Statement is more catered to our cultural context within this local congregation. The way that we have chosen to state our mission with the Great Commission as the backdrop has been this way for the last decade or so:

We exist to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus



Now, what I want you to know is that Mission Statement came out of Mark, chapter 2 when I preached through it about 12 years ago. And we love the idea of wrecking the roof and we're going to do whatever it takes to get people to Jesus. We're going to remove unnecessary barriers because that's what these four buddies did for their friend.

So, Matthew 28 is the foundation, Mark, chapter 2 is the inspiration, John the Baptist gave us an example of this. John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and he was doing all of these amazing things before Jesus comes on the scene.

Some people thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah. So, they came to him and they were like, "Hey, are you the one?" And John the Baptist is like, "No, man. I'm too weird for that. I eat locust and wild honey. Camel's hair. No. I'm not the one." And then he said this, he's quoting the prophet Isaiah. "I'm just here to clear the way for the One."

In Acts 15 the church had just gotten started. They had a church congregational meeting and they said, "Hey, let's not make it any more difficult for the Gentile believers to come to faith," meaning that there were some unnecessary things that were making it difficult for them to follow Jesus.

We took all of those passages with Matthew 28 as the backdrop and we stated our Mission Statement that way:

We exist to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus

Now, can I tell you this? I love that Mission Statement because of the passages that it came out of and I just believe so much in it. But after living with it for a while, we need to change it. There are three big problems with the way that we stated our Mission Statement.

Here's the first one: people kept saying it wrong. So, instead of unnecessary barriers they would say: We exist to remove barriers to Jesus. And that changes the meaning like wholesale. So, then you could take that and interpret it like, "Oh, we're trying to lower the bar, water the gospel down, do whatever it takes to just get people to Jesus." And that's called heresy.

We're not trying to just remove all barriers because the gospel itself says that there are barriers to the gospel—mainly our pride. Jesus still calls us to repent of sin. There are still times when are not willing to give that up and we can't get to Jesus. It's unnecessary barriers, not just barriers. And people kept leaving off the word unnecessary.

Here's the second problem. People would often use our Mission Statement to validate their complaint or criticism. Not you all. It wasn't this service, but it was the other people in the other services. They would send an email and anything they didn't like, anything they were complaining about, they would call it an unnecessary barrier—kind of funny how that works. And I was getting tired of hearing it.

Number three: This is the most critical, most critical. Our Mission Statement was incomplete. You see where I am going with this? Once we get people to Jesus, well now what? And the mission isn't to make converts, crowds, or church members, it's to make disciples.

So, after about a full year of studying and praying and talking about it, we've clarified our Mission Statement. We have a new Mission Statement. Still, Matthew 28 is the backdrop. Here it is:

Clear the Way

Equip for Battle

Deploy for Impact

We will Clear the Way, so that gives nod to unnecessary barriers. We will Equip for Battle, because we are all in one. And we want to Deploy for Impact.

And so, what this does is it captures the fact that we still need to get people to Jesus, we want to equip you for that battle that you are in—that's spiritual growth, discipleship—and then deploy you to make a difference in your world: salt and light.

Now if you're looking at that and you are like, "Well, that sounds like a little militaristic. Well, that's just the theme of the Scriptures. If you recognize that from Genesis to Revelation it's a war. Satan is a fallen angel who declared war on God and it got him kicked out of heaven.

And then he goes after God's creation. He went after Adam and Eve. They fell into sin. They got removed from the garden. We've been in a spiritual battle ever since.

And maybe in your Bible reading plan you've been reading all of the Old Testament conquests. In Daniel (I believe that it is chapter 10) Daniel prays to God and he doesn't get a response. And then some time goes by and an angel rushes in and he's like out of breath. He's panting, "Give me just a second, Daniel. As soon as you prayed I got dispatched from heaven to answer your prayer," get this, "but I got caught up in a spiritual battle. There is war going on on the other side of this mail."

In Matthew, chapter 11, Jesus says, "I've come with a sword to divide."

Colossians 2:15, He disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities, shaming them publicly on a cross.

Ephesians, chapter 6 is a whole chapter on putting on the armor of God. In fact, all of June, in our summer message series we're just going to work through Ephesians 6. We're going to go through the different armor pieces of God.

You know the first time Jesus came to earth He came as a helpless baby born of a virgin in Bethlehem. Cute little cuddly baby in a manger.



Do you know when Jesus returns again to the earth what He's going to come as? Revelation 19—a righteous warrior on a war horse with eyes like flames of fire, a robe dipped in blood, a sword coming out of His mouth. He will rule with an iron rod and a tatt on His thigh (UFC style) that says King of all kings and Lord of all lords. That's Revelation 19.

Listen. The Bible is set within the context of a war and it calls itself a sword. Now, not a culture war, a spiritual war with cultural implications. You already know that you are in a battle. A few of you raised your hands when I asked you at the beginning of the message. We're just trying to equip you for it.

Do you know what Acts, chapter 1, verse 8 (this is a passage written not to pastors but to Christians) says this:

"...you," not your pastor, "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my," say the word, "witnesses, telling people about me everywhere." (NLT)

Now he didn't say, "You will be my theologians." He didn't say, "You will be my preachers." He didn't say, "You'll have all of the answers." He said, "You will be my witnesses." What is a witness in a court of law? You are just there to testify as to what you've seen, heard, and experienced. That's all He's asking you to do.

"Hey, I don't have all of the answers. I'm not a theologian. I'm just here to testify to what I've seen, heard, and have experienced Jesus do in my life." And where do you witness? Everywhere.

So, we want to clear the way, we want to equip you for the ministry that God has called you to, and we want to deploy you for impact—everywhere. That's the new Mission Statement. Alright?

Don't be so excited.

Here's the Vision Statement—here's the Vision Statement. The Vision Statement is... By the way, visions are just high and lofty. We're not going to accomplish them on this side of eternity. We want to attempt a vision so big for God that if He isn't in it, it will fail. Here's our Vision:

Taking ground for the Kingdom across Indy and beyond

We just want to take ground for the Kingdom, Jesus's Kingdom, across Indy and beyond. That's our Vision Statement.

Here's another way to say it, "Guys, we're going to wreck some more roofs to add room for more." That's what we are going to do.

Additional gatherings this August



SATURDAY

Northwest: 4 PM

Carmel: 4 & 5:30 PM

SUNDAY

Fishers & Plainfield: 8 AM

So, there are a couple of practical ways that we are going to do it. Beginning in August we're adding a couple of additional service times. Northwest and Carmel we're going to add a Saturday night service. Fishers and Plainfield we're going to add an 8 AM to make room for more. Alright? So, be thinking about which service you want to go to to make room for more.

And then our 200th birthday as a church is in 10 years. We're already planning that birthday bash. And what we've just laid out is, Lord willing, that we would launch a campus every year until our 200th birthday making us a church with 15 or 16 campuses.

That's a map right there. The dark green is where are current campuses are. The lighter gray is just some areas that we are praying about. And we're just praying, Lord willing, that God would continue to expand our influence across the state.

We've got a new logo coming with all of this. We've got a new website. We've got a new app that is coming in the weeks to come.

So, the new logo is simply this right here—just giving a nod to our past. You can see that the T and the P are kind of shaped like a forward moving arrow highlighted in yellow to say that we're going to be people of the word. That's what all of that means.

And we've got new car decals with the new logo so you can get rid of the old decal and put on the new decal. Those are available here today, by the way. So, you can grab those. Slap them on your car.

I know that a bunch of you are thinking right now, "Yeah. I don't do that. I don't do that." A number of you told me, "I don't put decals on my car because of the way that I drive." And I'm like, "That sounds like a discipleship issue. That's what that sounds like."

Hey, listen. We don't do this to advertise our church, by the way. A lot of people think that's what we do. We don't do this to advertise our church, otherwise we'd put Traders Point Christian Church, here's the website.

We just do the logo. Why? People see that all over town and they see people actually letting them cut in in traffic and being gracious. Here's what they do. They say, "I see that



all over town. What is that?" It's an opportunity for you to be a witness. That's why we do that.

So, if you're the kind of person who is like, "I don't do bumper stickers." Can I just lovingly challenge you? Change your mind.

Last thing here—really, really super practical stuff right here then I'm going to end in a devotional thought and then I'm going to be done. Part of the Awaken initiative was to refurbish this campus. This campus is almost 20 years old. It's our sending campus. It's our broadcast campus. There are a bunch of things that we need to do to update this room for another 20 years of effective ministry.

We're talking sweeping changes in this room. We've already seen some of it with the new baptistery and some other stuff. You've got to look up. Mark, chapter 2, is visual. We've got the roof coming down.

And in order to do this, in order for this room to be outfitted for the next 20 years the team came to me about a month ago and said, "Hey, it's kind of like we've got to do some massive renovations. We've got to gut this thing.

May Schedule:

May 18 – Northwest online only

May 25 – No in-person or online gatherings

It's kind of like when you update your kitchen. You can't use it for a couple of weeks, but it's going to be really awesome after. We come to that place here. So, May 18th Northwest will only be gathering online because this room will be torn up. The other campuses will continue to meet, they won't skip a beat.

We will be prerecording a whole worship service before that happens that we will show that weekend, on May 18th, COVID style. PTSD all over again, but we're going to do it. Alright?

I actually hated making this call because I don't want to not do church that weekend, but it's kind of one of those things where it's like we have to. We're just at that place. So, that's happening May 18th.

The next weekend is Memorial Day weekend, which we typically don't gather for church to give all of our difference makers a three-day weekend to rest and refill. It requires thousands of difference makers to do what we do and I want you rested up.

I want you to go with the cultural rhythms of our city. Everybody is out on Memorial Day weekend. To then come back here and to hit it hard because we are ready to go for our summer message series right after that. That's what is coming.



So, let me turn a hard corner and end with this devotional thought. I'm getting really, really reflective right now in my life. Some of that is because I'm recognizing my days are more numbered. I had a birthday last week. It was not the big one, but it's close to the big one. And then my daughter just got engaged a couple of weeks ago. There is some crazy stuff happening and I'm like, "This is my life. It's flashing right in front of me."

Listen. More and more, as I look at this, I've had the honor of my life to serve this church for almost 18 years. I'd like to give it another 20. Now, listen. If God has done all He's done in the last 18 years, imagine what He can do in the next 20. I don't think our best days are behind us. I don't even think we've scratched the surface yet. And that excites me and it scares me to death.

Do you want to know why? Because I've read my Bible. Do you know that only 20 percent of leaders in the Bible finish well? They hit the tape then they held their heads high. And that scares me to death. And it sobers me to death. And it brings me to my knees on almost a daily basis.

So, about six weeks ago I texted our elders and our executive team and I said, "I just need you to know, because this is the team of people I work most closely with, I'm being confessional with you. I need to level up. I need to level up as a husband. I need to level up as a dad. I need to level up as a leader, as a pastor. I need to level up as a preacher."

I've seen far too many people hit the age of 50 or so and start coasting on the benefits of the past, the fruit of the past. And I don't want to do that. Guys, I want to throw some haymakers for the Kingdom of Jesus in my 50s and 60s. And that begins now.

So, I don't think it was any mistake two years ago when we developed the name of our generosity initiative that God led us to Awaken thinking that we might be in the fifth Great Awakening right now. And I want you to be a part of this.

So, let me end the sermon this way. What's God saying to you in the stewardship of your life? Whether you're a teenager, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s and on up. What is God saying to you, man? What's your next step of obedience?

Chances are it's in one of those three little phrases of our Mission Statement: Clear the Way, Equip for Battle, Deploy for Impact. Maybe for some of you you need to give your life to Jesus. Maybe for some of you you need to clear the way for others to get to Jesus, you've been making it too much about yourself.

Maybe you need to be equipped for battle because you're not. And you need to get into a Bible reading plan, or you need to get into Rooted, or you need to get some accountability, you need to grow. You are failing in that battle.



Or, maybe it's to deploy for impact. It's fine to sing praises to God and listen to messages here but outside these walls you're not really living for Him. So, what does it look like to be deployed to make a difference for Him?

What's God saying to you? What's your next step of obedience? Which is one of my favorite definitions of what a disciple is—a disciple is not somebody who has it all figured out. A disciple says, "This is my next step of obedience."

So, with that in mind I want to pray over you. Would you please stand to your feet at all of our locations, right now? Stand to your feet and let me pray this prayer of blessing over you and our church, right now, in this season.

Father God, thank You so much for working in and through our church. What it's going to take is a move of God. What it's going to take is an encounter with Jesus.

So, we know that You show up where You are wanted. So, we declare with one voice, You are wanted here. We need Your presence. We need Your Spirit. We cannot do this alone.

We refuse to think that our brightest days are behind us. We choose by faith to know they are ahead of us. So, God, would You please help us as we consecrate ourselves before You?

We repent of any sin—we come to You with motives and attitudes that are not of You.

Would you please use us as Your servants to clear the way, to equip for battle, and to deploy for impact for the glory of God and God alone? And the church says: Amen and Amen and Amen. Let's worship together.

