

ARE WE SAFE?

SERIES: BROKEN DREAMS | WEEK 4 | 3.1.2020

Gotta change gears this morning; we're supposed to be in the Book of Ruth. And if you walked in the doors this morning and you saw peanut butter and diapers in the lobby it's because you are a group of people that loves Jesus and loves people, and just from a fullness of heart you have poured out. We have been overwhelmed as a church this week by your response. It's been overwhelming. It's been full of love, and it's what the body of Christ is supposed to be doing.

You know, the simple thing was in the Book of Ruth this family goes away to stay away from famine and in the course of going away to stay away from famine the husband and the two boys end up dying. And the ladies come back to the place once the famine's gone, a place called Bethlehem, and when they get there they have nothing and so they have to glean in the fields. And it was only because godly field owners left the corners of the fields open that there was a place for them to glean. And so we just asked last week, hey, let's be that kind of church. Let's be that way in our daily life. Let's be that way as a church. And there's some things that we can do together that are greater than if we did it individually. And we know that there are young mothers that need diapers and a wonderful organization that makes sure that they get that, and so by you bringing those in this week it made a difference. We know that there are children every day in this county, it's hard to believe but it's true, that are hungry and don't have enough food when they come home after school, their parents are at work and they don't have anyone to feed them. And we were told by the food bank they could just grab a scoop of peanut butter and eat it and so you've brought in peanut butter. Thank you so much. I'd love to commit that as an offering to the Lord right now.

Dear Jesus,

I thank You for those who brought those gifts in, who loved those children, who loved those moms so much. And we know that You love them, and so I pray that every ounce of peanut butter out there and every last diaper out there would just bring the love of Jesus to the person that receives it. And Lord God, I pray that You'll go with every ounce of what's out there to those people and that it will flood their hearts and their lives for Jesus' sake.

It's in Your Name we pray. Amen.

This week a news story broke and I assume by now from hearing you coming in that most of you are aware of it, but lest you are not you'll find out why I've changed the message for this morning. My family and I have been dealing with this for a very long time, a threat against my life and a respected judge in this area, and thankfully this week an arrest has been made and charges been made. And we wanted to just thank you for your absolute love and care. It has been incredibly overwhelming. My wife and my two adult children are just overwhelmed by—you have just showered us with your love and your prayer and your concerns. For those of you with children that have heard about this, your children should never have to hear such a thing. I'm sorry they had to hear about this but thank you for leading them and leading them well as a family. I just want you to know that the love that's been outpoured to me has even been from the pastors in this community and from all over the state for that matter, all over the nation and world, and we have just, again, been overwhelmed by it.

I just want you to know that the elders of this church have been involved with this since the very beginning and they have been unbelievable. Our pastors and staff have borne this weight and they love you so much and they have been so loving and so caring to me and it's been phenomenal. And so I'm just coming to you today with a full heart of love, compassion, and thanksgiving. I also want you to know that we have a safety team here at the church. Oftentimes you don't see them but they are working

hard. They are here oftentimes when you are not, working hard to protect this church, and I'm just so appreciative of them.

I want to say this to you right now, here's what I know and here's what I'm pumped up about this morning. I mean, I am really, really pumped up about this this morning. The Bible describes you, the body of Christ, as the Bride of Christ. And you know what? Jesus loves His Bride so much that He gave His life so that we could have eternal life. And if you know Jesus as your Savior, you're part of that Bride and He is in the process of refining His bride and making her beautiful and I just want you to know. And someday I'll be able to tell you a whole lot more.

Jesus' watch care over you, over me, my family has been unbelievable. I just AM overwhelmed **[APPLAUSE]**. He has protected, and He has cared for in ways that when I tell you someday you're gonna stand back and go, "Wow, God!" And I get the privilege to stand up here in front of you this morning and say He is alive! He is active. He is active in my life. He is active in your lives. He is active in this church. And I am so, so pumped up about that. **[APPLAUSE]** And I am gonna tell you what, the gates of Hell will not prevail against the church. **[CHEERING, APPLAUSE]** Jesus promised that. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it."¹ And the gates of Hell attempted to; it wanted to stop what God was doing here, wanted to stop the Word of God, wanted to stop you from making a difference in this world—and God said no way.

I received an email—attacks—from someone just yesterday who used to go here and said, "There's something desperately wrong at that church." I'm here to tell you this morning no, there's something amazingly wonderful at this church, God's Spirit is in this place. God's Spirit is watching over this place. God's Spirit is moving among us. And God's Spirit is calling us to something way more that we've ever dreamed possible for this tiny little place in the middle of a place called what? Downington? Downtown? What's that place called? Is it Exton? Where is it? **[LAUGHTER]** God is doing something big here and He's calling us all to a moment that if we miss this moment—if we get caught up in gossip, if we get caught up in fear, if we get caught up in ourselves—we will miss it.

God has drawn my attention to a book of the Bible during this time. I would encourage you to read it yourself today, tomorrow, this week, it's the book of 2nd Corinthians. You don't need to turn there right now, I'll reference a few things out of it. The more I read it, I just, I sort of want to stop our present series which I don't want to stop, I want to talk to you about Ruth today, I want to talk to you about Chapter 3, we'll get to that. Let me tell you what 2nd Corinthians, the Apostle Paul was dealing with a bunch of what 2nd Corinthians says in like Chapter 11 and 12, people called "super-apostles."² They were people that they had two things in mind—me and how I look. It's all they thought about. And so they had come into this church that the Apostle Paul had led, the church at Corinth, and they were out there just trying to look good and it was all about what could be seen and about their stature and their priorities. And the Apostle Paul is a man that was all about two things also, it was all about Jesus and the unseen.



And the people were looking at Apostle Paul going these guys are amazing. This is Paul. Paul says, I want to redirect and refocus your attention. I want to turn your eyes away from what is seen—your degrees, your status, your wealth, what you are known for, what you can accomplish, what you can do—

¹ See Matthew 16:18

² "Super-apostles" – see 2 Corinthians 11:5

I want to turn your eyes away from me and I want you to turn your eyes on Jesus, and I want you to turn your eyes on the unseen. And if there has ever been a period of time, the last six months, where God has told me I want you to look not at what you can see, but I want you to look at what is unseen. I say to people all the time, if we could see the spirit world and see the evil in this world for what it really is, I mean, we think we see it, we hear stuff and we're upset about it, we don't even begin to know the beginning of it. There is such a dark, dark thing going on around us all the time. If we could see it, we'd be scared out of our minds. But then I'd pause and I say this: I am convinced that if we could put on our glasses, our spiritual glasses, and see what God is doing in this world and His powerful Holy Spirit in this world and in our lives around us, we would be jumping up and down and screaming right now.



You'd be telling me to be quiet until our dear brother David Virgo from Cleveland, Tennessee, to get back up here because we want to start singing and worshipping again. [APPLAUSE] And we wouldn't just be sitting here wanting to sing some little K-Love songs with *my-boyfriend-Jesus* theme to Him and go home after a little golf clap. We'd be shouting out our praise to Jesus Christ because He has us guarded around in every way possible. He has protected us. He cares for us. He loves us. And He loves you and if you've doubted that this week, I am your pastor, I've come here and he's brought me through some stuff to be able to shout out to you **we serve a good God who loves, loves, loves us.** [APPLAUSE]

And when the Apostle Paul had the opportunity to share the same message I want you to hear what he said, this is just the first chapter of 2nd Corinthians he says:

⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer.

— and he says —

⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

— but listen to these words, down to verse 9 he says this —

⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.

~ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:6-6-7, 9a (ESV)

Let that sink in for a moment. Later on in the book he describes what he had been through. Any one of us who think we can name off what we've been through, it's like nothing compared to this guy, the Apostle Paul who wrote most of your New Testament. He says we really believed we had received a sentence of death. And then he says this, I want you hear this, church, this is what God's doing in my life right now:

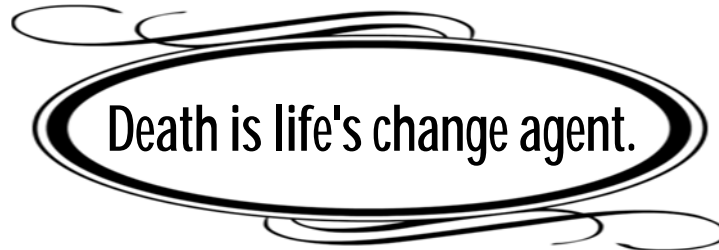
But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God

— listen —

who raises the dead.

~ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:9b (ESV)

It's all about Jesus. He didn't stay dead when He hung on that cross, when evil wicked men hung Him on the cross. God brought Him out of that grave. He resurrected Him and because He is alive, we can be alive. We can come here today with confidence because He is the God who raises the dead. And this phrase came across my mind this week: Death is life's change agent.



And when you have been given a sentence of death, when a death threat has been placed over your life, when you have been given two months to live, when you have been diagnosed with a terminal disease, when someone nearby you is at the door of death, all of a sudden our perspective changes. We move away from this candy spirituality that these super-teachers in 2nd Corinthians that Paul was talking about that wanted bigger houses and nicer lands and nicer cars and more money and more wealth and more fame and more notoriety and more platform. Move from that me-and-my-and-what-I-can-get mentality to I'm looking to the unseen. I'm looking for what I can't touch, what I can't feel, but I know there is an eternal God who's got me. And all of a sudden it isn't about me.

And that's what Paul says. He says in my weakness He is strong. And a whole bunch of us in this room today needed that because you are under a gun. And death—the death of a dream, the death of a experience that you thought you were going to have, something that you knew was going to be there looming in front of you, a death of a friend—is life's change agent and it calls you away from all this fake stuff that we're so in love with here, and causes us to begin to look beyond this day and to something more and something greater so that we will not rely on ourselves but God who raises the dead.

¹⁰ He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope

— listen to this —

that he will deliver us again.

~ 2 CORINTHIANS 1:10 (ESV)

Let's set our hope on God. I read these verses and they have been so helpful to me, 2nd Corinthians Chapter 4, verse 5:

⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ

— that's why I just appreciated those words of that song before we stepped up here, just focusing in on Jesus because it's all about Jesus —

as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

— listen to these words —

⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

~ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-6 (ESV)

There is much darkness around us. Each one of us face it every day that we wake up. Wherever we're at it just slamming us and the Scriptures say, "*let light shine out of darkness.*" God is using our experiences, God is using the experiences of this church to allow the light of Jesus to shine out. If this just becomes some big drama that we play out and re-tell with wide-eyed scared eyes and wanting to add to the story or create new thought processes, we've missed our moment. The moment is for light to shine out of darkness and for Jesus to be lifted up.



There's a passage of Scripture though that I remember because of the numbers in it. I just can remember it, it's John 6:66, so now you're gonna remember it. [LAUGHTER]

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

~ JOHN 6:66 (ESV)

You know, the disciple John is the only one of the disciples that did not go to a martyr's death, but rather was exiled to the island of Patmos; the rest of the disciples died a martyr's death. Jesus, it says, He was walking with His disciples and He began to tell the truth of what was going on. He began to explain this in terms of His death, in terms of even what you just partook of in communion of blood and His body and there were a whole lot of people in our lingo today "weirded out" by that. Like, "That doesn't make sense." "I don't like that." "That's strange talk." And the text tells us there were a whole bunch of disciples that turned around and walked out the doors, "I'm outta here!" "I'm done." "I'm not doing this."

Understand that word *disciple* in that case just meant "follower." There were a whole lot of people following Jesus. After all, I mean, in those days there weren't huge buffets. Out there in the middle of the wilderness He feeds people all they could eat dinner. People are getting healed. They're standing back going, "This is great! I love this!" And then He says these kind of statements and they're going, "Yeah, I'm out of here." You see, they were people that were followers of Jesus that were following Him for the good things that He could give so that they could just go, "Man, I like this." So I can have my best life now, so I can have my dinner now, so I can get more things, and so I can get the blessing of God, and everything's all happy. And all of a sudden Jesus makes it very clear that following Jesus is not safe. That following Jesus is going to call you to do what Jesus did—to die. The Scriptures are going to say in Luke 9:23, we share it all the time here, it makes it very clear—you want to follow after Jesus, you're gonna have to deny yourself. You're gonna have to take up your cross and follow Him.

²³ And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

~ LUKE 9:23 (ESV)

And when Jesus says those kinds of words the crowd leaves. Easy to get a crowd. I tell people all the time, we can get crowds here if we wanted to, we just get kegs out here and we'll fill this place up every

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week. [LAUGHTER] Promise you that you'll become millionaires if you give a certain amount of money, if you do certain things, jump through so many—easy to get a crowd. You say come and die and it's a different story.

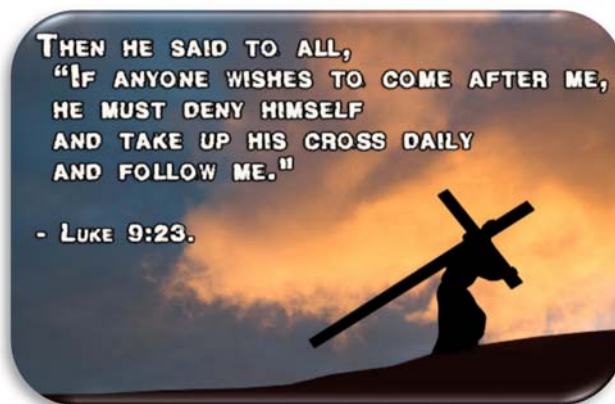
But think with me for a moment, how many of us in here want to be in the game? I think what did me in for sports was my Little League experience. Cornwall ACS I played for, one hour east of here. Guess what I got to do. I got to be a carry-on and whatever that meant was you can raise your hand when the coach comes to pick the next player, but you are never going to play. All those years playing for the Cornwall ACS I don't think I ever got in the field. And there's a whole lot of us in this room right now they're raising our hand going, "I want to get on the field." No one ever signed up for a sport and wanted to sit on the bench. And yet something happens.

Oftentimes we get into these kinds of moments and we just go through the motions and we're trying to protect and we're trying to be safe and we're trying to survive. We think,

Hey, listen, I'll step out for God some day, but I'm just getting started in this job.

I just met this wonderful person; I don't want the fact that I'm a Christ follower to cause them to think I'm a freak show and run from me.

And we just go full head into a decision that's gonna leave us in the wrong place. If you've been with us for the last bunch of weeks, we see Elimelech did that very thing. He didn't care what God thought. In the moment what seemed to make sense was to go to Moab and he goes there and—he still dies. And I step back now and I go, "You know what? I want to be the person that gives up my life serving full out for Jesus.



You know, something that oftentimes gets said in services like this is that there are a whole lot of us that scream a whole lot more for the Eagles than we scream for Jesus, but here's what I want to say to you: That's our fault because we've never given you a mission and a vision large enough, something big enough to take on for Jesus to even make you stand up and scream. I'm just saying to you today would you be a church just like you were this morning that said we're gonna care for people that are in need; just like you've been this week to your pastor and showing me such incredible love as you are to each other, as you are as you gather in your groups every week, as you are when you step into your workplace. Like the one man I heard about just not too long ago who just got saved in this place and he started carrying his Bible to work and reading it at lunch every day. And when the people started asking him about it they started mocking him over it. He said, "I told them about that Jesus is the most important thing in my life."

It's the story we've been able to tell everyone that we've come into contact with this week, Jesus is the most important thing in my life. The Scriptures are clear. He says this—listen to these words—this is what Paul says in Chapter 5 of 2nd Corinthians:

⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home

— Heaven —

or away, we make it our aim to please him.

~ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7-9 (ESV)

So we have to ask ourselves: Are we gonna sit on the sidelines raising our hands but nothing happening, or are we gonna step into the game? You know, we can fear death because that's when we say, "Hey, if you're gonna come to Jesus, you're gonna die, you're gonna die to yourself, you're gonna die to some of your plans. You may even find yourself physically dead, but when you are you'll be with Him in glory. You'll be more alive than you've ever been." Would you step into that arena? Would you step into something more? This one life I have to live. This one life you have to live. Oh, man, I want to live it full out. I'm gonna stop there.

I'm gonna ask the worship team to come up. A couple, oh, it's probably a year ago, I was reviewing a resume and I saw something written in that resume and when I read it it just grabbed me. It was a quote, I have no idea who this person is, you'll probably know but I don't, and I want to read that quote to you this morning and I would love for you to stop and make a decision whether you want to live for something way bigger than yourself. If you want the biggest fear to be in your life that you won't be on mission for Jesus as opposed to being afraid of everything that could happen to you, that you'll begin to live full out. I'm gonna read this quote but before I do just let me set up.

In a moment we're gonna give our offerings and our tithes to the Lord. When we give to Jesus we're saying: I love You more. And I would suggest to us today that maybe our first step – how do I get to a place where everything in my life is I love You more, Jesus? I love You more than my house. I love You more than my stocks. I love You more than my dreams that haven't come true. I don't know, how do you fill out that sentence, I love You more? I love You more, Jesus, than a vacation. You can't even go on a cruise any more. I love You more, Jesus, than my family. I love You more, Jesus, than my own physical life.


I love You more, Jesus, than my . . .


You see, we're just amping that up so when we start with money, yeah, it hurts but it's – you know that's all going away. He wants us to trust Him with that, to begin to trust Him with every aspect of our life. The Apostle Paul says I went through what I went through so that you can know that you can rely on God. We put our trust on Him and we want you to put your trust on Him. Because I love Him more than anything else, I want you to love Him more than anything else. And then together, church, we can together go out and begin to tell everyone, "I'm a Christ follower, that's why I'm reading my Bible at lunch." And they'll all look at you like, "What?" He changed my life! I'm not half-waying anymore. I'm not sitting on the sidelines. I'm jumping in the game." Jesus, I love You more than anything else.

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Let me read this quote and then you can give your gifts to the Lord. I just threw it on my phone first thing this morning. The Lord just told me to share this this morning. The person who wrote this is a lady by name of Janet Chester Bly:

Breathless Tales

I would rather
clutch my invitation
and wait my turn
in party clothes
prim, proper,
safe and clean

— this is what I love —

But a pulsing hand
keeps driving me
over peaks
ravines
and spidered brambles
So, I'll pant
up to the pearled knocker
tattered
breathless
and full of tales.

Janet Chester Bly from *Managing Your Restless Search*, copyright © 1981,1992³

I feel that pulsing hand of God and He will not let me settle, and I want to invite you to feel that pulsing hand of God at full throttle for Jesus.

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