

## Heaven on Earth (Part 17) – The Promise Fulfilled

Matt Chandler – February 17, 2019

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Good afternoon. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. We're going to be in John, chapter 6. We're going to look at the first 21 verses. John, chapter 6, is actually a really complex chapter. What I mean by that is the first part of the chapter has this sign in it, this miracle that if you have a background in church you'll know what it is right out of the gate.

Then following that sign is a long sermon by Jesus in which you're going to watch what we've been talking about the last couple of weeks, which is the authority of Jesus, slamming into human autonomy and men and women having to decide whether or not they're going to submit to the authority of Jesus or whether or not they'll choose that they are a better god than God.

If you've been here the last couple of weeks, we have been in John, gazing at the authority of Jesus Christ. The authority of Jesus Christ transcends human categories and human fragility. He is able to heal body, spirit, and mind. In Jesus is life and judgment, and those are significant, because in monotheistic religions it is only God who gives life in the beginning and judges at the end.

Jesus is teaching "The Father has given life and judgment to me," so Jesus is teaching, "I am God, and I am in perfect unison with the Father in regard to identity of will and action. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, three in one...God." We have said, and we will watch next time we're together in John, that when the authority of Jesus collides with human autonomy, self-autonomy, the belief that we know better than God...

Twenty-five years of preaching and teaching, and no human has sat across from me and said the words, "I just think I'm smarter than God," but all of us from time to time *live* that way, don't we? All of us from time to time choose, "You know what? I know what's clear in this text. I know what God is asking me to do. I'm not going to do it." Well, in that moment, we ascend to the throne of our hearts, ask Jesus to step off of it, and assume his authority for ourselves.

This is especially difficult in 2019. You and I live in an age where, maybe even rightly, we are skeptical of anyone with authority and power, because what we see every time we pick up our devices is yet another example of someone with authority and power who betrays the very people that power was meant to protect and provide for. Right? Is it just me?

It feels like every time I pick up my phone, every time I pick up my iPad, there's yet another story of some politician, some educator, some [you fill in the blank] in the domain who was given power to protect, to nurture, to provide, who has used that power to inflate their own ego and take from people what they were meant to actually *provide* for people for their own comfort and good.

Dial in for a second, because I need to say some things that I know are going to be super weighty for some of you. I'm trying to give you a heads-up, and then I want to try to love you well through this. In this new world where every time we pick up our device and see yet another example of abused power and authority and it has led to being jaded and skeptical, you would think the church of Jesus Christ that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit would be the one place where there would be safety.

By the way, if this is too weighty for you, if you need to check out for a second and take a deep breath, do that, and then kind of circle back around and join me when we get to the text. Last week, the *Houston Chronicle* ran the first story of three stories about 700 sexual abuse victims in Southern Baptist churches...that's just the SBC...where there was victim shaming and blaming and there was protection for the predator. No wonder we're jaded when it comes to authority. No wonder we're skeptical when it comes to power.

By the way, this is an aside. There's no such thing as consensual sex between a pastor and a member of his church who's not his wife because of power dynamics at play. There's no such thing. There *is* no consensual sex between two adults between a pastor and a member. It doesn't exist. It just can't. A man in my position who would prey upon a woman in a difficult situation, prey upon her emotions, prey upon her vulnerability... It's evil. It's unacceptable.

We see a lot of it, and God help us. No wonder we're jaded. No wonder we're skeptical. If you have a backstory where it's hard for you... Like, that *Houston Chronicle* article rolled out and you can't read it, because if you read that you're going to disappear for months. I want you to hear I see you. We see you. I want to just say to you we have trained our pastors and made some hires. We want to be a place for you to heal. I know it's a long road back.

The kind of damage that does to the soul when that happens to you when you're a child is just unbelievable. So we see you. We love you. We're trying to build a place where we can serve you well. We brought in outside help. If at the end of today you're like, "Gosh, I want to step forward and finally start to heal," we would welcome you to come up. You won't be blamed for anything. We're not going to not believe you. We're going to just engage you with grace, and let's see what the Lord might have.

What's fascinating about John 6:1-21 is to watch how Jesus uses his power and authority. So, if the way *man* uses his power and authority makes us jaded and skeptical that anyone in power could be fully trusted, Jesus is going to transcend yet again the way humans see the world acting. So let's look at this together. This is John 6. Again, if you have a background in church, this is going to be very familiar to you. This is one of the only miracles that's in all four gospels, each with a different vantage point. Let's look at this. John 6, starting in verse 1:

**"After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand."** Spoiler alert. That is the key to this entire passage. Not the sign but what the sign is pointing to. So if you write in your Bible, I would highlight that little verse, because it's huge.

**"Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, 'Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.'"**

Two hundred denarii is a wealthy person's annual salary. So Jesus says, "Philip, you're from around here. How are we going to feed all of these people? Where are the food trucks?" Philip says, "If a wealthy man was here and he gave all of his annual salary, not everyone would even get a single bite." That tells you the immensity of the crowd. But then look at this. Verse 8. This is probably one of my favorite parts of the story.

**"One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?'"** I love what just happened

here. I think there's something for us. It's not the point of the text, it's not the main emphasis of the text, but it's here, and I want to draw your attention to it, because I think it's amazing.

Our boy Andrew loses faith in the middle of a sentence where he started with a smidge of faith. Like, how miniscule does the faith need to be for the power of Christ to flow from it? Well, gosh, he couldn't even get the sentence out of his mouth before he doubted it. What's Philip's faith? Philip is like, "Bro..." (He wouldn't say "Bro" to Jesus, but...) "If we had a rich man here and he gave us all his salary, not everybody would even get a single bite."

Then Andrew stole this kid's Lunchable, and he walks up and is like, "Uh, I found *this*, but what good is *that* going to do?" He had faith for a second. It was gone by the end of his sentence, but he has it at the beginning. Why did he take that kid's lunch and go to Jesus? Because he believed for a second, didn't he? Or why are you going to bring the lunch to Jesus? For just a nanosecond he believed, and then it was gone. Anybody been *there* before?

Jesus doesn't rebuke Andrew. He moves in power through this tiny, tiny bit of faith. Gosh, it didn't survive the sentence. Just as a reminder, you can be nicer to yourself than you are. God is not looking for this big, giant "I believe..." It's this tiny little, "Here's a lunch. It's not going to work." "Okay. I'm going to make it work." Right? That's what's going to happen here. Be encouraged.

**"One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?' Jesus said, 'Have the people sit down.' Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.**

**And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!' Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself." How about *that* for power dynamics?**

**"When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became**

**rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going."**

Now, there's a lot of phenomenal stuff in this text, but what I want to do is draw you into the main point of the sign, what the sign is pointing to, so that when we look at the Bread of Life sermon *next* week you'll have context for what's actually happening in this text, because this Lurchable feeding 12,000 people is the *smallest* thing that's happening in this passage.

The first thing I want to highlight... Look there in verse 2. **"And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick."** If we consider who all is in this sign that's about to take place, you have a massive group of people. You have 5,000 men. Most commentaries are putting the number at about 12,000 when you throw in women and children.

They are, by and large, there not because they have any intention of following Jesus and submitting to his authority but, rather, because he has power over the sick and he's doing all kinds of signs and wonders and they're intrigued. There's something there, but they're not sure what it is, so they're there to figure it out.

The modern-day equivalent to this would be an open skeptic ("There's *something* here") or might even be those of us who are moral conservatives, so church makes sense, and we're kind of in an outer orbit to Jesus. If I could make that really simple, Jesus is like golf. He's something you do on the weekend. Once we get away from Sunday, there's no Bible in your life, there's no Spirit in your life, there's no surrender in your life, there's no obedience in your life, but come weekend when it's time to tee off, now you're all in.

That's that outer ring that's being addressed here. The text is clear. They are not there because Jesus is Lord; they are there because he can heal the sick and do miracles. That's why they're there. Now, the Bible doesn't rebuke that, and *Jesus* isn't going to rebuke that, but his authority *will* confront it when we get into the "I am the Bread of Life" sermon, and you'll see what happens in that moment, that some believe and some bail.

The thing I think is astonishing here is...this is crazy...Jesus cares about the outer ring, those people who are in orbit trying to figure it out, not quite sure what to make of it, just trying to make sense of

who Jesus is and what Jesus is about. Maybe that's your whole life. Maybe you've been sitting in church your whole life, and you can watch other people, and they seem to love him and surrender to him, and you just can't quite understand what that is or maybe even how to get in.

If you remember hopping into jump rope as a kid (if you're young, you don't know what that is, but Google it later on your device), you would watch the rope, and you had to wait and then get in. Maybe you've been watching Christianity like that. Like, "Okay, how do I get in there? How do I get in?" If it's Double Dutch, you're just a dead man. Maybe that's how you've been viewing Christianity.

They're here in this text. They see something. They're not sure what it is, so they're kind of in the orbit of Jesus, but certainly not following him. So he does this sign. Here's the thing about the miraculous signs of Jesus: they're always pointing *to* something. Miracles don't terminate on themselves. The sign is pointing at something. I think the most astonishing thing in this passage is not that he took a Lunchable and fed 12,000 people; I think what's astonishing is what he's pointing to.

Now, I think the key to this text is not the bread and the fish. It's not the outer ring versus the inner ring anxiety. It's actually that it's Passover. For you and me, Passover doesn't mean a lot, but for first-century Palestinian Jews, Passover was all about their identity and their nationalism and how they understood who they were. You have to realize that we're in the middle of something here, and I don't mean we're in the middle of the book of John.

One of my favorite classes we have here at The Village that you probably can't get into is called *The Story of the Bible*. What *The Story of the Bible* is meant to do is to teach you that this whole thing is a story. You and I have jumped in not just in the middle of it but kind of a smidge toward the end of it, and what Jesus is doing is reminding them that he is the fulfillment of the promises of the Passover.

A first-century Jewish man or woman would not understand their identity outside of what Moses did in being used by God to pull his people out of slavery and oppression in Egypt. Jesus is saying, "I'm the fulfillment of that" in this passage. Maybe this would help. It would be like the Fourth of July for most Americans or, since we're Texan, like the Alamo. If you don't know this, Texans are really strange people. We should just keep embracing that. I'm not dogging it. It's amazing.

But if you head up to Delaware, there's no bumper sticker in Delaware that says, "Born somewhere else but got here as quick as I could." That doesn't exist in Delaware or New Mexico or Utah or

California or Hawaii or any other state. It's *us*. Part of that is if you grew up here, you were drinking the Kool-Aid by fourth grade. When you were fourth graders, they were like, "Texas history. Let's do it, baby."

We have such lore around what it means to be a Texan...Battle of the Alamo, Six Flags, our own republic. Texans believe we could fight the other 49 states and win, and many of us are hoping they'll start it because we're game. See? The fact that you're cheering is evidence that I'm not lying. If you think about the Alamo... Here's the story of the Alamo. You have a group. They're all hunkered in. They're surrounded. They have no shot at survival.

Colonel Travis pulls out his sword and draws a line in the sand and says, "To stay is to die for something bigger than yourself or you can leave like a coward," and the lore is only one dude left. We don't ever get his name, but one guy leaves. We know it isn't Davy Crockett. *He* didn't leave. We know it wasn't Jim Bowie with his giant knife. *That* brother didn't leave. He was ready to roll.

Texans. Unless you're from Tennessee and you're like, "Well, actually..." But that's okay. If y'all want to come get it, come on and get it. Dallas is bigger than your state. See? It has happened to me. It's in me. I wasn't even born in Texas and it's got me. Then what happens? Thirteen days of glory until every man is dead. That stuff does something to you. It shapes you. It gives you an identity. It creates a sense of pride. In every culture, you'll find this lore and these narratives that are meant to help us identify ourselves. "This is who we are. This is what we're like. These are our people."

Well, the Passover was that for the people of God. "We are the chosen people of God, delivered by God, made a people by God, provided for by God, fed manna from heaven by God, given quail from heaven by God, given land promised to us by God, protected by God." The Passover. Every year, they got together to remember, "This is who we are." That's what's going on when Jesus takes this Lurchable and feeds them all. The point isn't the bread, because he's about to preach a sermon that says, "I *am* the Bread."

This is one of three Passovers. The first Passover was spent when Jesus taught, "I am the living temple that will be torn down, broken, destroyed, and will rise again so that the Spirit of God might dwell inside of you." Not you have to go to a location in order to worship, but worship will spring forth from your own soul. This is the middle Passover. There are only three, and the last one is actually when they crucify Jesus.

So there's a lot going on in this text, but the connections are so numerous it would be hard to do in this 35-minute sermon, which is why I've punted it all until the next time we get together. Even then it will be trying. The sacrifice in Passover is a lamb whose blood is spilled and marked on the doorways so that judgment might pass over the people of God. Well, in chapter 1, who is Jesus? The Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

Now, remember, we're in the middle of a story. When Jesus is heralded as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, what does that do to the people of God? How does it resonate with them? It's getting at their very identity, the very thing that defines them most. Jesus is saying, "That lamb that makes judgment pass over you? It's mine, because life and judgment are mine, because the Father has given them to me."

This is a narrative arc that Jesus is teasing out. The Old Testament manna is superseded by the real Bread of Life. The Exodus story sets forth that eternal life is given to the people of God and they're delivered from sin and destruction, and Jesus is saying, "*I'm* the fulfillment of that. *I* do that. The lamb and the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread don't do that. They're pointing to *me*. *I* do that. I am the Bread of Life."

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Passover feast is taken over by the Eucharist, or the Lord's Table. You and I don't do Passover meals; we take Communion, but we're still celebrating what they were celebrating in Passover. We just know in full what they only knew in part. By the way, if you have an opportunity to do a Seder meal around Easter, I think they're beautiful, but we were given something greater.

If we're thinking about the Bible, the movements from Moses to Jesus, from Passover to Communion, or Eucharist, don't make any sense if what we're seeing in John is not Jesus looking back, superseding the lamb, and looking forward to his death on the cross *as* the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Otherwise, this Bread of Life sermon and Jesus, who's about to say, "Unless you drink my blood and eat my flesh you have no part in the kingdom..."

By the way, that's a long way from where we were in chapter 1. Do you remember chapter 1? In chapter 1, the men were like, "We want to follow you. Where are you going?" He says, "Come and see." Do you know where we are now? "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood..." Do you know where we end? "Unless you die..." This is what we've been talking about in regard to progressive sanctification.

The Spirit of God opens your heart to believe. "Oh my goodness. Jesus is the Lord of the universe. I'm going to say yes to Jesus." We don't even know what that means. So Jesus starts by saying, "Hey, come and see." Then we're like, "Okay, I'm going to come and see. I'm going to submit my life to you." Then the Holy Spirit is like, "Great. I need to have a talk with you. This thing over here?" Now all of a sudden it's "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." Then eventually it's "Unless a man come and die..."

This is progressive sanctification. This is "Come to me. My yoke is easy and my burden is light." I love that this is the invitation that's actually going out to the outer ring. The men and women in this crowd haven't come out because Jesus is the Messiah. They haven't come out because they want to submit to Jesus. They've come out in an "outer ring" way. "I think there might be something there." Jesus goes after this identity they have that they certainly aren't walking in in any kind of fulfillment.

They're under Roman oppression, they're under the oppression of the religious leaders of their day, both of which are abusing authority in order to crush them and destroy them. Jesus shows up and goes, "Okay. There's a different kind of authority here. The promises of the Passover find their fulfillment in me. Your identity is not in *this* heritage or *this* background. Your identity is in *me*. I am the Bread of Life. Life is in me. I don't *provide* bread; I *am* bread."

Think about this. What kind of king dies for the peasants? Is it not in human history the peasants who die for the king? It's Christianity alone that says, "No, no, no. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords actually goes out and dies so you won't have to. In fact, he goes out to make provision for *you*. You don't make provision for *him*."

You know this intuitively. Right? You can't add to God. You just can't. I know you're awesome, but you can't. "I'm going to add to the greatness of God with my behavior, with my money, with my gifts." You're not adding to God; you're being obedient under his provision. This is astonishing. This is what Jesus is going after.

Listen. If you're in the outer ring, the Bible is not mad at you for being in the outer ring. *I'm* not. Gosh, I'm just really excited that you're trying to figure it out, trying to get to the bottom of it, and trying to figure out how to get in that. I'm just letting you know here's the invitation: Come as you are right now. Your identity is secure in him. Say yes to Jesus.

Finally, get out of the cheap seats and come onto the field and play. Every one of you can be filled with the Holy Spirit, gifted by the Spirit of God, and given ministries that would blow your mind. I really believe some of you think... Professional ministry is not God's call. It's the priesthood of believers that is God's call. *You've* been given the job of ministry.

*My* job is to *equip* you to do the work of ministry, not do ministry other than equipping *you* to do the work of ministry, which I'm trying to do with my teaching gift and my leadership gifts. That's what I'm trying to do: equip *you* to do the work of ministry. So many of us are like, "Ah. There's just no way God could use me because of *this, this, and this.*" I'm just wondering what Bible you're reading. My guess is you're *not*, because only stupid, broken people are used by God in profound ways, because that's all there actually is.

If you're waiting to get to some kind of mythical level of something before you trust that the Spirit of God can use you despite you, you will be stuck in neutral all of your life. I just know God is going to call some of you up and out, not to go but to stay...*some* of you to go but many of you to stay. There are men and women in this church with these profound, huge ministries to the least of these, to the poorest of the poor, to people all over the world, to young marrieds, to young adults, to singles.

It's not organized. It's just God put it on their hearts, and they're giving of themselves for the glory of God and for the good of others, and they're finding life and joy in it, and they're being challenged and stretched in it. It's what Christ has for *all* who are bought with his blood. When you trade that in to listen to a dude preach... Gosh, aren't you bored? Maybe you're like, "Not if you'll tell some more jokes." I'm just saying that's a really... Look. I love you. That's the dumbest trade ever. Where else do you do that in your life?

"I don't want to drive; I just want somebody to talk to me about driving and be entertaining about it." "I don't want to go on a vacation; I just want somebody to tell me about the beach. Give me all of the details about Italy. I don't want to actually go there. Gross." Right? Why are you doing it with *this*, the *greatest* of things, when you've been invited and you can afford it? It'll only cost you everything. It's awesome. Now, that's not all that's going on here. This is the invitation: "Come and live." But then look at this. I'm so encouraged by this. Look at verse 16. I have all kinds of questions.

**"When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened."** In other texts they think he's a ghost. They think they're about to die. They're absolutely terrified, and here comes Jesus jogging up next to the boat. I have questions. We're going to talk about them.

**"But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going."** I have a quick question. Why did they leave Jesus? You're in the boat. Jesus went up on the mountain. I don't know the answer to this. I've just been pondering it. They left Jesus. They got in the boat and left him. I just think I wouldn't have left Jesus, even if Peter was like, "Let's go." Like, "Peter, bro, Jesus...he's not here yet. I'm guessing we should probably wait." But they don't. They head out.

This is important. For a first-century Palestinian Jew, the sea was not a place of comfort or a place to be desired. I love the song "Oceans." It's still in my rotation, but the people of God were terrified of the sea. They did not see the sea as a place of comfort. They did not see the sea as a place of respite. They were not like you and me who would want to stand in front of the Pacific Ocean and go, "Isn't that amazing?" The sea to them was death.

The disciples are on the sea, and the wind and the rain and the waves have kicked up, and they are convinced they're going to die. Then they see what they think, if you look across the Gospels, is a ghost. So, you believe that the sea equals death, you think the sea is about to swallow you up and kill you, and then here comes a ghost. Now put them together. Why would the ghost be there? Well, to claim your life. They are terrified.

If I could make really simple what's happening here, I would say what's happening here is Jesus is meeting the anxieties of his inner ring. If he's extending the invitation of life to the outer ring, he's meeting the anxieties of his inner ring, which is super, super comforting to me. There are two points here. I think they're both profound. Here's the first one: *even those closest to Jesus will get disoriented and anxious at times.*

These brothers have just seen some things that are probably a little bit beyond what you and I have seen. Anybody see a Lunchable feed 12,000 people? Okay then. They have witnessed things that we will convince ourselves had *we* witnessed them we would never doubt again. If you're one of those

skeptical brothers or sisters who's like, "If I could just see a miracle I would believe," the Bible says that's not true, *won't* be true.

What it says is if you see a miracle you'll demand another one, and if you see another one you'll demand yet another one, and if you see another one you'll demand yet another one. What we have happening here is the disciples are terrified and anxious, and I think that's good news, because I have found *myself* at times anxious and discombobulated. Jesus isn't raging against that. He's not angry about that. He just reminds them who he is. That's all he does. "It's me."

Now, I want to highlight this, because I see a lot of fear and anxiety all around us. In fact, I don't know if you know this or not, but we are being whipped into a frenzy around fear and anxiety. At every turn, people are trying to make us anxious and afraid, and we're being manipulated and controlled by such things. We're being whipped into a frenzy, caused to attack one another without real information, and that leads to a kind of disunity and brokenness that pleases the Enemy and breaks the heart of our God.

So I want to highlight a couple of these areas of anxiety that I've seen as we're navigating 2019 together. There is a legitimate anxiety around sexuality. You and I live in a day and age where the biblical version of sexuality is not just offensive but is seen as oppressive. That can be really disorienting. High schooler, middle schooler, this can be disorienting. Here's what I want to invite you into. Luther, the great Reformer, said faith is a wrestle with doubt.

If this is one of those areas where you're like, "I don't know what to do with this. I don't know what to make of this. I hear this. It kind of makes sense, but I see in the Bible *this*. I'm just not quite sure..." God has given us the community of saints and given us one another to wrestle with these doubts together, slam into the authority of Jesus, and trust that the one who created sex as a gift to humankind actually knows how it works.

I see a lot of disorientation, a lot of discombobulation around politics. Just say something. If you say something... It doesn't even have to be crazy. It could be anything tied to one or the other of the political parties. Just say *anything*, and normally sane human beings in 2019 will lose their minds and become psychopaths. All reason out the window, all benefit of the doubt evaporated in an instant, and there will be nothing but hostility and anger. We've been whipped into this frenzy, and we have *allowed* ourselves to be whipped into this frenzy.

So, gosh, what do you even say? What do you ever do? There's just nothing we can say or do where there's not a backlash of rage and outrage about it. As the people of God, we must not give in to this day and age. We must be seasoned with salt and light. We must extend the benefit of the doubt. We must seek to understand the opposition, especially if that opposition is first and foremost worshipers of Jesus. I'm not saying policy doesn't matter. I think policy very much matters.

I'm saying we must seek to understand those who love Jesus first and have different political persuasions than us. That doesn't mean they're right, but it *does* mean we don't bully, beat them up, or cast them in some horrific light. Right? This is one of those areas where I can feel like Andrew. I'm saying it, and even as it comes out I'm like, "Man, they're not going to do that. They're on Facebook after this to call me out for being a socialist." That's what's happening to me right now. I'm saying this sentence, and I'm like, "Ah!" But I have to keep saying it.

I think there is a lot of anxiety around evangelism. There was a terrible, awesome, heartbreaking article that *Christianity Today* just came out with. It said this massive percentage of Millennials believe... By the way, Millennials aren't kids. Millennials are 30 years old now. They have kids and houses and cars, and they haven't destroyed the world. How awesome is *that*? Because that's what we were told. You guys were going to kill us all, and you haven't. A bunch of homeless, lazy, entitled bums, and it looks like now you got married and bought houses. Great job. You made it.

Yet among those Millennials, the percentages were "We think sharing the gospel with people of other faiths in order for them to come to know Jesus eventually is ethically wrong." Then in the same survey, 94 percent of them said that life in Jesus Christ was the best thing that ever happened to them. Something is broken there. Right? "This is the best thing that could ever happen to anybody, but we'd better not say anything."

You don't do that about anything else. You don't do that about your essential oils. You diffuse that mess all over the globe. You have cards and necklaces. You don't do that about music you like. You don't do that about movies you like. You don't do that about apps on your new iPad. You don't do that about anything else, where you're like, "This is the best thing that ever happened to me, but I'm not going to say a word." That doesn't make any sense. It's counterintuitive to your humanity. You were born to praise something.

We must not bury our doubts and anxieties. Here's the way this works. If you're wrestling with doubt and you buy into the false lie from hell that Christians don't do that, you feel all alone, and

when you feel all alone what you do is you isolate, and as soon as you're isolated, you are in danger. You're just in a lot of danger. If our Enemy roams the earth like a lion, seeking someone to devour, who is it that the lion picks off: the pack or the straggler? Always the straggler. The lion doesn't want to risk getting injured and dying himself, so he picks out the straggler.

So if you have doubts, if you're wrestling, if you're in a season of anxiety, I just want to press you. God knows. He's not surprised by your humanity. Do you know why you're experiencing that? Look at me. Because you're human, and this is what humans do. Jesus meets them in their anxiety and assuages the anxiety simply by reintroducing himself. "Oh my gosh! We're going to die. Oh, there's a ghost that's come to take us to hell."

"Actually, it's me."

"Oh, okay. Phew! All right. Better now."

The Bible tells us in the other gospels that the wind and the waves and the rain obeyed that "It is I" and confidence was restored. They wanted to take him in, and then here's the miracle. As they sought to take him in, now eyes on him, not on the storm, they made their destination. It's another sign, another miracle in this passage that as they sought to take Jesus in... Their eyes were on Jesus. "Let's go get Jesus in the boat. Oh my gosh! We're here."

That leads me to the second point, the first one being that even those closest to Jesus will get disoriented and anxious at times. We also now see that *Jesus is with us in our storms and will get us safely home*. This week, I had the opportunity to visit one of our members in hospice care. Things are just not looking good. I am not without hope. In fact, I prayed this morning that the Spirit of God would miraculously and profoundly heal her body like we're seeing in these texts, because I believe the Spirit will do that from time to time, break through and do it.

I love doctors. I don't care what they say here. They're guessing. They're practicing. God doesn't practice. He just doesn't. God has never practiced anything in his life. He just *does*. Humans practice. The divine doesn't have to. So I'm just praying full outright healing, but I walked into a room... Here's what happens when they've given you just a few days to live. All the glittery nonsense of this world is gone. It's *gone*. In fact, those couple of hours I just count as one of the great privileges I've had the last six months as the pastor of this church, just to sit with a dying woman and her family and sing and laugh and let the hope of Christ be there.

All of the things you and I think are so, so, so important are gone, and Jesus is still there. That's a great privilege to sit in that room. To watch her husband bound gladly in covenant love, serving his emaciated, weak, failing wife with his love for her and compassion for her, despite the fact that she can give nothing in return. I guarantee you it trumps that nonsense from Thursday night, a little baby in a diaper shooting people with emotive love. Give me what I saw in *that* room over *that* nonsense. (I'm referencing Valentine's Day. If you're like, "What was Thursday...?" You're probably still in trouble anyway if you're wondering *that*.)

Jesus here meets people and carries them through. You and I aren't promised a life of ease; we're promised a life of presence. Do you hear me? *You and I aren't promised a life of ease; we're promised a life of presence.* Some of us will wrestle with the authority of Jesus. We'll gladly surrender and pick it back up, gladly surrender and pick it back up, gladly surrender and pick it back up, gladly surrender and pick it back up.

Jesus is just going to be there with us. He might break our hands from time to time to get it *off* of that thing because he loves us. Life will be difficult. You'll never hear me say anything other, because I don't want you to be surprised when it comes. You *shouldn't* be, because the Bible is full of it. Don't be cherry-picking verses that always have this...

Here's what I know about my time in that home. That woman will be healed, either with a resurrected body or some crazy miracle, but Jesus was there. Jesus was present. Where else do you get a bunch of people in a room laughing and singing as a woman's vitality disappears? The presence of Jesus was clearly in that room. It reoriented all of us around what actually matters and what doesn't. Those are gifts and privileges.

To watch her, weak and frail, sing, pray, want to listen to the Holy Spirit and hear, want the Word of God read over her, want to sing again? That is so beautiful, and it's what's being offered to the inner circle in this moment. Death is going to overtake us. We're terrified. Jesus goes, "No, no, no. I'm here. You're not." "Oh, thank God Jesus is here. Oh my gosh! We're home." That's what just happened in the text. We turn toward, we move toward, we cling to, and then we're home.

This has been a difficult season. I have tried to be very honest the last couple of weeks that this has been a crazy difficult season for me personally. Twenty-five years of following the Lord, and I have felt in the last six months wave after wave after wave after wave. At one point, I wanted to just go,

"Are you kidding me? Can I breathe for a second here?" The funny answer I felt I got back from the Ghost was, "Okay. Well, I'm trying to expand your lungs, and if I'm going to expand your lungs, I need you to not breathe for a little bit," which was really kind.

If you're in maybe a similar spot, he sees you. You've not been abandoned. He's there. In fact, I think you'll find him more sweetly there than you can imagine. Outer ring? The invitation has come in. Inner ring but in a tough spot? Jesus says, "I'm here, and I'm not disappointed that you're afraid. I'm not angry that you're anxious. You haven't betrayed me in your fear. I'm here, and I'm going to get you home."

I don't know where you are today. I don't know how you've come in, but maybe you're on that outer ring. I just want to plead with you that there's more for you than coming to church on the weekend and that Jesus is greater than a golf-like relationship. He sees you, and you've been invited in. You're here this morning so that you might hear this.

If you're a follower of Christ and this is that season, that dark night of the soul, that space that we watch King David walk through quite a bit in his descent, where he says, "How long, O Lord, will you forsake me? Will you forsake me forever?" and David is called a man after God's own heart... If that's your season, then hear the Lord through the text say to you, "I see you. I am here." Let's pray.

Father, you say we have life in the name of Jesus. So we ask for your grace. We ask for the capacity to see this, believe this, embrace this, and know this. Help us. We need you. Do the work of illumination. Give us hearts of belief. For the outer ring, draw us in. For the inner ring, let us remember Jesus. Reintroduce yourself to us this morning, Jesus. We love you. Help us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.