

## A Vision of the King

Trevor Joy – March 24, 2019

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My name is Trevor Joy. I'm one of the pastors and elders here. I'm excited to dive into the text this morning. If you've been with us the past couple of weeks, we've been in John. We started the year in John. That's where we've been, but these past couple of weeks you've noticed, and we've talked about it in here, we're taking a step away from John for the time being. I don't know when we'll go back to it, but we've taken a step away.

What led to that... There were a lot of conversations going on amongst the leaders of the church, and just prayer, angst, and it culminated in a conversation with Matt where he said, "There are a lot of things that are kind of coming out of me that are in my prayer journal that I'm asking the Lord for in the church, just dreams and hopes we have," and he started naming some of them. One of us just looked at him and said, "I feel like you need to preach that," and he said, "Well, I can't. We're in John." We had that moment where we were like, "But we can not be."

For a bunch of control freaks to get to *that* place in the room, that is a movement of the Spirit. So we said, "Okay, let's not. We feel like the Lord is leading us a different way, so let's do that. Let's be faithful to what God is prompting and leading here." So we stepped out of John, and that has meant for the past couple of weeks you've gotten to hear from JT, and then myself today. I'm really excited about the next few weeks, because Matt is going to get an opportunity to share with you guys what the Lord has been pressing on *his* heart. I'm really excited, as a member of this church, to hear that and be a part of that.

But a means for us today... Matt gave me the freedom to come and just share what God is leaning on my heart and pressing on my heart for us this morning. What's awesome about that is I really felt like the Lord had impressed something on my heart for us, as a church, in January for Nations Weekend, and then I got the flu. So I was like, "Okay, Lord. That's what you were doing there," but I really feel like that's what we have for this morning, which is awesome.

The other thing that's interesting about it is this past fall I celebrated 10 years being on staff at the church. It's interesting to be in a reflective season being 10 years in a place. I worked at a church before I came here and at another nonprofit ministry before that and have been party to some really incredible things, but as I've reflected on my past 10 years here (and the church has been going longer than that), there is no other way to describe what God has done in and through this church than just remarkable. It has been remarkable.

If you've been here for any amount of time, then you've seen it. If this is your first time this morning, I would be willing to bet you're probably sensing, "Something is different about this place." And it is, historically, presently, and I'm trusting the Lord in the future tense it is going to continue to be so. It is just remarkable what the Lord has chosen to do in and through this church.

Matt's video is just another evidence of it, of seeing how God is stirring amongst us, as a church, to be a part of a movement of seeing men and women formed as teams and sent to the nations to plant churches in some of the hardest places where Jesus isn't named or known, putting our stake in the ground and saying, "We don't want to *talk* about it; we want to *do* it." It's incredible. Churches and organizations putting walls down and working together and being a part of that movement together is remarkable.

So when he said, "You're free to share what you want to share and go where you want to go..." Where I want to go this morning, in light of all of the remarkable things we've been a part of and have seen God continue to do here, I feel a strong sense and need to press in some areas. I get a lot of confidence in knowing that these are areas our church needs to be pressed in because they're areas that I, personally, need to be pressed in.

So we're going to enter into that space together where I'm preaching a sermon to you that I really need to hear myself. Let me kind of give you guys the foundation of what I've been thinking, what I'm sensing, what I really want to communicate to us this morning and come around in. It's this statement: *we are capable of behaving in radical ways when we have been provoked by something great*. Let me give you a couple of examples of what I mean. The first will be more of a lighthearted example.

A couple of months ago, I was starting to clean out the garage, and over on the side of the garage we have all of these big boxes and Tupperware filled with memorabilia stuff, like letter jacket from high

school, all that kind of stuff, really crucial stuff you have to keep. In there I have a box from college. So I opened that up. I was like, "Oh, what's in there?"

In there was this box of pictures, photographs. Remember those things? We would take a picture with a camera, and it would have this stuff you couldn't let in the light, and then you'd take it to get developed, and then you would put those square photograph things into an envelope, and then you'd go pick it up from Eckerd's, and that sort of thing. Well, that's what happened. We used to take pictures back in college.

There are some people in the room who are like, "What are you talking about?" When you hear what this picture had on it, you're going to realize why I'm grateful there is no digital footprint of this picture. I look in there, and there's a picture of my college roommates and me after a football game. I went to Texas A&M. I wanted to be an Aggie since I was in middle school. I just was there, was sold out for it. Several of my family members went. I was in, wanted to be an Aggie.

I just didn't have a frame of reference for going anywhere else. I applied to one school. Because pre-calculus and I don't jive, and then a couple of other subjects throughout high school and I just didn't jive, I didn't get in. I didn't apply to another school, so there wasn't a plan *B*. It was, "Well, I'm going to go *here*. I didn't get in." Not only didn't get in. Not a waiting list. Just a "No." So it was going to have to be a new body of work they were going to consider in order to think about letting me in.

So I moved down to College Station, just sold out. "This is where I want to go." I got into the junior college there, and then just worked my tail off for a year making the best grades I could. I stopped by the admissions office all the time and begged them to let me in. I finally got in. So my sophomore year, this is me just so ready and excited to be a part of this community, this culture, this thing, what's happening, and my roommates are too. They were all really smart, so they got in their freshman year. I had just been ready.

Football season comes around. If you're an Aggie or familiar with it, you know that's a big deal. So, we are getting ready for football season, and we have our tickets. I have my own ticket now. I'm not borrowing anybody's. We're going to the game. I'm real. I'm a student. I'm a fan. All this is coming together. It's perfect. It's kind of like my own Rudy Ruettiger moment happening, where I'm getting in the stands. I've worked for this. It's happening.

So, I look at this picture, and this picture is us after the game. There are just some things... Like, in the fog of excitement I didn't know this happened, but now, as a more grown adult, a little bit more mature, I look back on this picture and realize what we wore to the game... This was our outfit. My roommates and I (I wasn't the only one) were in overalls, sleeveless shirts, and boots, and that's what we wore to the game.

You kind of say, "Oh, okay. For Texas football, maybe that's pretty standard." It *is*, except we had taken our overalls and decorated the overalls with all kinds of things with puff paint. *Here* to the ankles, every square inch of those overalls was brightly decorated with puff paint...Aggie symbol, "Gig 'em," my class, all those kinds of things. I looked at this picture, and I was like, "Surely I didn't... I really wore that? I wore that in front of tens of thousands of people?"

I wore that in front of girls I had actually intended to ask on a date, and what was broken in their cognitive process that they would have said "Yes" to me after seeing me in these overalls? Then I lifted the box of pictures, and sure enough, there were the overalls folded right underneath it. I was like, "Why did I keep this?" At what point in my life was *this* acceptable? Not only acceptable; it was so celebrated that I wanted to go and flaunt that in front of 80,000 people with every bit of confidence.

I'll tell you what it was. We were so incredibly sold out and bought into and captivated by this fandom that we were willing to be absolute fools for the sake of being a part of it. That's what it was. I am grateful there is no digital footprint or evidence of that, and there may not even be evidence of those overalls or those pictures anymore. If you know my wife or think you're going to be funny and ask for it, give it a shot.

Let me give you a different example. This one is a little bit more sober example. If you've seen *Band of Brothers*, it's one of my favorite shows. It's a 10-part miniseries tracing this platoon in World War II from start to finish, from the beginning of the war to the end of the war. If you know World War II, what was happening in our nation at that time is Pearl Harbor hits. There's a war going on, and that war is distant and far off and pretty severe, but when the attack on Pearl Harbor happened it became very personal for the United States, and that's when we got drawn into the war.

You can imagine. We have been attacked. The first time for us, the United States, to be attacked. So, we were attacked, drawn into it. Men and women are signing up to be a part of this, however it is. You see these men in droves signing up to be a part and go fight in this war, because it's a real battle

of good and evil. In *Band of Brothers*, the way the thing is organized is before and after each episode they have real soldiers from the war, who are being depicted in the actual film, sharing their own stories of this battle or what's happening.

The very first one, when they're all going to boot camp, you get one of these soldiers, and he's talking about... He's from a small town, and he's talking about Pearl Harbor hitting. He says, "There just wasn't another option. We were going to war. We had to be there." He's kind of painting this picture. "It was a battle between good and evil. We had to go." He said, "We were so captivated by it that in a small town..." And apparently this happened more, is what he alluded to, and I've since confirmed.

In a small town, you can imagine all of these men going to sign up to go fight, and they have to go through a physical, a medical clearing to be able to go and fight. He said there was a guy he knew in his small town who was signing up with everybody else to go fight, didn't pass the medical clearing, and went home and killed himself. He couldn't bear the thought of not going and fighting. It was so shameful that he went home and ended his life. That was actually more common, because they were so captivated by this battle that they needed to be a part of. They could not imagine themselves not being a part of it.

There's this statement I'm going to read to us. *We have tremendous capacity to live radically when we have been provoked by something great.* We all want a war to fight or an adventure to join, an epic story to be a part of, and we will give everything when we find it. Sometimes we write our own through sports or work, success. Sometimes we try to join somebody else's epic story through relationships and live vicariously through them. Sometimes we try and live through fictional stories that are marketed to us, like movies and TV shows and popular culture.

All of these are with the promise of satisfying a deep longing inside of each one of us to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. We will go into debt. We'll compromise convictions, buy, sell, kick, scratch, and fight to fill that void of significance in our lives. From the outside looking in, many of us look like we have it all, but unfortunately, somewhere between believing and doing is the person we become in the process.

For many of us, when we look at that space between what we believe and how we actually live our lives, we don't really like what it is we see. Yet for every single one of us, that longing for awe, for wonder, for significance, for greatness is in us, yearning to be satisfied. Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us

what it is. It says that God has placed eternity in our hearts. We have an innate desire for our lives to be pointed toward and spent on something bigger than ourselves, but for some mysterious reason, there can be this giant gap between what we say we believe and how we actually spend our lives, and we just can't figure out how to close that gap.

Thomas Chalmers gives us an answer to that question...*How do we close that gap?* He describes it this way: "Seldom do any of our habits or flaws disappear by a process of extinction through reasoning or by the mere force of mental determination. Reason and willpower are not enough. But what cannot be destroyed may be dispossessed. [...] The only way to dispossess [the heart] of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one. [...]"

[The heart's] desire for one particular object may be conquered, but...its desire for having some one object of absolute love is unconquerable. It is only when admitted into the number of God's children through the faith that is in Jesus Christ [that] the spirit of adoption is poured out upon us. It is then that the heart, brought under the mastery of one great and predominate affection, is delivered from the tyranny of its former desires, in the only way that deliverance is possible."

Did you catch that? The heart's desire for one particular object may be conquered, but its desire for having some one object of absolute love is unconquerable. The only way to replace an affection of our heart is by the power of greater affection. So my goal today is really simple. My aim isn't to convince you that you need to move overseas, though I'd be thrilled if the Lord so moved many of your hearts to go and take the gospel to places where he's neither named or known.

My aim isn't to condemn you with numbers, though I do genuinely want us to tangibly feel the burden of the 400,000 people just in Denton County alone who have rejected Jesus or the 2.6 billion people who live in the world today who have never gotten a chance to hear about him. Those are real things. Both of those should be plenty to provoke us, but my hope here this weekend isn't to convince or condemn you into action.

Instead, I want the best I can, in my limited abilities and our limited time, to help us catch a glimpse of the majesty and beauty of the God of the heavens; that whatever object holds your attention, holds your affection, would be expelled by the greatness and glory of our God and King; that whatever and however you're living your lives today, wherever your actions or your affections lie, would be replaced by a greater affection for the greatness of God and a life lived for the glory of God.

I absolutely believe with all of my heart that this can happen today. That's why I'm excited to dive into Isaiah, chapter 6. What it is for us is a beautiful example of what it means to be captivated by the greatness of God. When I was studying and preparing for this sermon, I was reading a commentary, and we got to the section of verses 1-8, which we'll be in, and in the introductory paragraph the commentator makes this note.

It's really an aside. It's not even a big point, but it struck me in a way that was really profound. Not in a way like, "Oh, I didn't know that," that I never knew that before so it was new truth to me. It was something I'd known, but it hit me in a profound way in that, "Oh man! I needed to hear that." This is what the commentator said. He makes the small point that this incredible scene in chapter 6 we're about to see is not a salvific moment for Isaiah. He was already a prophet being used by God.

So what we're seeing here is not Isaiah encountering the Lord for the first time, but it's a fresh encounter. I needed to hear that, and I needed to hear that because I needed to believe. I need to believe that there are more encounters with the living God to be had, that wherever we find ourselves today, whether we've been walking with Jesus for a long time or you're a brand new Christian, we can have a fresh and awesome encounter with the living God this morning.

Since we're willing to live radically when we have been provoked by something great, I know I don't have to preach cause to you. I don't have to guilt you with numbers and facts. I don't even have to ask you to do anything. I just have to put before you the beauty and the majesty and the splendor and the holiness of God, because everything we want to see happen in the life of our church will only come when our church is provoked by the greatness of God.

In 1907, in Pyongyang, Korea, there was a group of missionaries who were really asking the Lord for the same thing. At this time, Korea was less than 1 percent evangelical, next to no Christians in the country. These missionaries had been there for a number of years working and laboring and trying to advance the gospel there, share Christ, all of that. They were doing the work and felt like they were getting nowhere, seeing very little fruit, very tired, frustrated, and weary.

They were gathering to pray on a night that later would be dubbed the *Korean Pentecost*. One of the missionaries gets up. I don't know how many people were in the crowd, but it was a large group of people. He gets up and starts praying and feels led by the Lord to start confessing sin, confessing

that doubt, that frustration, that fear, that anxiety, all of that, but also begin praying for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a fresh encounter with God.

This is how that same missionary, several years later, describes what happened that night: Just as on the Day of Pentecost, they were all together in one place, in one accord, praying, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. That's how he describes it. Revival broke out in that room, as people were captivated by the greatness and glory of God and began confessing sin, praying, calling out.

This night led to a massive gospel movement in Korea. One year later, there were 50,000 new followers of Christ, and it stemmed out of this movement. A few years later down the road, in 1911, this same missionary remarked that when he came to the country in 1901 it was hard for him to ever find a Christian, and just a few years later from this night he said there were over 250,000 Christians in Korea. Five years. The tide had turned.

Fast-forward to today. In South Korea, the movement of the gospel still is radical. Over 30 percent of that country is professing evangelical Christians. Korea is currently second only to the United States in sending out Christian workers to global mission. They have over 27,000 missionaries on the field today. So why do I share that with you? Because this entire movement that literally changed the trajectory of a nation all started when they experienced a fresh encounter with the living God and were deeply provoked by the glory of God.

What I love is we don't have to go very far. A fresh encounter with the living God is waiting for us by the Spirit's power right here in his Word. So let's do that. Go to Isaiah, chapter 6, with me. Let me kind of give you the backdrop. This whole passage starts with this statement: "**In the year that King Uzziah died...**" King Uzziah was the ruler of the nation. He had come to the throne at age 16, ruled for over half a century, and brought a ton of peace and prosperity to the kingdom.

Great leader. They were thriving. Now he has passed. He has died. Judah is without a king, is leaderless, and is in that space where that great national pride, glory, and thriving were all at risk. So, it's with this backdrop that the prophet Isaiah has a vision and says he saw the Lord. The challenge with that is the Bible says that no man can see God at any one time. John 1:18 says that. No physical eye can see him. At the same time, though, the Bible also says in Matthew 5:8, for example, that men will see him.

One commentator tries to explain it this way. It's a little complicated, but he says, "It is not the essence of God which Isaiah sees, for, inasmuch as God is spiritual and invisible, that essence cannot be seen by the physical eye of the creature." So what is it? "At the same time it was a true seeing; a manifestation of the glory of God in human form, adapted to the capabilities of the finite creature, which the prophet beheld!" Confusing? Okay.

Calvin puts it a little more simply and says God gave Isaiah in this moment, "according to his capacity, [the ability] to perceive the inconceivable majesty of God..." There it is. Isaiah saw the Lord but in a vision, and it captivated him. That's my hope for us today. So let's do this. Start in verse 1. Let's read this together.

**"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew."**

I want to approach this a little bit differently. I want you to do me a favor. As you can, I want you to close your eyes for me. If you have kids with you, that might be dangerous, because you could wake up and they're around somewhere. That's okay. I want you, as best you can, to close your eyes with me, and I want you to take yourself to a place that is familiar to you that's peaceful or beautiful. Maybe it's a place you like to go vacation to. Maybe it's the beach of an ocean, a mountain, maybe it's your front yard. Whatever it is for you, I want you to do that.

As you're there and as you're imagining this, I want you to imagine you look up and see a giant throne. This throne goes up into the clouds. It's bright and beautiful like nothing your eyes have ever observed. You have nothing to compare it to. The legs of the throne stretch as far as you can see, filling every space in front of you. The train of the king's robe fills the entire space so there's no room for anybody to stand near him.

He is so bright when you look at him it's hard to keep your eyes fixed on him, almost like looking into the sun. You have to close your eyes for a minute, and then open them up again, and then close them again. Then you look next to the throne and see these giant creatures. Their name, *seraphim*, means burning one, so you can imagine what they look like. Again, something like what you have no comparison to in earthly terms.

The creature you are looking at has six wings, and you notice some of the wings are hiding their face, almost as if the brightness is too bright for them too. Some are hiding their feet, and the wings that are helping them fly are dozens of stories tall. Are you there? And you notice these seraphim begin to shout to one another. What are they saying? They say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is filled with his glory!"

These creatures are so large, when they sing the entire throne room shakes from the sound of their voices. Because *it's* shaking, you can feel the ground shaking underneath your feet. You can open your eyes. Did you see it? Did you hear it? What were these giant, majestic creatures singing? "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is filled with his glory!" Like Psalm 99:5 says: **"Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!"**

They're singing "Holy" because holiness is the attribute of attributes. In this song of praise, the seraphim declare the distinguishing characteristic of God, and that's his holiness. God's holiness is rooted in his uniqueness, his utter transcendence. He's incomparable. He can't be defined. Set apart, set in a class by himself.

This is how John Piper describes this word: "His holiness is what he is as God, which no one else is or ever will be. Call it his majesty, his divinity, his supreme greatness, his value as the pearl of great price. In the end, language runs out. In the word 'holy' we have sailed to the world's end in the utter silence of reverence and wonder and awe." There may be yet more to know of God, but it will be beyond words.

As the foundations of the throne room are shaking, the seraphim sing, "The whole earth is filled with his glory." If holiness is God's incomparable perfection, his glory is the manifestation of that holiness to the world. In short, when God shows himself to be holy, what we see is glory. And his glory won't just be seen here in our limited space. It won't be seen just in this city, in this country. The entire earth is going to be filled with his glory. Like Habakkuk 2:14 says, "The whole earth will be filled with the glory of God like the waters cover the seas."

Recently, I was in a really difficult and unreached part of Africa where we have some members who have been there working for a long time. We were in the city they live in, about a million people. I was on top of their roof, overlooking the city, and just praying and asking the Lord for a movement there. I just became overwhelmed with the difficulty of the task, to look out over a landscape like

that, where you have over a million people and virtually no Christians, and say, "Lord, would you move here?"

I just became overwhelmed with how difficult, how high that mountain felt. Too difficult of a task, too long of a journey, too hard of a place. That all kept coming to me. At the time, I was studying this passage, Isaiah 6. It was as if the Lord in that moment... I was able to visualize a leg of the throne dropping right down in the middle of that city.

It was as if the Lord was saying in that moment, "I rule and reign here too." In that moment, my view of the greatness of God exploded, because the reality is there is no place in the world, no situation or circumstance in life where our King does not rule and reign. We know that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of the Father.

Isaiah is going to respond to this vision twice in this passage. We're going to see two different responses. The first one is *this*, after he has beheld this vision of God, sitting on a throne, majestic and holy. How does Isaiah respond to this holy vision of God? He says, **"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips..."** "I'm sinful, and so is everybody else." **"...for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"**

Now take it to you personally. Have you ever stood in front of something truly breathtaking, truly awe-inspiring, and the result was an inflation of your own ego? No. Have you ever stood in front of the ocean or the mountains or a breathtaking piece of art and it made you think how awesome you are? No. Right? I totally believe that's possible for somebody to do that, but by and large, the human response to experiencing something truly remarkable is not a realization of our greatness but a realization of our smallness.

Isaiah's response when he takes in this incredible sight is, "I'm done. I am undone. You are the King, and I am not worthy of you." When Isaiah comes in contact with the majesty and holiness of God, it wasn't his greatness that was exposed; it was his unworthiness. In light of God's infinite perfection, Isaiah became overwhelmed by his utter imperfection. It doesn't stop there. Then the scene takes a different turn. Isaiah describes what happens this way:

**"Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.'" This is incredible. The seraphim came**

to Isaiah with a coal and said, "Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is taken away." In an instant, Isaiah goes from never feeling more dirty, guilty, or unworthy to never feeling more loved, forgiven, and secure.

Just as we sang a few moments ago, as God spoke, in one moment, a hundred billion failures disappeared. His holiness is incomparable and his grace is inconceivable. In this moment, Isaiah's shame over his sin was confronted by the powerful grace of God. What was the fruit of Isaiah experiencing both the glory of God and the grace of God? We see that coming next.

**"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'" When Isaiah encounters the glory of God and the grace of God, his response isn't just willingness; it's hunger. He isn't saying, "Hey, if nobody else goes, I'm in. You can count on me. If you need something, I'll be here. I'm willing. Sure. Just tell me what..." No. That's not it. *Willingness* falls short to describe Isaiah's heart-cry response in this moment.**

He's saying, "Wherever you are, God, that's where I want to be. Whatever you're doing, that's what I want to do. Here I am. Send me. Me! I want to be there. I want to be where you are. I want to be doing what you're doing." *Willingness* falls short. It's hunger, and it's hunger for the glory of God. If I have one prayer for our church right now, it's that this glory hunger would permeate our church, because what I know to be true is this statement: *we have a tremendous capacity to live radically when we have been provoked by something great.*

We need a fresh encounter with God, to be provoked by his holiness and have a hunger for his glory, because when we're provoked by the greatness of God it radically changes how we live. The people of God who have been provoked by the glory of God live radically for the things of God. Long before we were known for our doctrine we were known for how we lived. To be a disciple of Jesus means to make disciples of Jesus. This is the flow of our spiritual lives and how it was intended to go.

There is not another framework in the Bible for what it means to be a follower of Christ. There's a quote out of one of the books we read in our Go Groups I wanted to share with you. It says, "When Jesus ascended into heaven, he didn't take his disciples with him; he had something he wanted them to do here first. 'Go and multiply disciples in all nations.' You and I are no different. We were born again to multiply. Our salvation doesn't just deliver us from our sins; it also sets us free from living meaningless lives."

I had a sabbatical at the end of 2018, and one of the things I wanted to do was just step out and grow in some different areas and have something to study. I didn't want to do class because I kind of had my fill of seminary. I just wanted to learn something new and step out and be challenged, so I started trying to learn Arabic. I've visited the Middle East a couple of times, was really fascinated by the language, wanted to do it.

I didn't know where to start, so I got Rosetta Stone. I started working on that. I didn't really get very far. Just to be fair, it's a very difficult language. It's a very, very hard language. We were at a dinner one night, and I shared with somebody... They were like, "What are you doing on sabbatical?" I was like, "One of the things is I'm trying to learn Arabic." They were like, "Really? Say a word for us. Talk to us in Arabic." I was like, "Mchah!" They were like, "What does that mean?" I was like, "I don't know, but I know I pronounced it right, because that little thing makes you say it in the microphone."

I stepped into the space for a little while, but it wasn't long before I got discouraged and put it down. I was like, "There's no way I'm going to learn this. This is not going to happen. Good try, Trevor." Fast-forward to February. I'm with a group. We're taking a group of our Sending Program missionaries into the Middle East who are really praying about going there long term. One of the things we do during one of the days is we go out and do harvesting, which is to go out and share the gospel. We go out in teams and share the gospel.

We went into a more English-speaking part of the city. This is a part of the city where more people speak English, hopefully. So we go, and we break up in teams of three. We have a translator with us, just in case we get into trouble and need somebody to speak Arabic, and then two of us. Well, one of the guys gets locked up with this dude. They're having a great conversation. The translator is helping. The guy speaks English.

I had been striking out all morning. I was going asking... We started every conversation the same way. "Do you speak English?" and they would say "Yes" or "No." I got all "noes." Maybe they did and they just told me "no" because it was a quick way for them to not have to talk to me. I kept getting "noes." Finally, I'm standing there on the sea wall, just looking at the Mediterranean Sea, and going, "Man..." I see this guy fishing. I sat there for like 10 minutes.

Finally, I just prayed and said, "Lord, just give me seven seconds of courage to go and start this conversation with this guy." So he did. I went up and started the conversation. I asked him, "Do you

Speak English?" He said, "Yes, I do." I was like, "Oh, awesome. Got one." So I start in, and it wasn't long before I realized, "This guy is really open." I told him I'm a follower of Isa, and he had heard that before. He said, "Okay." He was a Muslim.

So we start having that conversation, but about two minutes in I realize, "Oh, you don't really speak English. You know some words and you know a couple of sentences." We exhausted his English language really quickly, and we exhausted my Arabic even quicker. What began to happen in my heart in that moment was a deep sense of frustration. This guy right here was so open to having spiritual conversation. In that moment, I literally broke down...

In my mind I'm praying, "Lord, would you do something? Would you let me speak Arabic? Just for 10 minutes. Just give me the language for 10 minutes. I know you can do that. I don't know if that's a thing, but you can do anything, so just do that. Give that to me. Let me speak Arabic to this guy. He's open. He's interested. I want to talk to him." He didn't, and we kind of got to that point where it was a no go. There wasn't even a place that we could go. Our words had run out.

So I looked at him and said, "Hey, can I pray for you?" I tried to hand signal and all that so he'd know what I was talking about. He let me know he wasn't comfortable with that. I said, "Okay. Well, I'm going to commit to praying for you." And I walked away. If learning Arabic was discouraging before, I didn't really have a lot of incentive to do it, you'd better believe, walking away from that conversation I had a fierce hunger to learn Arabic. I wanted to get back to the hotel room, turn it on, and learn some phrases, so I could go back out. I needed it in that moment.

This is the flow of Christian life I'm talking about. To be a disciple of Jesus means we make disciples of Jesus. There's not another framework to live by. I'll explain what I mean. First, sometimes we can get stuck in what I like to call *someday Christianity*, where we study the Bible, come to church, get involved, build up relationships, store up knowledge, all with the hope that someday God might use us, and we miss the fact that a crucial aspect of my being formed as a disciple is being used to make other disciples.

There is another category for waiting until you're ready or you know enough so you can be used by God, but it's on the journey of being used by God that true hunger for your own growth as a disciple really comes. So, a pastoral confession for you. In 2018 I started the year... I'm a goal setter, so I started the year with several goals. One of my personal goals was that I wanted to lead somebody to Christ that didn't have anything to do with my job. Just Trevor the disciple. I just wanted to lead

somebody to saving faith in Jesus in an environment that was completely separate from being a pastor.

Fast-forward to the end of the year. It didn't happen. I didn't get to lead somebody to faith that didn't have anything to do with my job here. But I'll tell you this: sitting here in March 2019 looking back on 2018...2018 was probably the most remarkable year of Christian growth for me. The journey of stepping out, of asking for boldness, sharing my faith, the spaces I entered into as I tried to embody the life of a disciple in my own life...

I look back on 2018, and I don't see a lack of performance; I see all of God's purposes right there. I don't regret any of it. It was absolutely incredible. When we participate and embody the life of a disciple, it's transformational. We can't miss that, church. When we sit in a Bible study or Home Group or even here on Sunday mornings and just store up in case we might need it someday, it's kind of like a Christian version of prepping.

We store up and store up in case there comes a day when it's needed. All of these environments are all needed and necessary. It is needed and necessary for us to be in here, for us to grow in God's Word, for us to grow in community. All that is needed. It may be an earnest desire to grow that drove you to these environments, but if you don't start living that faith out, that desire will soon be replaced by boredom, apathy, or pride.

We were never intended to grow in our knowledge of God's Word for us alone, because the gospel, these treasures we have were never meant to stay with us. If you want to experience real hunger for the Word of God or for the Spirit's power, go pour yourself out and be used by God, and when you get to the end of yourself and the limits of what you know, you'll be driven to the Word for more truth and to your knees for help.

We can't stop at listening or observing; we have to participate in the life of a disciple. It's not risky to listen and watch; it's risky to jump in. It's not risky to see somebody else do it; it's risky for us to step into it. Plus, the promise of the Bible. Jesus says in Matthew 10:39, **"Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."** The promise of the Bible is that real life is found out there, not just sitting in here. We have to go live it out.

The growing conviction I have for our church is that much of how we spend our days falls short of how the Bible talks about the Christian life. We have to participate in the story. We had a group that

went to Berlin not too long ago. One of the guys came back and told a story. He said he was going and sharing the gospel with some Muslims, and he met this guy from Afghanistan. He said, "I'm a follower of Isa," and he goes, "Oh yeah. I know Isa. He visited me in a dream."

He's like, "Oh. What do you mean?" Which, by the way, never happens to me. I'm going to go talk to somebody, and they're going to be so far on the other end of the spectrum and just annoyed with me. This guy gets a guy... The table had already been set. He's like, "Oh yeah. Jesus. Yeah, he approached me in a dream." He's like, "What did Jesus say?" He said, "He said I need to go find somebody to tell me what it means to follow him." It is really common among Muslims for the Lord to visit them in their dreams.

I thought, on one end, how incredible it is that the Lord really visited this guy and prepared this conversation, but then I was also struck by the fact that "Jesus, you were already there. You probably could have just sealed the deal in that moment. You were already there. You communicated with him. He's recognizing this is what this is." He absolutely, within his power, could just go in and save somebody right there, just do it, communicate the truth to them and it would be done.

But that's consistent with the way of Jesus, because what did he tell him? "Go and find one of my followers to tell you how to get there. Go and find somebody who follows me to tell you how to follow me." That's the flow of the Christian life. That's how he knew the dream was true. He's going, "Jesus is acting every bit consistent with the Bible." "Go and find a follower of Jesus. He's going to tell you how to follow me."

Guess what. He's not going to do it unless we're there to answer. Much of our experience of the Christian life has left us frustrated, disappointed, or bored, and why this is so important for us to get is if our hearts are going to be aligned with God's heart, we're not going to just keep sitting here and soaking up, and we're not just going to have this small view of God and his kingdom.

That throne room we've been envisioning in our minds is going to get bigger, and the leg of the throne is not going to... Maybe it started out in this room, but it's not going to stay there. It's not going to just go to Argyle. That leg of the throne is not just going to extend to South Dallas, but that leg of the throne is going to go over the whole of North America. It's going to go to China. It's going to go to Africa. It's going to go to Europe.

Our view of the greatness of God, the throne room of God, would extend to the entire world; that we would be so greatly provoked by the greatness of God that living and loving radically means we are willing to give our whole lives, because this hunger for God's glory will not be satisfied in us until his glory covers the whole earth like the waters cover the seas, until every mouth and every neighborhood and every nation is filled with the praise to our great God and King.

That's what this hunger means, and that's the church I want to be a part of, where we live and love radically from every neighborhood to every nation, because everywhere we go we see that throne and we are reminded he rules and reigns here too. But we won't get there, we won't live like that until we're provoked by something greater. We have a tremendous capacity to live radically when we have been provoked by something great, yet the invitation is there. "Whom shall I send? Who will go?" The answer of a hungry soul is "Here I am; send me."

We're going to do something a little bit differently. Usually we do Communion at the very end. I wanted to do Communion earlier. I'll explain why I wanted to do that in a moment. As they're getting ready, I want to share with you another pastoral confession. If you take away anything this morning, you can just go, "Well, pastors fail too."

Part of 2018 of really trying to embody this life of a disciple was asking the Lord to give me a greater heart for my neighbors and my neighborhood to come to faith. There are two other church members who lead Home Groups in my neighborhood, so I texted them and said, "Hey, I'm not okay with the fact that there are people in our neighborhood who don't know Jesus. We live here. Those two things shouldn't coexist. What do we do about it?"

They said, "I don't know. What do you want to do?" I said, "Man, let's just start praying." So we're praying Sunday nights. We've been doing it for about a year. Sunday nights we meet up, and we just, really simply, started walking our neighborhood and praying and just asking the Lord. It's at night after the kids go down, and we're just asking the Lord, "Lord, would you give us opportunities here? Would you give us opportunities to share the gospel? Would you create a movement here?" We just wanted to bathe our neighborhood in prayer.

Then one time, about December of last year, we were praying, and I felt really led by the Lord to pray over this one particular house of a neighbor I know. So we're standing there and I'm praying, and I'm literally asking, "Lord, would you give me an opportunity to share the gospel with this

neighbor? Would you provide that? I don't know how it can happen...through our kids playing or whatever it is. Would you give me an opportunity to share the gospel with my neighbor?"

We finished praying, and we're just standing there talking, about to all walk back to our houses. No lie to you. We're standing there, and we're right by that house. That neighbor's garage door opens up, and he walks out. He's taking trash out to his trash can. He looks at us, because we're just three grown men standing out in the middle of the street at night. He probably thought something was wrong.

He said, "Hey, what's going on, guys?" The two guys look at me, and I look at him, and my response was, "Nothing, man. We're just talking." He said, "Okay. Y'all have a good night," and I said, "Hey, have a good night." I told the guys, "Hey, good night, guys," and I started walking to my house. You'd better believe, those hundred yards from where we were standing to my mailbox was one of the longest walks of my life.

I had asked the Lord, "Would you give me an opportunity to do this? I really want to be faithful in this. I want to not just talk about this; I want to do this." It's almost like the Lord goes, "Yeah, here. Sure. Go." And I completely blew it. Just blew it, just missed it. I didn't have the courage, when he not only came out but just put it on a tee. "What are you guys doing?" "Hey, let me tell you what we're doing." I knew all of the things to say but in that moment just utterly blew it.

As I'm walking home to my mailbox up the street at night, I could hear the voice of the Accuser behind me saying, "You're doctor of what, pastor of what? Of failure. *That's* what. You don't really believe this. If you believed it, you would do it. Why are you even telling them? You're not living it." All of those voices just going, going. So I stopped at my mailbox, and I was like, "I can't go inside like this." I had my head hunkered down. I was standing there by my mailbox, and it felt like the Accuser had moved right in front of me and was just telling me, just all this is true about me.

In that moment, it was like that leg of the throne dropped down right between us. God spoke to me in that moment and said, "You're mine. I rule and reign over you too." Just like that moment with Isaiah, when he sees the greatness and glory of God and experiences the grace of God, God said, "I rule and reign over you too." What's beautiful about that moment is I got to experience the grace of God in a really incredible way.

What happened was that hunger the next day... Do you know what happened to that hunger? It grew. Not shame. Hunger grew. Do you know what's interesting about that encounter? It's embarrassing for a pastor to share that story, but why I'm grateful for it is that would have never happened if I had just sat aside and watched. That kind of encounter doesn't happen when you're watching other people do it.

There is a power when our participation and God's purposes meet. When we embody the life of a disciple, begin participating in God's story, step out being used by God, it's transformational. That's what this is inviting us into, that we would be so provoked by the greatness of God we'd say, "Here we are. Let's go. I want to be a part of this. God, wherever you are, that's where I want to be. Whatever you're doing, that's what I want to do. Here I am. Send me."

There's no some future version of yourself you're waiting for that's ready to do that. It's here, right now. Child of God, he has created you, gifted you, purposed you to use you. There are aspects about who God is, who you are, and what it means to be a follower of Christ that you will not know until you step out of those stands and step onto the field.

I love that Jesus gave us Communion. On the night before he goes to the cross, he gives us a physical representation of the most important day in human history. He says, "I want you to do this. What I'm about to show you..." What we're about to take... These elements represent something. They don't hold power in themselves. They represent something that's really powerful. When we do this, we're embodying remembrance in a different way. We're participating in a way where it's not like, "Hey, I know this happened." It's I am physically participating and embodying the power of the cross and the resurrection right here in this moment as I take these elements.

It's almost like he's doing that, saying, "You're going to need to remember that this isn't just about cognitively understanding something, recognizing this happened. You are going to need to be a part of this." When you do that, you can look around and go, "Man, I'm not the only one who's a part of it. God is doing something. He's doing something bigger than me." So let's do that together as we can. Why don't you all stand, and let's take the elements together.

So, he passed around the bread when he was with his disciples and said, "This bread symbolizes my body that is to be broken for you. Take this in remembrance of me." Then he passes the juice around and says, "This is the blood of the new covenant. Next time we take this again we'll be together in heaven. Do this in remembrance of me." Let me pray for us.

Father in heaven, I'm grateful that you have not just called us out of death and darkness but into light and life. So many of us have settled for such a short, small, insignificant version of what life is, and what's waiting for us is meaning, purpose, and power. God, we want to experience that, we want to step into that, we want to be faithful.

So, God, wherever we are, whatever is holding us back, whether it be circumstances, belief, frustrations, fear, anxiety...whatever it is, God, provoke our hearts this morning to such a degree that we are so captivated by the greatness of who you are that the only response of our hearts and our lives is "Wherever you are we want to be. Whatever you're doing we want to do. Here we are. Send us." You can do that. We ask that you would. In Christ's name, amen.

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