

April 17, 2016

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Date: 17 April 2016

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

- [0 : 0 0] This is the day That the Lord has made Let us rejoice And be glad in Him This is the day
That the Lord has made Let us rejoice And be glad in Him This is the day This is the day
That the Lord has made We are glad to have you here this morning. The two ministry
opportunities on our clipboard are to help with our Seneca Street dinners that we do down
in Buffalo to help the people of that community and our prayer vigil, which we do a 24-hour
prayer vigil here.
It's an amazing, wonderful experience with God and we do recommend it to you. I also
wanted to mention that we are having a meeting after the late service, 1 o'clock in the
afternoon. I know it's a gorgeous day.
I promise we'll keep it short. But this is for those people who are interested in trying to
figure out how to take what we do out there. Bible studies, new church starts, whatever it
might be.
People will feel a calling from God to go share the Word of God in a special way out in our
community. So that's going to be at 1 o'clock and we do invite you all to that if you're
interested in coming. Starting tomorrow, you can bring your junk, I mean your treasures,
and stuff for the rummage sale.
- [1 : 5 7] You can bring them here and put them in the back of the sanctuary. The ladies appreciate
that. They sell those things and they give the proceeds to help people in ministry around
the world, around our community.
They give it all away. So keep that in mind. And I did want to mention about the net out
there because some people have asked me, what's that about? The United Methodist
Church has decided to wipe out malaria in the world. We've decided that's something we
can do.
And you might wonder, how can we do that? There's 12 million of us. If everybody does a
little part, we believe not only that we can do it, but we're already doing it. We've reduced
the amount of malaria in the world and our goal is in the next three or four years to wipe it
off the face of the earth.
That's a mission of our church. I think it's a good one and our kids think so too. So they're
going to be bringing mosquitoes to you somehow. I don't know how that works, but they're
coming. But they won't fight. I promise they won't fight. Let's pray, shall we?
Dear God in heaven, pour out your Holy Spirit into this gathering. Help us to experience
the wonder of God, to touch the hem of your garment and experience your power in our
worship and in our lives.
- [2 : 5 8] Focus us on you and bless us this morning. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen. You're
invited if you're able to stand as we're going to sing together, Lift High the Cross.
Lift High the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim, Till all the world adore His sacred name.
Come, Christians, my Lord, lift triumph inside. Love, host, love, God, in unity combined.
Lift High the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim, Till all the world adores His sacred name.

Each new servant of the crucified. Each new for servant of the crucified, each new for servant of the crucified. There's found the proud, the sins of Him who died.

[4 : 33] Lift High the Cross, The love of Christ proclaim Till all the world adore his sacred name O Lord, what's lifted on the glorious tree As thou hast promised, brought the world to thee Lifted high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim Till all the world adore his sacred name So shall our song know triumph at the day

Praise to the cross, the pride for victory If I would trust the love of Christ proclaim Till all the world adore his sacred name The Lord be with you. Take a moment if you will and greet your neighbor with the peace of the Spirit. We're going to invite the kids to come up and join us Frogs come on right up here Frogs come on right up here Any of the kids want to come up and join us?

Just catch them right here We're going to catch you guys right here Okay? All the kids come on up and join us right here if you want to come on up Come on down Come on over here guys Okay, frogs are going to sing for us So the rest of the kids are going to be right down here for a minute, okay?

Okay? There we go Oh, okay, so we're standing up Right over here Herding sheep Back Back I just want to be the sheep Ba, ba, ba, ba I just want to be the sheep Ba, ba, ba, ba I pray the Lord my soul to keep I just want to be the sheep Ba, ba, ba, ba I want to be a mercy And I want to be a mercy Because they're not mercy I don't want to be clarity I just want to be the sheep Where are the sheep Ba, ba, ba I just want to be the sheep

Ba, ba, ba, ba I don't want to be the sheep Ba, ba, ba, ba I pray the Lord my soul to keep I just want to be the sheep Ba, ba, ba, ba I don't want to be an immigrant I don't want to be an immigrant I don't want to be an immigrant Cause they're not hip with death, I don't wanna be an immigrant.

[8 : 13] I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I pray the Lord my soul is sweet. I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba.

I don't wanna be sad as me. I don't wanna be sad as me. Cause there's no fair to me. I don't wanna be sad as me.

I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I pray the Lord my soul is sweet. I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba.

I don't wanna be a ghost, no. I don't wanna be a ghost, no. Cause there's no hope, no. I don't wanna be a ghost, no.

I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba. I pray the Lord my soul is sweet.

[9 : 17] I just wanna be sheep, ba-ba-ba-ba-ba. I can't stop. I got a chicken in here.

I got a pig in here. And I got a cow in here. How many of you believe I've got a chicken, a cow, and a pig in here?

And how many of you think that that's just crazy? Oh, it's not a chicken, it's a duck. And a pig.

And a cow. Duck looks like a duck. It's not a duck. It's not a duck. It's a duck. It's a duck. Duck looks like a duck.

It's not a duck. It's not a duck? It's a duck. Wow, you guys are more up on your ducks than I am.

[10 : 33] I can't even get my ducks in a row. Anyways. You know, I said that those animals were in there. I was wrong about the chicken, by the way. I meant a duck. But you know, it seemed impossible, didn't it?

Yeah, but I wouldn't tell you there's something in a box that's really not in there. You know, because that would mean me a liar, wouldn't it? Yeah. Sometimes we don't understand things, but that doesn't mean they're not true.

And God wants it. I didn't lie. I just messed up about the chicken. You're right, though. I did. It was a duck, wasn't it? Yeah, sometimes I mess up. Okay? Now, you know who never messes up? God.

And if he says something's true, even if it's hard to understand, it's true. Okay? What do you guys thankful for? You want to share something? Raise your hand, and you can go ahead and share it. My friends and family.

My mom and dad. My adorable baby ducks and chickens. My family. My mom and my dad. This church.

[11 : 34] Friends. Friends and family. My family. My brother. My cousin.

All right. Everybody. Lord, we thank you for all the blessings in our lives. The animals, the people, the good things. God, this church. Bless us always, Lord.

And help us to trust you in all that you say. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You guys go out to church school if you'd like to. All the kids are welcome to go out to church school now. Good morning.

Good morning. Have you been blessed yet? It has been, you know, just where we're what? Twelve minutes into the worship, and I have already just had my socks blessed off. The kids are just wonderful.

What a blessing to be able to be here on this glorious day. What a blessing to gather together and worship in God's presence. Let's continue being blessed and being a blessing as we bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings before the Lord.

[12 : 51] Amen. When I am down and, oh, my soul so weary.

When troubles come and my heart burden me. Then I am still and wait here in the silence Until you come and sit a while with me.

You raise me up so I can stand on mountains You raise me up to walk on stormy seas I am strong when I am on your shoulders You raise me up to more than I can be There is no life, no life without its hunger Each restless heart beats so imperfectly But when you come and I am filled with wonder Sometimes I think I glistening eternity

You raise me up to walk on your shoulders You raise me up to more than I can stand on mountains You raise me up to walk on stormy seas I am strong when I am on your shoulders You raise me up to walk on your shoulders You raise me up to walk on your shoulders You raise me up to walk on your shoulders You raise me up to break on your shoulders You raise me up to more than I can be You raise me up so I can stand on mountains You raise me up to walk on stormy seas I am strong when I am on your shoulders You raise me up to more than I can be

You raise me up to more than I can be You raise me up I am strong when I am on my shoulders I am strong when I am on my shoulders Praise God from me all the same star Praise to you all the dear below you Praise to you all the heavenly ones Praise to you all the heavenly ones

[17 : 24] Amen Dear Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks and praise for this day And for the opportunity to gather together and worship you To lift up our gifts before you You are the one who bestowed them on us You are the one who blesses us Pouring out into our lives And Lord, we return these gifts to you We offer them up to you Along with all of the gifts you've given us For ministry and for service in this world We ask that you would bless them Each and every one And give us wisdom to know how to best use them For the furtherance of your kingdom We do desire that many come to salvation in Jesus Christ And that your wonders be done In this church and throughout all the world Be with us and bless us It is in Jesus' name we pray Amen

Please be seated Amen So many blessings we have from the Lord Amen God just keeps pouring it out And we're supposed to keep on sending it forth Right?

We keep all of our folks in our congregation In our prayers, of course Because we want to be ready to do all those things God calls us to do And we have some folks that we have some rejoicing over Because they're healing and they're progressing But we want to keep on continuing to pray for them Lorraine Earl is home from the hospital As is Jan Gertz Who is recovering from back surgery She's home Tommy Ryman Little tiny Little teeny Tommy Ryman Angela and Ian's new baby And this is Naomi Lasky's great grandbaby Was in the hospital earlier this week I went up to see him And he's a tiny little thing They weren't sure what was going on But he's home now And everything is doing much better So praise God for that And let's keep that family in our prayers And Ron Elman Who usually attends our 815 worship service Got a call earlier this week And had to travel to Wisconsin To be with family His 28 year old niece, Christy

Died suddenly in her apartment in California And so we need to keep that family in our prayers as well Just a sudden and tragic loss All have needs in our hearts And those people in our lives that we care for Those situations in the world that give us concern Having those concerns is what calls us to prayer That's God, the Holy Spirit, prompting us to pray And so now we go before the Lord in prayer Lord, we thank you for the opportunity And the call on our lives to pray To pray for those people That we know of in our lives And people in the wider world Who are in need Lord God, we lift up those folks

Who are sick and infirm Who are recovering from surgeries Who are recovering from illnesses We pray for those who have ongoing health issues Lord We ask in all of these cases That you touch them Bring your healing power into their lives That they would be whole in you From the tops of their heads To their soles of their feet Lord And their spirits Their souls and their bodies Bring healing Give comfort To each and every one Lord God, we lift up those Who are taking care of these folks Those medical professionals And family members And friends And hospice workers And aides And home care workers All those folks Lord God We pray that you give them Compassionate hearts Hearts of love And the patience To care for these people

[21 : 49] We pray in Jesus' name That you are present And God That they would know That you're there Lord God We pray for those Who are grieving losses now We just ask in Jesus' name That you would touch their hearts And bring peace and comfort That you would help them To come to terms with What they don't understand There are so many things In this life, Lord That we don't understand Help us to trust you That you walk with us Through each and everything That it's hard To rejoice with us When we rejoice And you cry with us When you cry Lord God

I pray now In Jesus' name For all of those people Who are affected by All kinds of things Earthquakes And disasters Of all kinds We just pray In Jesus' name Lord God That you be with them there That you send Good people To help them That your presence Be evident And that people Are drawn to you And turned to you We pray For those who Don't know you Lord And for those Who deliver the message Of your salvation Of your mercy Of your grace Lord we pray That like those people All over the world Bringing the message Of salvation To people who have Never heard We ask that you Would touch us too Inspire us Give us words Let our stories Of your great love In our lives Be something

We can share Freely and easily So that others Will know you too Help us Lord Wash over us As we hear Your word today Let it transform us Let it strengthen us Let it give us Boldness To speak your word Lord God We pray in Jesus' name For Pastor Thomas He delivers the message You have given him Let it be a blessing To him and to us Lord God We just pray That all of our worship This morning Is pleasing in your sight Because we have come To worship And glorify you It is in Jesus' name We pray Amen Shall we hear from the word Good morning

Good morning This morning's scripture is taken from the book of Acts, chapter 4, verses 5 through 20.

The next day the rulers, the elders, and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Anas, the high priest, was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and others of the high priest family.

[25 : 45] They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them. By what power or what name do you do this?

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers and elders of all the people, if we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this.

You and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead.

That this man stands before you healed. Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind, by which we must be saved.

[26 : 53] Indeed. When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus.

But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

What are we going to do with these men, they asked. Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign. And we cannot deny it.

But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name. Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John replied, which is right in God's eyes? To listen to you or to him?

[28 : 09] You be the judges. As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. And this is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Thank you, Chet. Thank you. Sermon series that we're in the midst of is talking about how can we bring the kingdom of heaven to earth.

As we say in the prayer, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It's from the book of Acts, the beginning part of the church. As we're looking at how can we restore the church of God to what it was meant to be.

They called them before the ruling Sanhedrin, the committee that runs the nation. And they said, by what power or what name did you do this? By what power?

By what name? What is the authority on which you base your decisions, your life? What guides your life? What is the rock on which you decide things?

[29 : 16] We grew up, many of us, in what would be called the modern age. When I went to seminary, I had a professor who said to me, everyone knows that to be a modern person, you must understand that logic and reason are the prime reference.

Now what that means is that everything must be logical and everything must be reasonable. That's the starting point of the argument of a modern person. And I raised my hand in this theology class and said, Professor, I thought God was a prime reference, and if he wanted to be unreasonable or illogical, then he can because he's God.

And he said, you're a Neanderthal man, Kraft. I kind of was proud of that. You see, because in many ways, a lot of the way I look at life is pre-modern, although we live in a culture that's now post-modern, that's actually found that some things that seem to be logical and reasonable aren't.

And so we've got quantum physics and we have things that are hard to explain that work, but we don't know exactly how, and we can't figure it quite out. So we're in a different culture than what we grew up in.

The world that I come up in, a lot of people have thought that science and mathematics and logic are in some kind of war with religion.

[30 : 40] But they're not. The purpose and the goal of science and mathematics and things of that study is to find the truth. The purpose of religion is to find the truth.

We're seeking the same thing. We might argue about things along the way, just like you and I might have a disagreement about how we're going to come to a decision. But once we find out what the truth is, we agree.

The difference is the starting point. What is the thing that is most important? Science, logic, reason, mathematics, philosophy, they're all good.

They're all good. But the starting point for a Christian is not logic or reason or science or math or whatever we can figure out in our mind.

The starting point is God. And so sometimes it looks like we're in an argument. This is a movie that came out a few years ago. A 12-year-old watches his mother dying of cancer.

[31 : 46] A God who would allow that is not worth believing in. Life is really a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury and signifying nothing. Name?

Wheaton. Josh Wheaton. Philosophy 150. You might want to think about a different instructor. Come on, Mary, you can't be that bad. Think Roman Colosseum. People cheering for your dad. I'm Professor Radisson.

This is Philosophy 150. I would like to bypass senseless debate altogether and jump to the conclusion which every sophomore is already aware of. There is no God. All that I require from each of you is that you fill in the papers I've just given you with three little words.

God is dead. It's a weakness. Something wrong. I can't do what you want. I'm a Christian. If you cannot bring yourself to admit that God is dead, then you will need to defend the antithesis.

Think of Jesus as my friend. You think Jesus is caught. I don't want to disappoint him. So your acceptance of this challenge may be the only meaningful exposure to God and Jesus to ever have. To me, he's not dead.

[32 : 55] I don't want anyone to get talked out of believing in him just because the professor thinks they should. Mr. Wheaton, are you ready? We're going to put God on trial.

Do you think you're smarter than me? Do not try to humiliate me in front of my students. In that classroom, there is a God. I'm him. In that classroom, there is a God, and it is me. If you've ever gone to college or school, you know that the teacher is always...

Well, they think they are. See, the difficulty is that we are buying into the concept that if somehow, in some way, someone can prove to a philosophy professor that God doesn't exist, God stops existing.

Actually, that doesn't even make the philosophy professor God. It makes you God. We have this idea that if somehow we've decided God doesn't exist, God stops existing.

Do you remember years ago, there was a movie. It was a Peter Pan movie, I think, and poor Tinkerbell was fading out of existence, and they looked out at the screen, and they said, all you children out there have to believe in fairies, or Tinkerbell will go away.

[34 : 01] Oh, I do believe in fairies. I do, I do. I believe in fairies. Listen, Tinkerbell came back to life. Do you really think that if you believe in God, God will exist, and if you don't, God will stop existing?

The Bible actually says, only a fool says in their heart, there is no God. Do we want to be in discussions and arguments with fools? That just makes us foolish. God doesn't exist, or stop existing, or be who he is, or who he isn't, based on what we think.

In fact, God finds this whole argument kind of a joke, kind of a silly thing, kind of foolishness. This is what he says in 1 Corinthians. He says, God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

He chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world, and the despised things, and the things that are not, and dullify the things that are, so that no one might boast before him.

He said, we'd all know that he's God. What do we make the starting point of our lives, of our beliefs, of what we do, of what we're going to live towards?

[35 : 04] What voice do we listen to? These were important leaders. They were standing before people who had crucified Jesus just a few weeks earlier. These men held their lives in their hands.

They acknowledged them and showed proper respect, which the Bible says we should respect leaders. But they reminded them that the scripture said that the very stone that the builders rejected had become the capstone.

Or in other words, what they said is sometimes leaders are wrong. That's kind of frustrating, isn't it? I'm going to tell you something that some of you will find affirming, and some of you will find very troubling.

If you come to this church long enough, I can promise you, maybe even today, I will be wrong. It will happen. I misquoted a song in the last sermon, and I was pointed out that I was wrong.

I was wrong. I make mistakes. Sometimes I don't get things the right way. How many of you have ever made a mistake? So we're all in the same club, right?

[36 : 10] Okay? Even leaders make mistakes. I don't try to. It's not my goal, and I'm not apologizing in advance for something I've done wrong or something. I'm simply saying it happens. And it's the beginning of wisdom to understand humility that, you know, we don't have it all together.

What impresses you? Who impresses you? Who do you listen to? Do we listen to any other voice than God? What impresses us about people?

They looked at these guys, these guys are uneducated fishermen. What do we be listening to them for? They don't know anything. Every once in a while, I remember who I am when I'm up here preaching.

I'm a kid from Cheek to Waga. All right? Before I was a pastor, I was a truck driver. I don't know how many of you know that. I grew up in a household where my father was a Buffalo firefighter. He was the first one to graduate high school in his generation.

We were the first ones to go to college. Sometimes I remember where I came from and who I am. Now, I have other pedigrees. We could talk about that another day. But that's not the point.

[37 : 13] The point is, what makes us who we are? Why do we listen to people? Why are people important? I could while away the hours consulting with the flowers, conferring with the rain.

Right? I went to the Wizard of Oz the other day. Do you know what the Wizard had a problem with? I mean, not the Wizard, the Scarecrow?

You know what his problem was? If I only had a brain. Yeah, the Scarecrow didn't have a brain. Or at least he didn't think he did. So you know what the Wizard did? He said, there's many people in the world that think that they're smart.

And they're no smarter than you, Scarecrow. But they think they're smart because they have a diploma. And so he gave the Scarecrow a diploma and all of a sudden, the Scarecrow was brilliant. I have diplomas.

I've got degrees. I've been to school. I even have a Masters of Divinity degree. If you can imagine, anybody would have the audacity to claim that they're a Master of Divinity. Not me.

[38 : 16] All right? But I have that degree. Right? Which simply means I studied some stuff. But do I really know more than somebody who's inspired by the wisdom and power and revelation of God?

We have to be very careful who we think is important. They came before this group of people because they had done a healing. There was a fellow who was a beggar and he was sitting by the side of the road and he was lame.

And he looked at Peter and John for a handout and Peter looked at him and said, I don't have any silver and gold. But I can say to you, take up your mat and walk. And the man got up and walked.

And so these people were in an uproar. I mean, the whole city was turned upside down. I mean, it was bad enough they had Jesus going around and doing miracles. But when regular fishermen type people start doing miracles, we got a problem.

When just regular folks think that they have the power of God to change things and do miraculous things, we got to put a stop to that. That's what these people are saying. You follow?

[39 : 21] What do we listen to? There's rules. There's religion. There's the Bible. There's our government. There's the Constitution.

Those are all good things. They help guide us. But they're not God. They're not God. They're not God. Even this book is not God.

The Constitution is a piece of paper. I wonder how many people would listen to the Constitution compared to the Bible. And how many times we might find ourselves doing that. You know the Constitution was written by some people a couple hundred years ago that are not as smart as any of you?

Really? They didn't have Google. They didn't have the internet. They didn't have near as much opportunity for wisdom and knowledge as you have. You've read more in your lifetime than they could ever have dreamed of reading.

You have more wisdom and knowledge and experience than they ever possibly could have had. And yet we're letting people from 200 years ago tell us what to do today. Think about it. All right? And I'm not saying they were bad people.

[40 : 26] And I'm not saying what they said wasn't wise. I'm saying the difficulty is sometimes sometimes we don't understand that ultimately we serve a living God.

In the book of Timothy it says all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness which is true. The Scripture is breathed by the power of God.

The Holy Spirit was in the people that wrote this book. But it's understood differently by different people.

Do you really believe that if you live right now in Nigeria and you just saw your children and your family brutalized and killed by people because of their faith in God that you would look at the judgment day of God the same as you do living in our world and our comfortable life?

When we go through tragedies we see our faith differently than when we don't. Our experiences of our lives from different cultures and different attitudes and different histories help us to see and understand this book more clearly.

[41 : 35] The Bible is an anthology not a textbook. An anthology is a book of stories. This is a book about the people's relationship with God and their attempt to understand God through the power of the Holy Spirit as they recorded for us so that we could see how people over thousands of years try to figure out their faith in God.

It's not a textbook. And if it were we'd probably think it's worth more. How many of you bought a textbook in your life? Holy cats. \$400 by some rag that the professor wrote and made you buy.

Really? Seriously? But we think it's worth a fortune because it's a textbook that tells us what's true until the next edition comes out which corrects all the problems in the first one, right?

And so on and so forth. The Bible's not a textbook. It's not meant to be used that way. In fact, if we live to the rules of the people who make textbooks we've already lost the battle.

Our problem is too often we're living to the rules of the wrong game. How many of you have ever played a game and as you're playing the game and you start to win and somebody tells you that there's a rule you didn't know.

[42 : 52] Have you ever had that happen? Don't you hate that when that happens? Right? Or could you imagine that you start playing Monopoly and you're going through Monopoly and all of a sudden somebody starts using rules that are from a different game?

You know? Like Scrabble. So now you've got to use Scrabble rules to work with Monopoly and you're going this doesn't work. It doesn't fit together. That's what we try to do as Christians.

We try to live into rules and a game that's a whole different game and if we live to the wrong rules we've lost already. We need to play to the game that God has designed.

Not the game that the world and our culture around us designs. God first. Everything else comes beneath it. That's so hard for us to understand because we can't get our human minds around it.

We don't believe God can do it but the truth is God is greater than your mind. I know that's a blow to your ego but it's true. And just because we don't understand it doesn't mean it can be true.

[43 : 56] These religious leaders think about it. they are defending the faith of God against the Holy Spirit of God. They are defending the faith the religion of God against the Holy Spirit of God.

Do you know that the rules change? I know that's troubling but the rules change. They do because our culture changes and the reason for the rules change.

We have a rule in our church that says you can't gamble in our church and you can't drink alcoholic beverages in our church. We live by it. We abide by it. It was made a hundred years ago. A hundred years ago when our culture had a real problem with alcoholic drinking and gambling that was destroying the people's lives and their families and everything else.

So we made a rule for it because we're trying to help our culture and our society. Now it's a goofy rule because I know all of you think nothing about going out and gambling or drinking as soon as you get out the doors of the church but we don't do it here.

It's a rule. Why? It's what we call an anachronism. It's out of history. It's out of time. Things happen like that. Things change. That same seminary professor said something very profound to me once.

[45 : 13] He said, some things change, some things remain the same. Which are which and why is the whole point of what we do when we look at our faith. Things change.

And the difficulty is that if we don't change even the good things will become bad things. I preached a sermon once called Staying One Step Ahead of the Devil. If you look at life what you'll find out is the good things if we leave them alone will become corrupt.

We can make a beautiful home and trim it out all perfectly in every way and if we don't do anything to it it'll rot it'll destroy it'll be decayed. We have to keep at it. We make a rule for one age that doesn't make sense in another age.

We take the cars off of Main Street and Buffalo in one decade and a couple decades later we spend millions of dollars putting them back on the streets, right? Am I right? And the answers and solutions to the problems of 30 years ago create problems today.

That doesn't mean those people were bad then. it means that the stuff from years ago doesn't necessarily apply to today. You know we've got this idea that people should retire when they're 65.

[46 : 29] Do you know where that age came from? Anybody know? A man named Bismarck. Bismarck lived over a hundred years ago. Over a hundred years ago. And what he said is if you reach 65 the government should take care of you.

You should get pensions. You should not have to work anymore. Do you know what? The normal lifespan of a person was in Bismarck's time? 50 years of age.

So what they were saying is that if you live 15 years past the normal lifespan you should get taken care of by the government which means you shouldn't get a check until you're 95. Think about it. Life's changed.

Right? So the rules we apply in this world in this culture in this situation may not fit this situation and if we try to hold on to them if we try to defend them if we try to make them into something that is actually supposedly representing God when it's just something for us in that culture we might find ourselves arguing against God himself like these people were doing.

We've had changes in the Bible. In the Bible God said be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. That made a lot of sense and people should have a lot of babies when there's a couple million humans on the earth.

[47 : 43] We've got 8 billion. I think we got enough. Don't you? Really? I'm not saying you shouldn't have a baby but I mean really we don't need to fill it up with 15 billion.

It's changed. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth made a lot of sense in a group that were wandering around in the desert without jails and prisons. They had to protect the people from bullies.

So you hurt somebody will hurt you. But that doesn't make sense when you can lock people up and keep them safe or you can make other rules and Jesus said do unto others instead as I have done as you would have others do unto you.

And I told you the platinum rule last week do unto others as you would have God do unto you. Which takes it to another level. Life changes.

We couldn't eat pork in the early days of the Bible. Do you know why? They didn't have it in refrigerators. They didn't know how to process it. They didn't know what to do with it. And it was a dangerous food to eat so God says don't touch that stuff. Later on in the Bible God says it's okay.

[48 : 47] You can have it. Go ahead. Have a bacon sandwich. It's alright. Okay? See that being that like therefore there's no real rules. Nothing. Of course some things stay the same.

Adultery still destroys families and marriages and rips them apart. Coveting is still the basis of some of our problems as a culture and a society that we want and want and want more than what we need.

It still isn't helpful when we lie or we steal and certainly it's still true that we shouldn't have any other gods before us. Some things stay the same.

The key is to be connected to God. In the book of Matthew in chapter 20 it says the kingdom of God is like a vineyard. That's why we have vines on the gates today. And there will be vines in heaven according to what it says in the Bible but the point of the vines is more for us right now.

The kingdom of God is like a vine. This is the way John put it. Jesus said I am the true vine my father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of me that bears no fruit.

[49 : 54] While every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so there will be even more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me as I also remain in you.

If we stay connected to God we stay connected to the source of all wisdom the source of all power and the source of salvation. In verse 12 of this passage it says salvation is found in no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. We are only saved by our belief in God. Nothing else can save us.

We try to come up with things to save us. Science can make your life live longer by the way. It has added 30 years to our life but it does not keep us here forever. None of us live forever.

The only way we gain eternal life is through God. And you know what happens the longer we live we find new diseases don't we to get sick and die from. Now we might say God is cruel in that.

[50 : 57] You know God doesn't want you to stay here. You know that? God thinks it would be cruel to leave you in this reality forever with all our suffering our sorrows our pains our struggles our difficulties.

He wants to eliminate that and create for us a better world for eternity. Living here forever would be torture. Really? God intends something better and all the knowledge we can come up with will only prolong our life but doesn't give us eternal life.

The name of Jesus they said is the power from which this comes from remaining in God. That passage in chapter 15 continues about the vine it says this no branch can bear fruit by itself it must remain in the vine neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me I am the vine you are the branches.

if you remain in me and I in you you will bear much fruit apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me you're like a branch that is thrown away and withered such branches are picked up thrown into the fire and burned and people will say to me well Pastor Tom people have done some amazing things who don't believe in God nothing that matters to God all the accomplishments that we accomplish are nothing compared to a God that can hang the stars in the universe we give authority to the wrong people to the wrong things and we lose before we begin because we're playing the wrong game we're playing to the wrong rules we listen to the law our leaders our bosses first or God first it's not wrong these aren't bad things but the first thing has to be

God before anything else in verse 19 they're standing before him and they said you've got to stop talking about this Jesus guy and Peter says which is right in God's eyes to listen to you or to him you be the judge as for us we can't help speaking about what we have seen and what we have heard we can't help be witnesses to the amazing God of the universe the Bible is not a textbook it's not a manual it's a story anthology of the amazing interaction of God and the faith experience of the people the real witness of the Bible is with others when we gather together to understand the truth you see it one way I see it another way they see it somebody else they bring in a different concept a different perspective and together we start to see the patterns the eternal truth that's why we study the Bible you can't prove

[53 : 51] God through the Bible people who don't believe in God don't believe in the Bible hello the Bible is for us to help us walk through the journey together so that we can bear fruit bringing the word of God to the world let's hear what our mission is hi I'm Sean Michalski I'm part of a Bible study at work we meet on Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays we have approximately 10 to 15 normal members we have a prayer vigil on Mondays for 30 minutes we also do our study on Wednesday and a recap of our Wednesday study on Fridays during part of our prayer vigil we usually take prayer requests often we see prayers come in and often answered you know later on down the road the Lord works in mysterious ways and we've seen the wonder of the Lord's ways it's very encouraging to be able to praise the Lord not only on Sundays at church but also to be able to praise the Lord during the work day you can't talk about

God at work Sean found a way to do it you know if we start with God we can do amazing things God doesn't call us to prove anything we don't study the Bible because we have to prove God you don't have to prove God God is God our calling is to witness to God to witness to the power and the wonder of God being a witness to God's Holy Spirit it said that they were filled with the Holy Spirit and as they were being questioned God gave them the answers did you know God will do that I've had God give me answers to questions people ask of me and I go where did that come from God will speak into your heart and into your life the wisdom you need to know if you turn to God we turn to everything but and then wonder why we don't see the power of God even in Isaiah in the Old Testament it says whether you turn to the right or the left your ears will hear a voice behind you saying this is the way walk in it when you're trying to figure out which way you ought to go in life listen to the voice that God has given to you he won't send you on the wrong path

God speaks to us do we witness to the power of God to speak into our hearts and show us the way we're supposed to be staying connected to the vine of God we witness to the change God makes in lives the fruitfulness of the vine you know there was a discussion about this very story years ago they were standing in one of these magnificent churches you know the ones where they have gold on everything and stained glass and all kinds of wealth and power demonstrated and the one man turned to the other and looking at this magnificent building said no longer can anyone say about the church we don't have any silver and gold and the other one said that's true but the church no longer can say take up your mat and walk because if we don't do what God wants God takes the power away we are his vineyard

God is working through us but if we don't follow God and we are not fruitful for God well let's read Isaiah about the vine this is what he says my love loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside he dug it up cleared it of stones planted it with the choicest vines he built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well then he looked for a crop of good grapes but it yielded only junk now you dwellers of Jerusalem and people of Judah judge between me and my vineyard what more could I have been what more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it when I look for good grapes why did it only yield garbage now I will tell you what I'm going to do to my vineyard I will take away its hedge it will be destroyed I will break down its wall it will be trampled I'll make it a wasteland neither pruned or cultivated and briars and thorns will grow there if we aren't going to live to be fruitful for God why would we think

God will bless us in my backyard I had a grapevine it was a nuisance I'd see it in the trees I'd see it in the bushes I'd cut it off I'd cut it here I'd cut it there finally got tired of this so I went and followed it until I was way back under the bushes and I found a trunk this big I got my chainsaw cut that baby off I saw stuff dying all over my yard that vine was huge it was everywhere it had gotten into everything but you know what it didn't have not one single grape all it was about was destruction and showing up its glory to the world if we live as people or we live as a church only to destroying others and other things and only to our own glory what do you think God's going to do to us why would God offer us blessings when we offer God junk we need to be a church that does astonishing things they were astonished because people's lives were changed the proof of God is not in the scientific theories the proof of God is not even quoting scriptures or logical proofs the proof of God is in seeing

[60 : 23] God transform and change the lives of people amen seeing the people who are broken in their relationships broken in their souls in their hearts in their minds and even their bodies miraculously healed and God does that I've seen it I've seen God do wonders and signs and amazing things and I know God will do more if we live if we breathe if we stay connected to God the power of the church is in the notable signs like they're saying here and they're saying how can we deny this we need to be a witness to the amazing power of God and we need to be a witness to the courage and the integrity that comes from having of God they had courage and this is because they had the Holy Spirit power of God within them in John chapter 14 it refers to the Holy Spirit and calls him the counselor some people think that means somebody who comes and goes oh let me talk to you now that's not the kind of counselor we're talking about we're talking about a counselor like Sue is in her day a defense counselor someone will go into the courtroom and stand up with you and take on the adversary that's what the

Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit is not oh you poor baby the Holy Spirit is come out let's go take this out the Holy Spirit is there to defend you to be with you to take it into the world with you culture will try to stop God but just like these people they couldn't stop God when we're confronted with a God that we can't understand we can't explain we can't figure out but a God that's doing amazing things do we deny it do we do we explain it away do we argue with it or do we fall to our knees and worship that God after this it says the believers went and gathered together they prayed to God in boldness and it says the Holy Spirit came upon them and shook them shut them we need God to come and shake us up the truth is I know we have things in our lives that aren't working that aren't going the way we want that don't feel blessed don't feel like they're going on the right path that don't feel like we're heading the way we should we got things in our life we need to shake up amen and if we shake them up with the power of the Holy

Spirit and we will see the wonder of God how great God is what God can do for you for me for his mind for the world a splendor of the king clothed in majesty at all the earth rejoice at all the earth rejoice he wraps himself in light and darkness tries to hide and trembles at his voice and trembles at his voice our praise our God sing with me our praise is our God and all will see how brave our praise is our God page to age he stands and time is in his hands beginning beginning and the end beginning and the end the God and free in one body spirit son the lion and the lamb the lion and the lamb name is our word pure think how brave is our

God and all will see how brave how great is our God name Name above all names You are worthy of all praise And my heart will sing How great is our God How great is our God Sing with me how great is our God And all we sing how great How great is our God How great, how great is our God

I want to be close Close to your side Because heaven is real And death is alive I want to hear voices of angels above Singing as one Hallelujah Holy, holy God almighty Great I am Who is worthy None beside me God almighty Great I am I want to be near

[67 : 17] Clear to your heart Loving the world Hating the dark I want to sing dry bones Living again Singing as one Singing as one Hallelujah Hallelujah Glory, holy God almighty The great I am Who is worthy None beside me God almighty The great I am Great I am Great I am Great I am The mountains shake before you The demons run and flee At the mention of your name King of majesty There is no power in hell

Or any who can stand Dive all of power The demons stand In all the power and the presence Of the great I am The great I am The great I am The great I am feels God Almighty, God Almighty, who's great on earth, great I am.

Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever.

Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever. Amen. People from every nation and time, from generation to generation, we worship you.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, we worship you, who you are. We worship you.

[70 : 25] Hallelujah, hallelujah, we worship you, who you are. Hallelujah, hallelujah, we worship you, who you are.

You are good. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, we worship you, who you are. Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever. Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever.

Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever. Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever.

People from every nation and time, from generation to generation, we worship you. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, we worship you, who you are.

You are good all the time.

[72 : 05] We worship You, Hallelujah, Hallelujah. We worship You, Who You are.

We worship You, Hallelujah, Hallelujah. You'll be what I say.

You know you are. You are good. Amen. Please be seated. You know, I have a confession to make to you.

Sometimes when I come into worship to preach, I really am concerned about what you think. I really am wondering about what you're going to say when you walk out. Will you be impressed with what I said?

Will you feel moved and excited? Will you walk out here going, wow, that was a great sermon. I got to confess that I worry about what you think way too often. Because when I preach, I know the only one I should be caring about is one person.

[73 : 10] And that's God. When we sing, we're worried about what the people around us are going to say. That's weird. That's crazy. Man, dude, they're rocking like the sheep, you know. We worry about what everybody else is going to think.

We worry about all this stuff from people who really aren't going to matter on judgment day. And we forget about the one that will make the difference.

We got to take that to God. And all that we do and all that we are. So let's pray. Dear God in heaven, sometimes I do the wrong thing. Sometimes I do the right thing.

Sometimes I'm just plain confused. Forgive me, Lord. Take away the confusion. Give me your wisdom.

Your revelation. Forgive my sin. Put your Holy Spirit alive in me. Turn loose the miracles. Change my world.

[74 : 19] That I might be blessed to be a blessing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. God has amazing things still waiting.

He's intended them. He's planning them. He's just waiting for us to turn to Him. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Glory to God. Amen. Amen. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word.

I ever with thee, and thou with me, Lord. Thou and thou only, first in my heart.

[75 : 59] Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art. Great God of heaven, my victory won.

May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun. How does my own heart whatever befall?

Still be my vision, my ruler of all. Lord invites us to his table, to come and share with him, to come and be filled anew with all we need to do what God has called us to do.

God will meet you here. You are welcome. You're invited. If you love God, earnestly repent of your sin, and seek to live in peace as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are welcome to come to the table and receive all that God has for you, all that God wants to pour out into your life.

You don't have to be a member of the church. It can be your first time coming here. And if you come seeking God and all that God has for you, you are welcome to come to the table.

[77 : 44] The Lord be with you. Also with you. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and courage.

It is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, and set before us the way of life.

And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Holy are you and blessed is your son, Jesus Christ.

- [78 : 54] By the baptism of his suffering, death and resurrection, you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit.
- By your great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of your son from the dead and to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading.
- Once we were no people, but now we are your people, declaring your wonderful deeds in Christ, who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light.
- When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always in the power of your word and Holy Spirit. And on the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread and he gave thanks to you.
- He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples. He said, Take, eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.
- [80 : 02] When the supper was over, he took the cup and gave you thanks and praise and he gave it to his disciples. He said, Drink from this, all of you. This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new covenant poured out for you and poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin.
- Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. So in remembrance of these, your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith.
- Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here. And on these gifts of bread and wine, make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world, the body of Christ redeemed by his blood.
- By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
- through your Son, through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit and your Holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father. Now and forever.
- [81 : 30] Amen. Shall we pray together in prayer, Jesus? Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
- Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
- For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Will those who are serving, please come forward.
- Amen. Amen.
- Amen. Amen.
- [83 : 42] Amen. The grapes to be squeezed into the chalice. We all share in the fruit of the same vine. They're all part of the same power of God.
- When you come to the table, you come to God. You're all welcome. To the table, the rail for prayers for healing, light a candle, come and join us with God. Amen. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Amen.
- Amen. Thank you.
- [85 : 30] Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[88 : 30] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

You know, the last couple of few months, I've talked a bit about the decline of the church and the struggle that the church is going through universally. I don't want you to misunderstand that discussion. You know, God himself may be pruning back the church.

It's possible that God is working on the brokenness and the dysfunction that we need to fix. I do believe God is working on the church. I do believe God is working on the church.

I do believe God is working on the church. And you take off all the dead and broken pieces. Amazing growth. I do believe God is working on the church. I do believe God is working on the church. I do believe God is working on the church.

[90 : 38] And the church has been pruned back. The vineyard of God has been pulled back. After that, that's when the wonders start pouring out. I got to tell you, folks, we are headed for one of the most amazing times in the history of humanity when God is going to pour out the signs, the wonders, the blessings in ways you have never seen.

Don't you want to be a part of it? Don't you want to live into it? Don't you want to be a vessel for God to make it happen? Go out and make God first.

Pray for his guidance. And let the Holy Spirit transform you into grapes. Go in his peace, his power, and his wonder. Amen.

Amen.