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Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

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This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Good morning. Welcome to Pendleton Church.

Fill out your friendship card so we can get to know you. We have a gift for our visitors here at the Connection site. I hope you guys have a great day. Enjoy the service.

We have two opportunities of ministry on our clipboards today. One is to help with our Niagara Falls dinners. If you'd like to help with that, there's a clipboard that goes around. We send that around once a month.

[1 : 2 4] The second is for our rummage sale. You know, the junkies, I mean, the stuff we sell, I mean, the treasures we sell here that you don't need anymore. That will be coming up in a couple of weeks.

You can start bringing your things, if you'd like to, a week from tomorrow. Don't bring them before then, but a week from tomorrow. And by the way, if you have lost a jacket or a coat, there's a lost and found section out in the coat room, out in the main coat room, out in the fellowship hall.

And you know there's a rummage sale coming. So, you know, get them or lose them, you follow. And I'm checking the ones that fit me. So we do encourage you to do that. But next Sunday at 1 o'clock, we're going to have a gathering here of people who are interested and looking into the possibility of starting new churches, congregations, faith communities, things like that.

If that's something that has been touching your heart or you think you'd like to hear more or know more about, you're welcome to join us next Sunday at 1 o'clock here at the church. Shall we take a moment to turn our hearts to the Lord in prayer?

Dear God, we do thank you for this morning and we pray your blessings upon all that we do. Help us to focus on you, Lord. Take all the distractions, all the thoughts, all the issues of this day and push them aside for a little while so that we can just experience the glory of God.

[2 : 4 1] For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I'd like to invite you to stand. If you're able, as we're going to sing together, How Firm a Foundation. How Firm a Foundation Ye saints of the Lord Is laid for your claim In this excellent word One more can he say That to you he hath said To you who for refuge Jesus hath led Be here not, I am with thee O be not dismayed For I am thy God And will still give thee aid

A strength in and belt thee And cross thee to stand A belt by my righteous A knifled in hand The soul that I'm Jesus Deletes for repose I will not, I will not Descent to its foes That soul, though of hell Should endeavor to shake I'll never, no never I'll never forstay The Lord be with you.

All with you. Take a moment, if you will, And greet your neighbor With the peace of the spirit. Amen. Kids, come on up, come on up, kids.

Kids, come on up. Kids, come on up, guys. Come on. All the kids, come on, come on. There's lots of you.

I know there's some kids here. Good morning, guys.

[5 : 32] How are you doing? Good morning. How many of you think That you're stronger than me? Anybody here? You think you're stronger than me? All right.

You're right in front of me. I should have done this Before I got here, right? Got to be an end Of this rope somewhere. All right.

You're stronger than me. You take that end of the rope. Go ahead. And pull. Go ahead. Come on. You're stronger than me. Come on. Come on.

Come on. Okay. What I want you to do Is keep that end of the rope. Now start walking that way. And everybody grab a hold Of the rope. Grab a hold of the rope. Everybody grab a hold. Just go on down the rope.

Go on down the aisle. Go down the aisle, guys. Go down the aisle. Adrian, help them walk Down the aisle. There they go.

[6 : 37] Go down the aisle, guys. Go off the platform. Everybody go on down there And grab a hold of the rope. Okay. Wait a minute, guys. Stop right there. Okay.

Everybody wants a hold, But you've got to get down On the floor. All right. All right. One more down.

Let one more get down. All right. Very good. Okay. Everybody stand up now. Stand up. Are you ready? Let's see who's stronger.

Ready? Pull. Pull. All right. Come on back. Come on back. Come on back. Come on back. Boy, that was different, Wasn't it?

I didn't last for two seconds. What was the difference? What was the difference? Yeah. You think you could take me, Huh?

[7 : 40] Everybody thinks they could take me. You know what? The truth is, I'm stronger than all of you. But I'm not stronger than all of you together, Am I? No.

You think you're stronger than me, Huh? Go ahead. Okay. Got to quiet them down one way or another. All right. Okay. See, The truth is, Together, We're a lot stronger than we are separate.

You know, That's why God gave us a church. So we'd have a place where we can all get together, And bless God, And be blessed by God. By not just God, But also by each other.

All right? What are you thankful for this morning? If you want to share something, Go ahead and raise your hand. My mom and dad and my family. My mom.

Friends and family. Friends and family. My mom. My mom. My sister. My brother. My mom and dad.

[8 : 47] Food and water. My baby sister. My mom and dad. My mom and dad. My mommy, my daddy, my grandma, and all my family.

My friends and family. The Lord. My chocolate with God. My cousin. Everything.

Friends and family. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for the blessings you give for us. We pray that you're with us. That you pour out your spirit on us, And bless all those things that are wonderful in our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay, we're going to try and do this carefully. They want the hot chocolate with God's kids to slide to the side. And those of you who aren't in hot chocolate with God can go out to church school. If you want to go out to church school, you can go ahead.

Miss Pam is waiting for you. S'mores can stay too. Yep. This morning I do want to mention just quickly that we have a special offering envelope in your bulletin this morning, Which is for our youth ministry that we do up in Lockport.

[9 : 56] It's a great outreach to young people who are kind of on the borders of life. So if you'd like to give a little something extra to help with that ministry, We call that to your attention, along with your morning tithes and offerings.

This morning our hot chocolate with God and our s'mores are going to share our thankful moment with us. So good morning.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Adrian Almeida, or as everyone here knows me as Mr. Adrian. On Friday nights we run the s'mores, me and Ms. Adrian runs the hot chocolate program for the girls.

She started just about four years ago with only ten girls. And I started about two years ago with only a little under ten boys. And here we are today.

We have just over a hundred kids today. And what you see here isn't all of them either. They're not all here. So while it is a large group, they do get opportunities on Friday nights to spend time in a small group.

[11 : 01] And where they're led by some of the youth here who help them in devotions and leading them in games and activities. But instead of having me talk, we're going to have some of our members talk and tell you about it.

Good morning everybody. My name is Kylie and I'm a freshman at Iroquois High School in Alma, about half an hour away. And I'm a member of the Hot Chocolate with God program. I'm a group leader for the little first grade girls.

And before I came to Hot Chocolate with God, I wasn't really involved in a church. I had gone to my fair share of vacation Bible school camps and around elementary school. But I never officially belonged to a church.

My cousin Grace has been at this church since she was born. And she was the one who got me to come here. I tagged along for one of the meetings and fell in love. I had never really believed in myself. So I thought I wouldn't have much time to put faith in God.

This program gave me a sense of family. And this family has taught me so much about who I am and why coming to church and having faith is so important. This group is truly a blessing. Without Hot Chocolate with God, I don't think I would believe and have faith and trust in God like I do today.

[12 : 07] Everyone that's a part of the program is so amazing. Mr. and Mrs. Adrian are such amazing people and are great at what they do. All of the leaders are so fun and smart in their own ways.

And even the little ones teach me a thing or two every Friday night. You guys are totally worth the half an hour drive. Thank you. Thank you. Hi, everyone.

My name is Cassie, and I'm a senior at Niagara-Watefield High School. I'm a member of First United Methodist Church in Niagara Falls. This is my first year doing Hot Chocolate with God.

Unfortunately, my church doesn't have many kids programs. We don't have a kids Sunday school class anymore. We don't have youth group anymore. So I was really thankful that Mrs. Adrian approached me over the summer.

She asked me if I would be interested in becoming a leader for Hot Chocolate with God, and I accepted the offer immediately. It was probably the best decision I've ever made. Through this program, I've met so many wonderful children, and I have made so many new friends.

[13 : 14] I'm thankful for every one of these kids and every one of these new friends that I've made. But most of all, I'm thankful for Mrs. Adrian. If it weren't for her, I don't know where I'd be right now.

So I'm just really thankful for this program. Good morning.

My name is Austin Dick, and I'm a freshman at Lockport High School. I was confirmed here when I was in sixth grade and then became involved in the many programs our church offers. Last year, I was asked to be a leader for S'mores.

I wasn't sure what to expect, but I thought it would be fun. I've always enjoyed being a leader for VBS, so I decided it would be a good choice for me to do my part as a member for my church. When we arrive, we share a meal together and get to know the kids at our tables.

Two team leaders at each table encourage younger kids to learn about each other. After dinner, we separate into small groups of up to six kids with two to three leaders. In the small groups, we discuss and help each other learn how to live as God wants us to.

[14 : 13] After our discussion, we do an activity based off the lesson. Then the entire group joins together and shares what we learned. After sharing, it's time to dance. It's always fun to watch and dance with the kids.

We end the night with a group lesson in the fellowship hall. Being a leader has helped me grow closer to God and my church family. I'm so thankful that my church has a great program for young people to learn about their faith. Thank you.

Thank you. Powerful have and my family. And celebration hello, for the children and for the maid and for the man that are not good manners, generosity, and sharing nature that is evident in all they do.

I remember assisting one evening and before the night was even over, I had a thank you note in my hand. How sweet is that and where does that happen?

My wife and I do our best to explain the world, the situations that occur, and why people act and do the things they do. We are so thankful that our daughter has a program to be excited to attend with other Christian girls that are equally as excited to be here and with each other.

[16 : 08] Nothing warms my heart more when my daughter on a Friday night is anxious to go to church and sad to leave when the activities are over. The world is not going to get any less complicated as she grows and I am so thankful that she has witnessed by example and reinforced with her Hot Chocolate with God family the tools required to be a good example for others and what good Christian girls should act like.

Hi, my name is Jayvon Carney and I am a member of the Pendleton Center United Methodist Church. I have been coming to this church for a really long time. I am sure you all know about the kids program called S'mores.

S'mores is a really good program because it teaches kids a lot about God. This program has really helped me grow closer to that. I would like to give a big thanks to Mrs. Adrian and Mr. Adrian and all the teenagers that help out to teach me about God.

Because of S'mores, I hope I can teach others about God. Hi everybody, my name is Dave Buds. This is my wife Melanie.

This is my daughter Sienna and my daughter Bailey and we attend the chapel and they come to Hot Chocolate with God. I am thankful for Hot Chocolate with God because I get to learn about God and have fun.

[17 : 46] I am thankful for Hot Chocolate with God because I get to see kids from my school after school and learn about Jesus with them. And then I know that I have friends at school that are Christians. And also I get to make brand new Christian friends.

And I'm thankful for it because if we think about the simplicity of Christianity, it's about intimacy with the Lord.

Christ died so that we could have intimacy with the Father. We could have access to Him. And the pastor just said that together we're stronger doing that than we are alone. So dads, hopefully we know how crucial it is that we are in fellowship with other believers in the Word of God.

And moms, hopefully we understand that too and we're doing that. So as a parent, to drive up on Friday nights and to see my daughters in fellowship, in Christ, in the Word of God with teenage girls, other girls their age, other boys their age, it's an amazing experience.

So they're being cultivated into that intimacy, into that fellowship with Christ that is hopefully something that will last with them as they grow. And the best story I have is one Friday night I had to pick them up alone and I drove up and it's dark so the windows are lit up and you can see all the kids in there.

[19 : 09] And they are just worshiping and dancing away like crazy to worship our Lord. And I just sat there in the car with tears running down my face as I watched my little girls dancing with older girls and celebrating their love for Jesus.

It's really cool. So yeah, I'm just so thankful for this group of kids and youth that just come together every Friday night.

They're just able to share and grow in their faith. Thank you guys. We are thankful for Hot Chocolate with God for the kids who are part of it, for the leaders who are part of it.

It's a wonderful program. God has blessed us through it, blessed our children through it. God has blessed us in so many ways. We take a moment if we can at this time in our worship to share our Thanksgiving with our morning tithes and our audience.

God has blessed us, those folks in bibliography.

[20 : 26] May it be a suicide-forials. May the next day have fried our pockets of our wooden shawn. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[23 : 01] Thank you.

Amen. Give us wisdom to know how to best use it for the furtherance of your kingdom.

Help us to reach many because we desire, as you do, for many to come to salvation in Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. joy to welcome all of those young people and the folks who are involved in the ministries in this church, how special it is that we can reach out and draw in so many from all over the place, you know, and just minister the love of Jesus Christ.

Amen? Amen. We have some folks that we need to be keeping lifted up in prayers along with the joys that we have before the Lord. We have a couple of people who are going to be going in for surgeries this week.

[24 : 51] We want to lift them up. I want to talk to you, Jan Gertz and Chanel DeGesery and other folks. There are other folks who are recovering from surgery. Some of them are here in the house today, and that's a blessing and a testimony to answered prayer on the part of God's people as God leads.

We need to lift up the Hendages family as well. There's stuff going on. Cliff Hendages, who is Phil's brother, has had a heart attack, and he is in the hospital. Sharon is still recovering from her broken shoulder.

They say she won't let her wear the sling anymore. They want her moving it and using it, but she's still in recovery, and it's been a long recovery process. Roy Lennar is also, he's been out for some time.

He had broken his ankle very badly last fall and spent a long time in the hospital and in rehab. And now he is at home, and he is recovering. So if you would keep him in your prayers, and maybe give him a call.

I know he'd love to hear from some of us from the church. With these concerns, and those that are on your heart that we haven't named out loud, shall we turn to the Lord in prayer? Heavenly Father, it is such a blessing to come before you, to know that you hear us and that you answer us, to know, Lord God, that you want us to be aware of all of the things that we're blessed with, and all of the things that you want to touch in our lives and in the lives of the people we care about.

[26 : 36] Lord God, we lift up to you all of those folks who are sick and recovering from surgeries, who are infirm in any way.

Lord, we just ask that you touch them with your healing power. Touch them and make them whole from the tops of their heads to the soles of their feet. Touch them in their spirits, in their souls, and in their bodies, Lord, each and everyone who is in need.

We just pray in Jesus' name that they be made whole in you. We pray for those, Lord God, who are grieving losses of all kinds.

We just ask that you would give those folks hope. Bring into their lives people with words of compassion, words of comfort.

Bring into their hearts and their minds beautiful and precious memories and the hope of eternal life. Father, we lift up and pray for all of the children and the adults who are involved in the ministries, in and around this church, especially this morning, s'mores and hot chocolate with God.

[27 : 54] And we pray also, Lord God, for the youth and the leadership that is involved in the alive ministry up in Lockport. Lord, we pray that these young people will grow in grace.

They will grow in the wisdom and knowledge of Jesus Christ. That they would find the hope of the call that God has set for their lives.

Let us know what you call us to do to support those ministries and also to reach out to others, wherever it is, Lord God, that you call us.

Give us the wisdom and the understanding to do what is needed for your kingdom, to do what is needed to lift up and support your church.

Help us, Lord, to be more like Jesus. As we hear your word wash over us and transform us, be with Pastor Tom as he delivers the message.

[29 : 10] Let it be a blessing to him and a blessing to us. Lord God, we just pray in Jesus' name that you make all our worship to be a blessing to you.

That is why we came. We gather together to worship you. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Amen. Good morning.

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Today's scripture lesson comes from Acts chapter 2, verses 42 through 47. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.

[31 : 00] They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Bill. Thank you, Bill.

Thank you, Bill. Thank you, Bill. Thank you, Bill. Thank you, Bill. In 2 Chronicles chapter 7, it says, Did you note that?

God has established an intention to reach God, not if the nation, if my people, the people who call themselves after my name.

God has a mission to bring heaven to earth. We pray it every week. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[32 : 19] God has established an intention to reach out from heaven itself and wash over our entire culture, our world, our nation, with the wonder, the grace, the love, and the blessings of God.

It's like a river that flows from heaven itself. Revelation chapter 22 actually speaks of it. It says, The angel showed me a river of water, of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city.

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

The river of life. In North America, a river is barred, amidst the thin air of 14,000 foot peaks.

Dropping nearly three vertical miles, snow melt water carries the memory of the Rocky Mountains. Through frozen meadows, forested shoulders, and rock-walled ravines.

[33 : 33] It tumbles past the land of dinosaurs, and the arched canyons of nine national parks. Bringing life to the deserts of America's southwest.

Stretching 1,500 miles across seven states and two countries, this river is the lifeline for 36 million people, and over 4 million acres of farmland that feed a hungry nation.

Rivers bring life. Without the rivers, we would dry up and die as a people. We have the mighty Niagara.

We have the Buffalo River. Been in that lately? The rivers that bring life. And God brings us life from his heavenly throne through a river.

Have you ever asked yourself the question, what are we doing here? Why do we exist? What's it all about? I'll feed. Most of you don't remember that song, so it's okay.

[34 : 38] What's the point of our lives? In the 42nd verse of this passage, which is about the foundational understanding of the church, it says that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and the prayer.

What do we devote ourselves to? What do we commit our lives to? What are the things that are most important to us? What do we pass on to our children?

This passage is about values. It talks about learning. It talks about friendship and God and worshiping God and what we achieve and helping the poor, building the church, sharing about God in the world.

It talks about values. What are the values that we hold as the highest? Most of you should have gotten a piece of paper on the way into church. If you didn't get one, raise your hand, because I'd like you to get one.

It's helpful for the sermon. If you didn't get one, raise your hand. I've got a couple. I'll catch a couple people up front here. What I want you to do, these values come right out of the Bible.

[35 : 43] They're not... none of them are wrong. They're just different. So, I got one. So what I want you to do is I want you to take these values and if you see the little line next to it, I'd like you to put a check mark between the ones you think are the five or six most important values in your life, what you consider to be the five or six most important.

I've got a hand up still over here in the front. Five or six. You should be able to do this pretty quickly. You don't have to rank them in order. Just put the top five or six.

Five values, maybe six values that are the most important out of all these that came right out of the Bible of God.

Because I want to talk about values today. That's what this passage speaks to us about and that's what I think we need to work on the most. Because I've got to tell you something about the river. The river is struggling right now.

The river is having a lot of difficulty, particularly in our country. In our nation, the river is struggling. And I mean the river of God. The river of God is failing.

[37 : 15] It's best seen in its manifestation, not its only, but its best manifestation in this world, is God's church. But the church is struggling. A couple years ago, I read in the Buffalo News that 100,000 people in the last decade decided not to go to church anymore.

100,000! Now considering that there's only about 400,000, 500,000 people that were attending church, that means one out of four people who used to go to church don't go anymore.

Just decided it wasn't worth the time. Churches across the country, it's not just in our area, churches across the country are struggling. I talk to my friends who are pastors and most of them are experiencing a contraction of the church.

I have people who say to me that they came to this church because they want to come to a church that they figured wouldn't die before they did. That's frightening. Because we're seeing the churches turned into condominiums and office parks and all sorts of things that were not the intentions of God.

The river is struggling. And it's because our values, our goals, are not matching up with God. The goal, according to this passage, is that it will draw the world to God and that all of those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[38 : 31] God was adding to their numbers daily those who were being saved. And I'll tell you, in my opinion, I think God in some ways is subtracting daily from a lot of what we call churches, the people who used to go there.

Because we're not living towards what God wants us to. Revelations, they actually have letters they wrote to the churches and one was to the church at Ephesus. It says, I hold this against you.

You've forsaken the love you had at first. You've lost your first love. And the first item on our list, on our chart of value, should be what? God.

It should be God. That shouldn't even be a question. You should have marked that one first. If we call ourselves followers of God and say that He is our God, I have a feeling that God may be killing some of our churches simply because the values aren't quite what God wants them to be.

Now this is just my opinion and you can tell me I'm wrong and that's okay. I don't mind because it's just what I think. But I've kind of studied this. This is what I think the Bible says are the most important values in order.

[39 : 33] I think God would put it down this way. Some of you might be surprised to find families so far down. It's not that God doesn't value families. It's that God values other things more importantly than a lot of the things that we might value.

This is what I think most of the churches in America value. Now you might argue with me but I think most churches and I've gone to many of them where I ask them what is their main goal and that is to grow or to stay alive or to have enough money to pay the bills or to be comfortable or to be healthy as a church.

Somewhere they mention church. To have the right value systems and to stand for the things that are right or wrong. I go there for my friends. I go there because Pastor Tom sometimes puts on a good show.

Right? You never know what he's going to do. He's had camels in the church. Somewhere they get around to God. But that's a problem isn't it?

And by the way don't think I'm just you know tooting the horn of our church. I think we've got some values a little off too. This is what I would say is the value system of our church. I really would. I honestly think sometimes we put the church above God.

[40 : 43] If God wanted us to do something that we didn't think would help our church we might argue with God about that. We worry too much about whether our groups are big or whether we've got enough people whether we're successful. Somewhere we do get to God and by the way it's not as far down as some people would put it.

But we put some things above where God would put some things. Some of the things God thinks are most important are quite a ways down on our list. I'm concerned.

I'm concerned because the churches are struggling. They're getting messed up. much like the rivers in our nation. And it is also on the most polluted river on the nation's capital and on the east coast.

And this, what we're looking at is coming from a combined sewer storm drain overflow that flows out from 100,000 families upstream about half a mile.

And they run from about, the outflow pipes run into the Anacostia about three or four of them for the next couple miles up. But, anyway, we got paper and off hands of flats and plastic bottles.

[42 : 05] doesn't it look like something you want to go swimming in? How many of you remember going swimming in a river or a creek when you were a kid? How many want to jump in that one? Yeah.

How many have ever gone swimming in the Tonawanda Creek? That's just right down the road here. I used to do baptisms in the Tonawanda Creek. Around here, we call it the Erie Canal as well. I don't know if you know, but there's a ledge on the Erie Canal.

It goes out about three, four feet. That's when they dredge it. And you can go in and it's about up to here. But if you go in there, you'll find your legs covered in some black gunk that comes up to about here.

I don't know what's in the black gunk. It worries me what's in the black gunk. That's why we don't baptize people in the canal anymore. Because it's a nasty place. Weird stuff has come from who knows where to mess up Tonawanda Creek and to mess up our rivers.

And the river of God is getting messed up too. By what we're putting into it. By what we're making our priorities. Christians should make their top priority being devoted to God.

[43 : 09] And that makes us part of God's river. It says that we need to grow with others, to worship with others, to be in fellowship with each other, to spend time together. Learning about God, praising God.

It says that they met every day to talk about and spend time with God. Not a little time, but quite a bit of time. They build a caring community. You know, care and love is probably what the world around us is looking for the most.

Somebody once said they won't care what we know until they know that we care. says that they ate together. We do that, don't we? I think we eat together all the time.

In fact, I think there's a gathering after this service if you want to go out. It's for everybody, by the way, not just hot chocolate for God people. Everybody can go. They got cookies and stuff. Eat, have a good time. Talk with each other.

When we eat together, we smile. We're happy. And we spend time getting to know each other. It says that they actually ate together in each other's homes. Is that the way we see our homes as places for hospitality and gathering folks together?

[44 : 14] Or do we see them as islands where we can get away from those crazy people out there? Don't come near my house. You think I bought two acres of land so that I could see you? Well, they didn't.

They were real. They practiced radical hospitality. Radical hospitality. They shared with what they had, what they had an abundance of.

If they didn't need something, they sold it. And then they used it to help the poor. Kind of like a rummage sale, which, by the way, in about a week and a half, two weeks, we've got some things you don't need.

You know how the ladies put on a rummage sale? It's not so that they can go out to lunch on you. They use those funds to help people in need in our community, around the world. They cared for each other.

They took care of each other. And they didn't share because they had to. They shared because they wanted to. The river used to be the place where people gathered back in the day.

[45 : 16] You went there to get clean. You went there to clean your clothes. You went there to get your drinking water. You went there to socialize with people. People would go down to the river. Let's go down to the river and meet with each other is what they'd say to one another.

And that's where people gather. Would you go down to the river now so that you could bathe? When we go swimming in the river, what do we do? We come home and take a shower. Right?

Would you drink the water? Do you remember when you were young drinking water out of a creek? Not anymore. That's how we want it. Bottled up, purified, individual, it's my water.

I own it. By the way, we think we can do that with God too. Water was meant to be free to everyone. It was meant to be available to everybody. Why do you think God put rivers and lakes and streams all over the world and it'll bubble up out of the ground so people can freely drink what they need to drink?

You know what they're going to bottle next. You do know what's coming next. The air we breathe. They had a little kids movie about that a while ago. They're pretty right on. There's cities where they sell air. It's coming and we sell water and sometimes I think we sell God.

[46 : 35] We think that it's about somehow being successful and so we've turned God into a commodity. It says that they gathered together with glad and sincere hearts.

Joy and sincerity not suspicion and negative things. In some ways I think that the church has gotten too slick to worry about everything being perfect, to worry about everything being just right, to worry about how people are dressed, to worry about what people say, to worry about how perfect everybody has to have when we walk into church feeling like we've got to watch everything we are and everything we say.

what do we value? The truth is what we say we value is not even what we live to. I think this is what America lives to, Christians live to.

They say that they live to God and church and sharing with others but I think really what do we say to our kids? What do we show to the world around us? When we have to make a decision what comes first in our lives?

What will we choose over the other? We move to Florida because it's good for our health and who cares about our families? Don't tell me that we put these things above what we don't put them above. When we set aside the church or friendship or helping the poor or doing what's right we kill the river.

[48 : 02] Psalm 46 says there's a river whose streams make glad the city of God. the holy place where the most high dwells. God wants us to share a river filled with gladness with hope with love with dreams with possibility with caring and nurture.

Amen? You don't see anywhere in this passage words like hate or self-righteous or perfect or victorious or proud or vengeful or even righteous anger which is the one I love to hear from Christians.

righteous anger. You're just angry. That's all. You're blaming God for it. The people of this world of our culture of our churches want to hear about the joy of the Lord the love of God the grace of God the forgiveness of God the hope that God gives to us.

We've got enough angry people in the world already. I read the other day about this girl she's driving down the road and pulls up to a stop sign. You ever do this? You can't figure out who goes first?

You know you sit there for half an hour going oh no no no you okay I go ah right but she went this guy got so mad at her he chased her down he gave her the Hawaiian hello sign you know what I'm talking about right and she's like in the car going you know like you're supposed to do right so she pulls in the parking lot where she's going and this guy pulls in gets out of his car comes up and is screaming at her through the window she said I finally had it I got out of the car I yelled at him and I got back in the car and I started to cry not cry because the guy got all over it cry because really we got a world so angry that we're going to worry about who went first at a stop sign who cares who cares is life so radically important as to whether you go first or not that you're going to chase some poor woman down into a parking lot and scream at them about going first at a stop sign go ahead go ahead why do they think they wave they're afraid you're going to take out a gun really we don't need any more anger we don't need any more yelling and screaming and blaming and telling everybody what's wrong with the world we need some joy some hope some sincerity some people who want to spread love and grace amen because the river is dying and if the river dies we die too all the rivers are dying even the mighty Colorado its water and the passage of time have linked arms to create one of the most loved canyon landscapes on earth it is also one of the most disputed the Colorado known as the American Nile flooded its delta for six million years but today not a single drop of its flow kisses the sea it is diverted dammed and tapped as more straws pull from this treasured resource the words of Mark Twain ring out whiskey is for drinking water is for fighting so who fights for the river who stands up for this lifeline when it runs dry and who works to bring her back to life who gives the river and her voiceless creatures a voice at the decision table water is fighting

[51 : 36] God gave us so much water so that we could freely drink it share it and give it away we're destroying the rivers I don't spend a lot of time talking about the environment but I'm worried about this world we live in we're destroying it at every single turn because we have to have have to have have to have we have to live in the middle of the desert with green beautiful lawns we have to try to defy the very ways of God and we're doing it to the river of God too I gave you that list of values from the Bible this is what I think is the list of values from the American culture and if you'll note they line up pretty much with what I think the church thinks rather than the other way right what do we think as a culture what do we work toward what do we hear should be our main concerns and you'll see what's at the bottom what should be at the top you don't believe me you know 15 years ago

I was told by a lawyer that if somebody goes into court the two people they want to have with them to testify are police officers and pastors because their testimony is considered above reproach so I was told 15 years ago 15 years ago the most respected institution in America was the church as it had been for 100 years now the most respected institute in America the military second to the military probably going to fall pretty soon the police after that business so what do we respect money and guns really that's a little frightening isn't it I got nothing against the military my wife works for them I respect the police I respect business but honestly whatever happened that the church dropped down so far that's because what we've done to the church to where now what does it even mean

I was watching a TV show and this woman wanted to get married and she said she wanted her friend to do the service he says I can't do a service she says oh just go online you can be ordained in 10 minutes it took me 6 years I had to get a master's degree are you serious you can be ordained in 10 minutes whatever you can be a member of the church of whatever because that's what we think of God that's what we think of the church whatever they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching to the fellowship to the breaking of bread to prayer all the believers held their things in common and if somebody needed something they sold their property and give it to them every day they continued together in the temple courts they broke bread together and with glad and sincere hearts they praised God what do we put into our faith what do we receive from our God you don't believe it or not there was a time when I was a four sport athlete this body was buff

I mean I'm telling you I could bench press over 400 pounds I was strong you know why because I spent three to four hours a day conditioning myself on weekends I'd spend more time and at night just for the heck of it I'd do 100 push-ups and 200 sit-ups I could not do 100 push-ups without the sit-ups now the problem is not that I've gotten old which I have the problem is that I don't work on that anymore I think it's a giant accomplishment when my wrist buzzes because Fitbit says I've walked 10,000 paces I'm like yahoo which I do most Sundays by the way in case you're wondering if we don't put anything in why would we expect we're going to get something special out if we put a couple minutes into God a day and we put in maybe if we have time if it's not inconvenient if there's not something competing with it if our kids don't have some activity if we don't have some place to be if our family doesn't call us to do something else if we don't have to work we may put in an hour a week maybe why would we expect signs and wonders and miracles to occur and believe me we don't need part-time Christians getting part-time results we need a church that sees signs and wonders and is awesome amen we want a church that's doing incredible things we want a church that is changing lives and transforming the world and we can do it they were together they were together and being together they created incredible things

I've seen it happen I've seen people in the ministry that I've been a part of this church and elsewhere I've seen people physically healed I've seen people emotionally healed I've seen people psychologically healed and I've seen hundreds spiritually healed from the brokenness and pain and negativity of this world from the disappointment and discouragement and anger and pain and joy and happiness and hope and possibilities and feeling good about themselves because somebody says they're okay they don't judge them by how they dress or what they say they were or what they've done or what their job is or what they've accomplished they just embrace them as children of God and they're healed and they're transformed and they're changed we heard the children talking about it today imagine what would happen if we could change the world in the same way and the truth is we can the river was meant to flow the river was not meant to be contained or dammed up or diverted or put into a pipe or stuck into a bottle the river was meant to be free and the river of God is meant to go out and transform the world to not live in here to get stuck in some little room or some building but to live out into the world and the culture around us there's some little colored papers in the back of the room and we've been giving those out every week we're going to keep giving them out you can put them on those strings up there put them in a basket or just do what you want with them what they're about is you making the decision that today you're going to be a part of the church out there not just the church in here and that happens when we change the church in here

[58 : 04] Jesus said if you try to gain your life you'll lose it and if you lose your life for my sake you will gain it Isaiah spoke about the river he said I'll make rivers flow on barren heights and springs within the valleys I'll turn the desert into pools of water the parched ground into springs God can bring it back God can bring life back into our world but we don't fix the river at its end we fix the river at its beginning anybody know where Tonawanna Creek starts it's out in Wyoming County out where my cottage is I go over it it's just a little tiny creek it flows pretty clear out there although I see them before it gets about even one mile it's already being filled with junk which flows downstream so we've got to fix it where it begins I'm all for fixing the older people in our culture and I'm worried about them you know they say that 40% of senior citizens when they die don't have a church that worries me that bothers me especially since those of you who are baby boomers like me are all senior citizens you know we can get a discount at IHOP for being a senior citizen so think about it but as much as I want to fix our generation and I'm concerned about them the most important thing we need to do is start at the source we say that it's important for us to reach the least the lost and the little ones you know why we want to work so much on little children on teenagers because if we change them we change the river for the rest of our lives if we change them the river will flow we'll be celebrating with them we'll be watching the signs and wonders no matter what happens to us if we transform them we transform the world so we're starting at the beginning it may seem impossible but we think it can be done

Hello, I'm Scott James and I along with Scott Dabb I'm part of an alive youth group that's down over at Christ Community at Genesee and Pine over in Lockport we work with 6th, 7th and 8th graders and one of the things we're trying to do with these young people is to bring them into youth group and get them into a situation where they're not trying to bully they're not trying to fight and after that we move them on into trying to learn about Christian ideas most of them know what the Trinity is now at the beginning of the year I only had one person that knew the Lord's Prayer and now I have about five and by the end of the year I hope to have all of them know at least the Lord's Prayer and what it means to go about prayer in the next year we hope to take them on retreat and we hope to get them to a point where they know a little bit more about what it means to be a Christian and what it means to follow Jesus and get along with others I know people would say what would it matter how could I make a difference rivers are made up of drops of water and little by little they become a river together and they can change the world you know how hot chocolate and s'mores began in our church

Jill Kelly that's Jim Kelly's wife sent me a book called Hot Chocolate with God she didn't have to send me a book she just sent me this book I looked at it and I said oh this is for kids I tossed it to Barb Jeffords I said see what you can do with this as he looked at it and she shared it with Adrian who changed children's lives all because somebody decided to put a drop of water in the river we can do the same thing our church together affects thousands of people the church affects billions of people every year every drop makes a difference it's not about changing the government it's not about changing those other people it's about changing who we are becoming different from the inside out because if we live inside out the world will take notice remember I did this once before the church has to start living inside out right don't worry about criticizing everybody else keep that stuff to yourself because you're the one who needs it the most take all that judgment and self-righteous and throw it on the inside and put the love and the hope and the possibilities and the dreams and the joy that you want to experience throw that out to the world and see if the world doesn't change and we'll bring the river of God back to full strength and we'll watch the power of God transform our world and restore our lives down the mountain river flow it brings free value wherever it goes through the valley there's no hope but fear the river is rushing and the river is here the river of God and the river of God fills our hearts with cheer the river of God fills our mouths with laughter and we rejoice for the river is here the river of God is teeming with life and all will touch it and be revived and dogs who linger on this river shore will come back bursting for more of the Lord because the river of God sets our feet to dance the river of God fills our hearts with cheer the river of God fills our mouths with laughter and we rejoice for the river is here up to the mountain we love to go to find the presence to call the Lord along the banks of the river we run to dance with laughter yelling crazy to the sun because the river of God sets our feet and dancing the river of God fills our hearts with cheer the river of God fills our mouths with laughter and we rejoice for the river is here and we rejoice for the river is here and we rejoice for the river is here all I once held dear built my life upon all this world believes and wars too long

all I once all day I have found good loss sent and worthless out compared to thee knowing you knowing you knowing you knowing you there is no greater thing you're my God you're the best you're my joy my righteousness and I love you Lord now my heart desire is to know you Lord to be loved in you and known as yours to possess my faith what I could not earn all surpassing you of righteousness knowing you

Jesus knowing you there is no greater thing you're my you're the best and I love you Lord you're my all piano plays softly

[67 : 50] As morning dawns and evening waves New inspired songs of praise That rise from earth Dear unto your heart And glorify your name Your name This is all we might in love Your name In the shelter like God Your name Let the nations see it loud Nothing has the power to say Your name As morning dawns and evening waves

You inspire songs of praise That rise from earth To touch your heart And glorify your name Your name Is a song in mighty town Your name Is a shelter like God Your name Let the nations see it loud There's nothing has the power to say Like your name Your name Is a song in mighty town Your name Is a shelter like God Your name Jesus in your name Jesus in your name

Jesus in your name We pray Come and fill our hearts to God Lord give us strength Lord give us strength Lord give us strength To live for you Lord give us strength to live for you In your name we pray Come and fill our hearts today Lord give us strength To live for you And glorify your name You pray with me?

Dear God in heaven I haven't always followed you I don't always make you first I mix up my priorities Forgive me Lord Help me to live as I should To change my life To change the little ones who follow after me To change the world In Jesus name we pray Amen Please be seated You know God will make his church happen The Bible says the gates of hell will not prevail against God's church It's not a question of whether there will be a church It's a question of whether we'll be a part of it We'll be able to see the glory The magnificent things The signs and wonders The awesome transformational joy And hope

And blessings and promises That God offers us And God says we can live into that future By starting today To put away the past In the name of Jesus Christ Your sins are forgiven In the name of Jesus Christ Your sins are forgiven Glory to God Amen God invites us to the table To celebrate To celebrate all that God has done in our lives To celebrate all that God wants to pour out into our lives today Everyone is welcome at the table If you love God Earnestly repent of your sin And seek to live in peace As a disciple of Jesus Christ You are welcome here this morning So come Come and receive all that God has for you Come Receive Jesus

[72 : 56] Into your heart And into your life Come Receive a new infilling Of the Holy Spirit So you can go out And share that love with everyone The Lord be with you And also with you Lift up your hearts Lift up your hearts Lift up your hearts Lift up your hearts Let us give thanks to the Lord our God With his grace Be our thanks and praise Thanks and praise Glory and honor are rightly yours Our Lord and God For you alone are worthy In time beyond our dreaming You brought forth life out of darkness And in the love of Christ your Son You set man and woman At the heart of your creation You loved the world so much That you sent your only Son To bring us life eternal Dying he destroyed our death Rising he restored our life And so we praise you With the faith of every time and place Joining with the choirs of angels

And the whole creation In their eternal 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 We thank you Lord That you called a covenant people To be a light to the nations Through Moses you taught us to love your law And in the prophets you cried out for justice In the fullness of your mercy You became one with us in Jesus Christ Who gave himself up for us on the cross You made us alive together with him That we may rejoice in his presence And share his peace always 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

Saying take eat Do this in remembrance of me And when the supper was over He took the cup And he gave you thanks and praise And he gave it to his disciples Saying drink from this All of you This is the cup of my blood The blood of the new covenant Poured out for you Poured out for many For the forgiveness of sin Do this as often as you drink it In remembrance of me On the day you raised him from the dead He was recognized by his disciples In the breaking of the bread And in the power of your Holy Spirit Your church Has continued in the breaking of the bread And the sharing of the cup And 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 has 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 Jesus Christ With the Holy Spirit And your Holy Church All honor and glory Is yours almighty Father Now and forever Amen Shall we pray together

The prayer Jesus taught us 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 Amen Will those serving this morning Please come forward Amen And As we forgive

[78 : 00] As W turtles Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[80 : 32] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[83 : 02] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[85 : 32] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.