

Fan To Follower

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Date: 10 September 2017

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[0 : 00] Good morning. We're glad to have you here at Pendleton Center Church. Let's join together in This is the Day that the Lord has made. The day, this is the day, that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.

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

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

Shall we pray together? Dear God, we thank you for this beautiful day. And we pray your blessings upon us, that you would touch us, be with us, fill us with your Holy Spirit as we have gathered here to meet with you.

Be present with us, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I'd like to invite you, if you're able, to stand as we're going to sing together, Jesus Calls Us. Jesus Calls Us Father, Christian, follow me.

[1 : 33] In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and hours of ease, till he calls in cares and pleasures, Christian, love me.

more than these. Jesus calls us by thy mercy. Savior, may we hear thy call.

Give our hearts to thine obedience. Serve and love, he's best of all. Please be seated.

This morning we have a couple of clipboard opportunities for ministry. One is to help with our Niagara Falls dinners, and the other one is to help with our prayer vigil, which is coming up this Friday and Saturday.

We are starting all our activities this week, which includes our Wednesday night activities and our dinner Wednesday night, so I just call that to your attention. Also, I want to mention our mission moment this morning, which is about student day for the United Methodist Church.

[2 : 48] In the United Methodist Church, a lot of our young people in this church actually receive scholarships from the United Methodist Church, and this offering helps to go and pay for that. Just one quick other item I wanted to share with you.

If you have a child who's in age three up to third grade, right now they're supposed to be over in the ark at Junior Church. It's a little different, so feel free to guide on up and take your kids on over there, or if you want, they can walk over with me.

Pastor Lisa? Good morning. Isn't it a wonderful day to be back to the normal schedule? Well, wait, not the normal schedule. We've got a new schedule for the fall, but it's a wonderful new schedule we're really, really excited about.

I am thankful to be here. What are you thankful for this morning? Just shout them out, all those things that you're thankful for and that give you joy because of God's blessings in your life. Oh, we've got all kinds of them all at the same time.

Any others? Family. My wife? Yes. Yes, our wonderful spouses.

[3 : 53] Aren't they a blessing? What else are we thankful for this morning? It is gorgeous out there, isn't it? I could stand at about 10, 15 degrees warmer, but it's good, right? Amen.

God is good. Others? Very good. Wonderful. Oh, what a blessing. What a blessing. Yes. Caregivers.

Yes, we are grateful for all those who are caregivers in our lives. Any others? Back to school. Yes, what a blessing. What a blessing. For all of our teachers.

Well, Lord, we come before you just so grateful for all of these blessings that you have poured out into our lives. We know we haven't spoken them all, but let them bubble up inside us so that we can remember what a good God you are.

And let's bring our gifts, tithes, and offerings in gratefulness to all God has blessed us with as a sign of our faith and our love for him. If you've been walking the same old road for miles and miles If you've been hearing the same old voice and the same old lies If you're trying to fill the same old holes inside There's a better life There's a better life If you've got pain He's a pain taker If you feel lost He's a way maker If you need freedom or saving He's a prison-shaking savior If you've got chains He's a chain breaker

[5 : 44] We've all searched for the light of day In the dead of night We've all found ourselves worn out from the same old fight We've all run to things we know that just ain't right But there's a better life There's a better life If you've got pain He's a pain taker If you feel lost He's a way maker If you need freedom or saving He's a prison-shaking savior If you've got chains He's a chain breaker If you believe it

If you receive it If you can feel it Somebody testify If you believe it If you receive it If you can feel it Somebody testify If you believe it If you believe it If you receive it If you can feel it Somebody testify If you've got pain He's a pain taker If you feel lost He's a way maker If you need freedom Or saving He's a prison-shaking savior If you've got chains He's a chain breaker If you need freedom Or saving

He's a prison-shaking savior If you've got chains He's a chain breaker He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior If you've got chains He's a prison-shaking savior If you've got chains He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior If you've got chains He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior He's a prison-shaking savior Praise God from the homeless He's a prison-shaking savior Praise Him, all creatures here below Praise Him, all He heavenly hosts Praise God, His Son, and Holy Ghost Amen Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you with thanksgiving

Knowing that you are the God who pours out blessings on all your people Giving us everything that we truly need Lord God, we ask that you would bless this offering As we return back some of that blessing to you For the work of your kingdom Give us wisdom to know how to best use it That many would come to salvation in Jesus Christ And grow in their faith And your kingdom come In Jesus' name we pray Amen Please be seated We do have some concerns to bring before you And I'm sure you have some concerns as well Sue Lester is going to be having surgery on Thursday If we want to lift her up Michelle Margherucci is experiencing a hearing loss Due to a virus And we want to keep her in our prayers That she would be fully recovered and healed And Lori Gondek is going to be having some medical procedures this week I'd like to add to that my sister Karen Who is battling cancer right now

And what do you have that needs to be lifted up? Just shout them out for me Thank you Thank you Thank you Yes Thank you Allie What else?

[10 : 08] Yes New stuff for Aunt Wanda and Uncle Jim Yes What else? Anything else out there? The people in Florida definitely Others?

Yes Yes. The people in Texas, too. That's right. That's right. All right.

Yes. All right. All right. All right. With these concerns and those that are on your heart, let's turn to the Lord in prayer.

You can join me at the rail or remain in your seat. Great God of heaven, creator of all things, you are the one who hears and answers our prayers, who invites us to come before you, lifting up all of those things that concern us because they concern you as well.

Lord, we lift up those who are sick and infirm, those who are in need of a healing touch from you. We ask in Jesus' name that you would be with them.

[11 : 26] By your spirit, touch them and make them whole. From the tops of their heads to the soles of their feet and their spirits and their souls and in their bodies, Lord God, bring them healing in the way you know that they need.

Father, we pray for those who are grieving losses of all kinds and ask that you would comfort them. Help them to find assurance of eternal salvation with you, that hope that you have set before us because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Lord God, we just ask in Jesus' name for blessed and wonderful memories that each one would remember all of those things about that person that are wonderful and that have made them who they are today as we do impact one another, Lord.

We cannot meet one another without somehow each of us causing change in the other. And as we meet with other people, Lord, our families, our friends, people on the street, people at work, let them see Jesus in us.

Let them always know the hope that we have of life with you. Be with those people, Lord God, who are dealing with all kinds of devastation because of natural disasters, the hurricanes, the earthquakes.

[13 : 07] Be with them, Lord. Let them know that you are there. Let them call on you and rest in the shelter of your protection.

Let their spirits and their souls be blessed knowing that you are with them. And let each one who knows you be able to share their faith with someone who doesn't that they might have hope too.

Be with us, Lord, now as we hear your word, as we continue in our worship. Let it all wash over us and transform us that we might bring your message into the world in a way that glorifies you always.

Be with Pastor Tom as he delivers the message. Let it be a blessing to him and to us and make all of our worship, Lord, to be a blessing to you. For that is why we came.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we hear from the word of the Lord? Amen. Good morning.

[14 : 23] This is Acts chapter 16, verses 11 through 15. From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samotris.

And the next day we went to Neopolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony in the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer.

We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God.

The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house.

And she persuaded us. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you.

[15 : 26] This morning, we're starting a new sermon series. It's entitled, God's Game Plan for Life. What do we need to do? What do we need to be? How do we need to live so that our lives will reach the ultimate goal of God?

In 1 Corinthians chapter 9, it says to us, everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They don't get a crown that will, they get a crown that will not last. But we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

We change our lives, we can change our church, and we can change the whole world. So this morning, I want to talk about going from being a fan to a follower with hearts changed and a passion-powered life.

Some people might have noticed that there's been some changes this morning at church here. We've made a number of changes, but the most particular one is the one about our worship times. You see, what happened was a number of years ago, to make things more convenient, we created three worship services on Sunday instead of two.

And by doing that, we thought we'd make it more convenient. People could come to worship, their children could go to Sunday school. We actually sometimes referred to it as the one-stop shop option.

[16 : 39] Well, the problem with that is it had many unintended consequences. First of all, we found that the people who were involved in worship were getting pretty tired and worn out by the end of the day, but that was a small thing, and they were glad to do that if it would help.

But the people who were involved in our Sunday school program found that they were making a choice, a choice between worshiping God or teaching the young people about God, which they wanted to do.

So they were torn between two things they felt were essential parts of their life. And the worst of all, what we discovered is that we were affecting our young people's faith life for the rest of their lives.

Because what I've discovered after watching for 30 years in this church is if you raise a young person in the life of the church where they attend worship and they're involved in other activities, there's an 80 to 85% likelihood that as an adult, they'll be part of a church.

If you raise them in a church where they attend worship, but they really aren't involved in much else, there's a 70% chance that they'll be involved in a church when they're adults. But if you raise them in every activity that we offer, everything you can imagine from Sunday school to VBS to youth ministries and such, but they don't attend worship, there's about a 15% chance that they will end up in church as adults.

[18 : 00] And if you think about it, it makes a whole lot of sense because this is where we come to meet God. This is where we come to remember we are the church together. The rest of it is more what we do as a part of our faith.

But without this, we're no different than any other club or organization that happens on the face of the earth. And after a while, young people walk away from a lot of the clubs that they've been involved.

You know, I played football when I was a teenager. I don't do that now. That would probably be painful. So we're making changes, and the changes are not because we're trying to mess with your Sunday morning.

It's because we're trying to change not just your lives, but particularly the lives of those who are youngest in faith, and we want to be involved in church as years go on.

God has a plan. And God has a plan that will happen in His time, His place, and His direction. If we listen to that plan.

[19 : 01] If we don't, we may have the best of intentions but find ourselves with unintended consequences. The other day, I was at the supermarket, and I had two lines to pick from.

One line had a grocery cart full of a bunch of items, and the other line, you know this story, don't you, had just a couple little items in the cart. So I chose the one with the couple items in the cart, and stood, and stood, and stood, while I watched the one with all those items go through the line.

And then I watched another one go through the line, and then I watched another one go through the line. Anybody else ever have this happen? The best of plans! What I fully intended to have happen, and it was a good plan, didn't work.

The Apostle Paul was so excited about his faith after meeting Jesus on the Damascus Road that he wanted to tell people about his faith. We're going to be looking at the book of Acts and faith stories during this sermon series, and one of the most powerful ones is the story of Paul coming to faith.

He was so excited to share about Jesus. He decided that the best place to start was a province of the Roman Empire called Asia. This isn't to be mistaken with the continent of Asia.

[20 : 19] It's really what we would nowadays call Turkey. All right? He was going to go around that area and share about Jesus, and it was a good plan, and it was an exciting plan, and everywhere he went, if you read in this chapter, verses 6 through 12, and I didn't have you hear all of it because, you know, it's kind of hard for our liturgists to say all those names.

She did very good this morning, don't you think so? Yeah, I mean, that was tremendously good. So, he started. He started in Galatia, and the Holy Spirit told him no.

So he went to Figia, and the Holy Spirit said no. So he went to Mysia, and then Bithynia. Everywhere he went, he was blocked by God from doing the thing he wanted to do for God.

Finally, he had a vision. It was a vision of a man in Macedonia, which is the northern part of Greece, saying that he should go over there. So he did. And verse 12, it says, he went to Macedonia.

He ended up in a town called Philippi, which was a Roman colony in Greece. And it says, he sat around for several days, waiting for something to happen. Have you ever had to wait for something to happen?

[21 : 32] I hate waiting. I don't know about you all. That's why those lines frustrate me. I have people say, what do you care? It doesn't matter. It's another minute or two. It makes me crazy to wait.

Several days, he's sitting there, waiting, waiting. Something should be happening and nothing's going on. We're going to talk about football during this sermon series.

Today, we got the Buffalo Bills starting their first game. Go Bills, right? I watched the Buffalo Bills. I watched the Buffalo Bills when they were 1 and 13. That tells you how old I am because they play 16 games now.

I watched them when they were 2 and 14. I watched them play Baltimore where they were losing by 47 points and the Buffalo fans were cheering, 50, 50.

After a while, those were the Baltimore Colts. I watched the Buffalo Bills in the rock pile. We didn't actually have nice stadium seats like they are now.

[22 : 37] We sat on these hard, cold, damp benches and my dad, being a compassionate kind of guy, would give us old newspapers to sit on. Anybody else have this experience? You had to be careful.

Sometimes we wore hats because the bottles would fly in the rock pile. And you had to watch where you walked and where you went in that stadium and outside that stadium because it wasn't just once that I had a knife pulled on me.

It was actually dangerous, uncomfortable, and a miserable experience, but we weren't just fans of the Buffalo Bills. We were followers and we were going to stay there no matter what.

Paul is staying in Philippi waiting for something to happen. Now there's another woman in this story and her name is Lydia and I love Lydia. It's a great little story.

Lydia is a role model for success, not just in the first century where she was a phenomenal success, but even in our world. Lydia was a businesswoman. She sold purple cloth, it tells us in verse 14.

[23 : 46] Now purple cloth doesn't mean much to us. We just wear purple and don't think about it. But in the ancient days, to dye a cloth purple was an incredibly expensive process.

And so only the very wealthy people or royalty could wear purple. That's why purple is associated with royalty in history. Because purple was hard to get.

And Lydia sold it. Now that doesn't mean that she necessarily was royalty because she's selling things, but it does mean she went around with wealthy, influential people and she probably made a lot of money selling this cloth.

She obviously had a house big enough to welcome Paul as a guest. She was influential of her own right. And in the first century, for a woman to be independently wealthy and powerful was unusual indeed.

Lydia was on a business trip to Philippi in Greece. And instead of being at the city gate, it says that she was outside of town. Now at the city gate is where the business was being transacted.

[24 : 56] That's where you'd expect to meet Lydia. But she decided it was a Sabbath day. And because she liked to worship God, she went down to the river where the other women gathered.

The women who really didn't have as much money. The women who weren't as influential. The women who had to haul their own water and washed their clothes in the same water. But she went down there because that's a place where you could go if you wanted to pray.

So instead of sipping a latte at the city gate with the business people, she went with the poor women down to the river to pray, studying about the good old days.

Who shall wear that starry crown? Oh, show me the way. In the meantime, Paul can't find a synagogue. The city of Philippi was a Roman colony.

They really didn't have a synagogue. And Paul didn't even know what to do because his pattern was real clear. You go to the synagogue, you preach about Jesus, and the people of faith shift from being Jewish to being Christian, and you start a church with that.

[25 : 57] He had it all figured out. But there's no place to go. So Paul is just sitting. Nothing to do. So he left the city and took a walk on the Sabbath day down to the river.

And that's when it happened. In verse 13, it says, On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a worshiper of God. And the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

God opened her heart. And the truth is, the Christian religion is talking about God. The Christian experience is when God opens our heart and changes and transforms who we are.

Christianity is a lot more than religion. There's a lot of religions in the world that talk about God. But Christianity is about the idea that we can literally know, experience, and have God as part of our lives.

[27 : 13] He gives us a heart attack and changes our life. And that's why we come here to gather to be with God.

Lydia worshipped God. She had the right actions. She had the right religious experiences. But she didn't have God in her heart.

Churches can be that. There's a lot of churches, Christian churches, that are a wonderful club. We're one of them. They have activities for everything you could possibly imagine.

You can come to this church seven days a week and find something going on. I know that because my wife is always asking me, what are the cars in the parking lot for? And half the time, I have no idea.

People gather here doing things, enjoying themselves. It's a great and wonderful thing. It's not a bad thing. But it's not the same as a changed heart because when we change hearts, then we'll change our church and we'll change the world.

[28 : 21] We'll transform who we are and be transformed by God himself. It says that not only was she baptized, so was her whole household.

Not some magic spell. Not something that people get done so that it can be seen as a public appearance or something that we think will somehow in and of itself do something, but a response to what had already happened to her.

Baptism is a powerful thing. It's about us dying to God and becoming alive to Christ. In Galatians chapter 2, it says it this way, I have been crucified with Christ.

I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me. When we die, when we get baptized, the image is that we die and we come back to life, to God.

Do you know that in the early church, many of the baptismal pools were shaped like a coffin? Because the assumption was when you go down in that water, you come out an entirely different person.

[29 : 34] 1 Corinthians 15 talks about it. So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, but it's raised imperishable. It's sown in dishonor, but it's raised in glory.

It's sown in weakness, but it's raised in power. It's sown a natural body, but it's raised a spiritual body. And if there's a natural body, there's also a spiritual body. You know, we associate this with the idea of what it'll be like when we pass from this world to the next, but this is about when we pass from our life lived for this world to a life lived for God.

We become dead to the brokenness, dead to the confusion, dead to the misdirection, dead to our plans, and alive to God. I was listening to old music on YouTube the other day.

I do that sometimes at night. It's just reassuring for me, you know? And now the end is near, and so I face the final curtain. My friends, I'll say it clear.

I'll state my case of which I'm certain. I've lived a life that's free. I've traveled each and every highway and more, much more than this.

[30 : 45] I did it. See, that's what we talk about. We believe that life is about setting our own course, making our own decisions, deciding what we want to do.

But God has other plans. And so God will take us from our confusion, take us from our brokenness, take us from our misdirection, and change things in an incredible way.

And sometimes things change so fast, it's hard to even imagine that what we're seeing is true. So I was in Florida. This is a long time ago. I was on vacation visiting my in-laws, and there was a Buffalo Bills game.

On back when the Buffalo Bills won football games. Remember that? Jim Kelly, the quarterback, remember this? And so it's about halftime, and I know that. So I'm going to turn on the set to see what's going on because, you know, my wife wants to go to visit the relatives, but I just want to see what's going on with the game just to find out what's happening.

Now, I knew the game was blacked out back here in Buffalo, but I was in Florida. I could watch it. I found out Jim Kelly wasn't playing the game. We had Frank Reich in the game.

[31 : 57] Anybody remember Frank Reich? Frank Reich was in the game, and the halftime right afterwards starts with Frank fading back and throwing an interception, and a guy from Houston runs it back for a touchdown, and it was obvious this game is over.

It's 35-3. Third and 15, 16 yards to Andre Reid for the first down. Several plays later, Thomas out, you saw Kenneth Davis rumbles down to the two-yard line.

Then, number 51, Jim Richer, pulls out from the guard spot with the block. Davis to the corner, 35-10, but they really have no shot. Marv Levy says, well, let's have fun. It's the outside kick.

Christie kicks it. Rick Graff, it's off his hands, and Christie, the kicker, falls on it. Buffalo in business, but Jack Hardy not worried. What the heck, he got a big lead. Right. The dunk, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, down the sideline, touchdown, 35-17.

Chris, the rule states that once you step out of bounds, you become ineligible as a receiver. Don Deby here steps out, should have been ineligible. You can see the official looking the other way, doesn't spot it.

[33 : 07] Result is a touchdown if you don't see it. 35-17. Three plays and out for the Oilers. A bad punt by Montgomery. Right. To Reed down the left sideline.

It's 35-24. The Bills are down by 11. They feel they have a shot. On the ensuing Oilers possession, second play, here's one that Warren wanted back.

The wobbler, tipped off Slaughter, picked off by good old Henry Jones, number 20, in Pro Bowl center. Safety makes the pick. On this play, Webster would have been better off having it miss his hands, but he tries to make the play, and Henry takes it on him.

Jack's still wondering. Warren wondering, no, this can't be. Fourth and five, down 11. Barble, he says, go for the end zone. Wright delivers. Over the middle of the read. You've got to be kidding me.

The miracle. Remember this? In Orchard Park, the Buffalo Bills came back from the greatest deficit that ever occurred in NFL history.

[34 : 08] And you couldn't see it, but I could. Because I was in Florida watching it on TV.

I didn't go to my relative's house. It's like, I'm not leaving. Odd side kick in the middle of a game? He's going for it on fourth and five?

What kind of wacky football is this? Something amazing changed. And some people caught it, and some people missed it.

I was talking to Pastor Jean about this, and she said, I was at that game! But my friends wanted to leave at halftime. Now that hurts.

That hurts. But here's the question. What happened? What happened to change a team that was losing on every single level?

[35 : 07] Same people! And turn them into a team that took over the field and won the game. What happened in the halftime?

Some people would say they were inspired. They were inspired. Must have been a Newt Rockne kind of talk in that locker room. And inspired is actually an interesting word because what it comes from is it comes from the idea of having the Spirit in us.

Not just any spirit, not a football spirit, the Spirit of God filling us. In the book of Acts it promises us right in the beginning, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

And then you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. When we are filled with the power of God, it changes everything.

It's a totally different world. God gives us a power that changes our lives.

[36 : 13] But even with that, we have to do it His way. Faith affects us if we follow God's lead.

Many of you know that before I was a pastor, I worked for Chem Lawn Lawn Care Company taking care of lawns. So I'd spend my time walking around in people's backyards for hours a day.

I had lots of time to pray. So I'd pray to God about all sorts of things and one day God answered me. And He said, I want you to be a pastor. I said, no, that's the guy in the next yard.

God, you're not talking to me. Do you know who I am? I don't want you to talk to people from those days in my life because you shouldn't really know who I was.

Except to say I wasn't the kind of guy that should be a pastor. But here's the thing. It wasn't my idea. It was God's idea. And so, after a little while of putting some things together, my wife and I left our house, sold our home, emptied our bank accounts.

[37 : 21] I went back to school and we moved out to this little town called Wyoming. They promised me a salary, \$75 a week, big money, and a beat up old house that I could remodel myself if I wanted to and if I wanted to pay for it.

That's what I was getting. The fellow who was assigning me there was called a district superintendent. We talked about those in the Methodist series and he said to me that he really had no expectations of me.

One of the churches had 15 people attending and the other had 11 and he said, we expect you to close one or both of these before you leave so don't put any pressure on yourselves and I thought, really? I sold my house, quit my job, moved out here to the middle of nowhere in a beat up old house so that I could close churches?

I don't think so. And God had other plans. God had other intentions. The churches did grow in the years that we were there. We had a wonderful time in Wyoming and Covington, New York.

By the time I left there, the churches had about 130 people attending every week. It was a wonderful ministry. I was enjoying myself. We had all sorts of kids. We had a youth group. We had a wonderful ministry going on.

[38 : 41] And then I got a call. We want you to go to some place called Pendleton. Where the heck is Pendleton?

You know, if you ask people from Amherst where Pendleton is, they'll say out by Rochester. They have no idea that Pendleton is north of Amherst. It's fascinating, right? Well, anyways, I came out here to check it out.

I came into a building that smelled of rotten fish. It looked like somebody had thrown stuff against the walls and it just sort of oozed down because it hadn't been painted in years. It was messy.

It was ugly. And the people themselves were not very happy with themselves or with their church. There were a couple of children that were attending at the time. And that was about it.

And I went back home completely depressed, thinking, my gosh, these churches I have, both of them are bigger than this little crummy thing in Pendleton.

[39 : 39] And I asked my best friend who is a pastor, I said, why are they punishing me by sending me to this awful place called Pendleton? This is the truth. But I came.

Because when God calls you to do something, you go and do what God calls you to do and you'll be surprised at what can happen. When God touches us, he releases a power upon us, not to do what we want to do, but to do what he's already decided to bless.

So here's the question. In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus asks the people that are gathered there, what did you come out here for? Why are you here? So what are you doing here?

Why did you come to church this morning? Why do you have anything to do with this place? What do you want to have happen?

There's all sorts of things you could be doing. You could be down at Rich Stadium having a tailgate party. You could be home sleeping.

[40 : 52] Why did you come here today? I would suggest you came here to meet the living God. You came here so your children would experience the power, the amazing life-transforming power of God.

God, I would suggest to you that you decided it was worth getting up a half an hour earlier or coming 45 minutes later depending which one of you we've inconvenienced this morning.

Because you've decided somewhere, somehow, God can make a difference. So are you ready? 2 Corinthians chapter 5 says to us, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come, the old is gone, and the new is here.

We're transformed if we open up our hearts to God and if we listen to what God has to say to us in this world. How many of you think this world needs to be changed?

The rest of you think it's going along pretty good, huh? Wow. That's interesting. thing. The truth is we can change the world. We can bring more hope, more love, more peace, more joy.

[42 : 14] Listen to Elvis singing. There must be a sky shining brighter somewhere. Got to be birds flying higher in the sky somewhere.

If I can dream of a brighter land where all my sisters walk hand in hand, tell me why. Why? Why can't that dream appear?

Well, the only reason is because we refuse to accept it. We refuse to live into it. We choose to live what we've decided, what we want to do, and we end up in brokenness.

We end up stuck. We end up spraying lawns for the rest of our lives. We end up doing the kind of things we shouldn't have been doing. God's not going to bless that.

Let's look at Paul. Paul wanted to go and preach the gospel. Does anybody remember where? Asia. He wanted to preach the gospel in Asia, but God wouldn't let him.

[43 : 19] Instead, he has a man, call him from Macedonia, he goes to Macedonia, he's in Philippi, he doesn't meet a man, he meets a woman. That's just confusing.

But the woman gives her heart to God. Her heart is opened up to God. Now here's the interesting part. She's from a city called Thyatira. Anybody want to guess where it is?

In Asia. And she insists that Paul goes home with her and starts a church in her house. So if Paul would have tried to start a ministry in Asia, he'd been on his own in a place where he knew no one, he had no connections, nothing at all to start with.

Instead, he's going to start a church in the home of a wealthy, influential woman who's got a big house and is excited and fired up for God. You see, you see, we think we have it all planned out.

But when we do our plans, we end up with unintended consequences. When God does his plans, he makes the dreams happen. There was a time when I would sit on newspapers at the stadium and cheer on the Buffalo Bills.

[44 : 30] And I've got to tell you, it'll be a sunny day in Buffalo if the Bills win today, man. Yeah, I'm a Bills fan. That has not changed. I still follow the Buffalo Bills. I still will watch what they do, but I got to tell you the truth, it doesn't power my life.

There's something much more powerful changing my life. I'm running a different race now. And as a Christian, I'm inviting you to go from being a fan to being a follower. from being someone who says, maybe I'll give it an hour now and then on occasion when I have the opportunity to somebody who's willing to commit to this.

To not only come and worship God and have your kids go to Sunday school, but to go to Sunday school with them and learn and grow about God and to change your life with God.

1 Corinthians says, run in such a way as to get the prize. everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Forever. So why are we changing now? Why all this stuff going on, Pastor Tom? Why all of a sudden did something, what happened?

[45 : 45] I'll tell you what happened. I probably shouldn't, but I will. You know that over the last couple of three years in different places I babbled about retiring, right? You all know that.

And I asked people if they want me to retire and they said no. Well, I don't care. I'm going to do it my way. You know what I'm talking about, right? My life, I've served my time. I went to St.

Louis to a conference. Took some people along with the hope that it would have an effect on them. I already knew the stuff they were going to teach, so what did I care? Have you ever had a preacher preach exactly right, directly to you as if the whole sermon was just for you and nobody else?

So here's this guy who gets up and he says, if you're called by God, you don't have the option of quitting. You don't have the option of resigning.

You may be dismissed, but you cannot quit. I said, oh, shoot. Seriously?

[46 : 49] Seriously? Seriously? So, you know, if I'm gone in a year or two, why would I make any changes? Let's let somebody else do it. Don't rock the boat.

Don't mess anything up. But if we're going to do this for a while now together, and I don't know how long a while it is because I haven't been dismissed yet, but we're going to do it the way God would want it to do. Amen? And if that means some changes and that means some adjustments and that means we've got to do something different, maybe even come to church at a different hour, maybe even encourage our kids to actually get Jesus in their heart, not just join some holy club.

If that means that somewhere along the line we have to actually go from being a fan to a follower of God, maybe we'll see the miracles start happening. It's not our plan.

It's not our time. It's not our place. It's God's. We've been waiting a long time in this country for God to do something special.

As we watch the people of faith seem to shrink, we've been waiting a long time for some kind of revival power from God. Well, guess what? It's time. There has never been a time in my lifetime where so many people needed Jesus as they need him now, especially in this part of the world.

[48 : 08] This morning in the Buffalo News, I saw an article by the New York Times talking about how people were going down to Houston to help the folks rebuild their houses and the picture was of the people gathered around in a circle before they started working, they had to pray.

You saw it too? What an amazing idea. Who put that idea in the minds of the people who write the New York Times? I wouldn't have expected that to come. But the world is waiting.

The world is ready. First Corinthians chapter 15 tells us, listen, I'm going to tell you a mystery. We won't all sleep, but we'll all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet.

For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with imperishable and the mortal with immortality.

And God has decided that this dead faith religion club thing is no more. It's time to change our hearts, change our church, and change the world.

[49 : 12] this is my desire to honor you.

And God with all my heart I worship you. all I have within me I give you grace all that I adore is in you Lord I give you my heart I give you my soul I live for you alone every breath that I take every breath that I take

For you are gone Every breath that I take Every moment I'm awake Lord, I'm your way in me Lord, I give you my heart I give you my soul I live for you alone Every breath that I take Every moment I'm awake Lord, I'm your way in me guitar solo You brought me out upon the waters

The great unknown The fear may fail And where I find you in the mystery In oceans deep Your faith will stand And I will fall upon your name And keep my eyes above the waves With oceans rise And so will rest In your embrace For I am yours And you are mine The grace abounds in deepest waters

And so on The sovereign man Will be my guide When he may fail And he surrounds me You never let me You never let me You once and I I will fall upon your name And I will fall upon your wings And keep my eyes above the waves When oceans rise And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine I am yours I am yours And you are mine Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders

[54 : 26] For the near walk upon the waters Wherever you would call me Take me deeper than my feet would ever wander And my faith will be made stronger In the presence of my Savior Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine Wherever you would call me Take me deeper than my feet would ever wander And my faith will be made stronger In the presence of my Savior Savior And I will call upon your name

And I will call upon your name And keep my eyes above the waves And keep my eyes above the waves When oceans rise When oceans rise The soil will rest in your embrace And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine And you are mine Amen We come here today renewing our trust, building our faith, being filled with God's love And we come here today recognizing that we are all sinners in need of God's grace

With a pick-me-up every single week to say get me on the right track Lord So would you pray a prayer of confession along with me Lord I am a sinner Lord I am a sinner I need your grace I need your grace I need to trust you more I need to trust you more And follow your lead And follow your lead Strengthen my faith Strengthen my faith Forgive my sins Forgive my sins Set me on the right path Set me on the right path Set me on the right path And fill me with your love Set me with your love In Jesus' name we pray In Jesus' name we pray Amen Amen Hear the good news Christ died for us while we were still sinners And this proves God's love for you and for me So 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 And now as forgiven body of Christ Let's share the peace of the spirit with one another And if you're a parent your children are coming back into the sanctuary

[illegible]

Hold me closely to his side With love and strength for each new day He will make a way
God will make a way God has made a way for us.

[59 : 05] God has made a way for us to have the hope of eternal life. God has made the way for us to be restored to relationship with our God and Savior. What a wonderful thing God has done for us.

He invites us to the table. Whoever we are, if we love God, if we repent of our sin, if we seek to live in peace as disciples of Jesus Christ, he welcomes us to the table and invites us to be part of the family.

He invites us to receive his grace and mercy. So come. You are welcome this morning. Whoever you are, come seeking God.

The Lord be with you. Lift up your hearts. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. 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, and spoke to us through your prophets.

[60 : 24] 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.

Your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. 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.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread and gave thanks to you. He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take and eat. This is my body, which is given for you.

[61 : 43] Do this in remembrance of me. And when the supper was over, he took the cup and gave you thanks and praise.

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 and for many for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. 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 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.

