

Series: Messianic Fulfillment

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon #8: Passion Week - Tangent Points

Hebrews 4:15-16

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- October 18, 2020

Good morning, Grace! Thanks for showing up here at the worship center and for watching us online. It is a privilege to be part of the ministry at Grace Covenant Church. And we're working through our reading through the Bible together, and now we're looking at the last week of Jesus Christ, which is called the Passion Week.

If you would, could you give me five minutes after the message today? The next couple of weeks or so I wanted to talk to us as a church about the kind of stuff going around and the craziness around us and how we could thrive as a church in the context of the insanity. And I didn't want to take away from our Bible teaching to do that, so I think I'm going to start doing that for a couple of weeks. If you would, pray "Amen" and then just give me five minutes. Give me five minutes.

And I appreciate the weeks off that I had. I had two weeks off. Melinda and I celebrated our thirty-fifth honeymoon. We went to San Diego and enjoyed that. What a good time. And no church is looking for pastors there ... so at Newport Beach we met our daughters—both girls are living there in southern California now. We got to spend some time with them.

Whenever I go to Newport Beach I just kind of glitch, because it was one of the worst times in my whole life, July 4, 1982. The Fourth of July, 1982, and I'm at Newport Beach, feet in the warm sand. And it was classic southern California—right where you drive up by the pier, there is a convertible Rolls-Royce with four very tanned body builders just sitting there, looking around. If you grew tired of marveling at the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, you could turn and marvel at them—classic.

But there was a cool breeze like there always is there, and people young and old were having fun as far as you could see in every direction. And then there was me. So many people having a good time.

And the story actually begins when it was my ambition to go to seminary to be a Catholic priest, maybe, but probably just be a very engaged deacon in that denomination. And the seminary that I was attending was out in southern California and required me to find a church where I could work for twenty hours a week. And so, the deadline was happening and I didn't realize I had to find something fast. So, I borrowed a ton of money—it was a very expensive flight—over \$600 to fly to Ontario—and I went from parish to parish to look for a Catholic church to work in. And I had enough money to rent from a place called Rent-A-Wreck. And they did not disappoint. Fred Flintstone had better brakes than I did.

And after spending three days, eight hours a day, interviewing at various parishes, they were all pointing me to this one woman, Sister Cratchitt. She was head of all the nuns in San Bernardino County. And in our conversation that we had, she just said rather frankly that there was no place in the Catholic church for me; that she was asking me to leave.

And that was July 3—but I'm over it now—it's all good, it's behind me. So, anyway, it wasn't just like the death of a dream; there was a whole part of my identity wrapped up in being Irish Catholic. And I would have to go home and explain to my parents, which would be a huge disappointment to them. And confusion: to the day they died, they didn't know why I did what I did. Not to mention going home to Catholic friends: they couldn't understand what was happening to me. And Protestant friends never did.

So, here I am at Newport Beach just looking at everyone having a great time and never feeling so alone in all of my life.

The Cassidys came over from Ireland in 1885. And as far as I know there has never been one who left the Catholic church. So, I went back to my hotel so I could cry some more ... all those people having fun was making it worse. And when I ran out of tears, it was as though something happened to me in that room. It was this feeling of the presence of God and it was like I heard this: *I understand. I know this kind of aloneness. And you are not alone because you can't be. Because I promised I will never leave you. I will never forsake you.*

It was a huge moment in my life.

God Understands

Today's lesson is called "Tangent Point." A tangent point is a phrase in geometry that is referencing when a line touches a curve. Leibniz put it this way: "... an infinitely close point of

contact on a curve.” And today we’re going to look at tangent points in life with God—infinately close points of contact with Yahweh. Even though He is vast and transcendent and holy, holy, holy, there are times in our lives where He comes and He says, “And yet, I understand.”

To be understood is maybe the single deepest psychological need in the human soul—to be understood. Jewel writes in a song—she’s a poet and she writes, “Oh, fragile soul, when no one feels the same.”

It’s not loneliness. It’s a close cousin to loneliness—aloneness. It’s the last unicorn. There are none like you. There is no one that understands. All alone. And not just with fellow humans—so much more with God. Does He understand? Does He have any aspect of what’s happening here? *Do you comprehend the depth of my experience and the feelings I might have in the high points or the low points?* Or is He distant? Is He transcendent?

And when people can’t feel as though God is part of those moments, whether they be mountaintops or in valleys below, they lose their ability to serve Him and enjoy Him. To know Him is to love Him, and if you don’t know that He’s there with you, it’s hard to serve. It’s hard to love. It’s hard to talk and pray.

So, today, here’s the point. I want to prove to you that **God has gone to tremendous lengths for you and I to believe that He relates to us so that we can relate to Him.** There’s a big “so that” in there.

The Lord God Yahweh can identify with us so that we can identify with Him. And God has gone to great lengths to make sure that we can understand that, so that we can know that we can be deeply understood. Because being deeply understood is certainly one of the greatest needs for the health of a human soul.

Look, maybe some of you have had experiences with something that was mind-blowingly good or inexplicably evil or wrong, or some kind of suffering, and you go to friends and you try to explain what’s happened and they finish your sentence. But they’re not finishing your sentence the right way. And then you go to your family. You know them, you grew up with them, and you see that they don’t get it either. The people that are supposed to know you best don’t know what you’re going through in this one thing. And so, you just wonder, *Well, I guess I’ll just stop talking about it. I’ll just roam the earth filled with people at Newport having fun, and I’ll just be in isolation. That’s okay. That’s what I got dealt.*

And then you're sitting in some Starbucks and you're overhearing somebody behind you and they're talking about your experience somehow. They—perfect strangers—understand what's happened. You have that tangent point with them and you turn and you say, "How do you know this? Who are you?" And they just say, "We meet on Tuesdays in the church basement." Right? Yeah.

They're called support groups. And what's the point of support groups? I bet there's over a hundred and fifty different kinds of support groups. Don't get me wrong—there are ones for those doing well in life, like Young Presidents Organization, for men and women who have succeeded early in life. They can't find people who can relate to them, so they started Young Presidents Organization.

But also, organizations, care groups, support groups, that are for cancer, or divorce, or addiction. Do you know why they do that? Because you have a group of people.

Do you want to share advice?

Yeah, sure.

Give you some answers?

Yeah, all right.

That's not why. It's because these people understand what you're going through. They get it. *I have nothing in common with any of these people sitting in this circle except this one thing, and this one thing is a huge thing. So, I'll see you on Tuesday. I'll bring the donuts.*

That's the nature of support groups. It's this longing in our souls to be understood. How much more for Yahweh God to understand us, the maker and creator of who we are and what we do? He has to be able to have one of these tangent points in these places of great celebration and in valleys of dearth. Does God understand? Does He understand this aloneness? Because the silence—when you feel like God is silent in your life, that silence will ruin or retard or maybe even end a very good, godly faith--if you believe that God is absent, if you believe that He can't relate to what's happening to you.

This happened to a friend of mine. We go way back. Let me tell you her story; it went like this. She's a very modest woman. She's a Puritan in the best expression of that. She is shy and private and somewhat quiet. And she had some medical things going on and ended up going to the hospital in the emergency room. And if you've been there, they take you, eventually, in the

back and they give you this little piece of, I don't know, dental floss or toilet paper and say, *Here, put this on, make sure it's open in the back.* That's all you get.

So, if you have modesty, you lost it before you even got through there. And what happened is that the doctor who was in charge of that particular section came in and saw that she was actually digressing rather quickly. And so, they put her on the gurney and they ran her down the hospital hallway. And in that, her gown flew open. And because there was such a ruckus, everyone was turning and looking at her. She was completely exposed. Then she went off into a pre-operation room, and while they were there, more people came in: more doctors, more nurses, and here it comes ... some interns on rotation about the age of her own children. And she was just laid out. And it was not like her to have that kind of experience and she just grit her teeth before she started weeping bitterly. And she thought, *Dear God in heaven, could it have been so hard, or was it so inconvenient, that someone could not have tucked my gown underneath me before this all started? Was any of this necessary?* And she just cried.

But she resolved on that day that her relationship with God was gone. Not completely—she was a mom, she had children, she wanted to make sure she went to church. It was good for the family, it was good for the kids. But she wasn't going to have conversations like she used to. She was a deep woman of God who loved her prayer life, but on this day, she could have used a little call from heaven to say, *I'm here and I missed that opportunity to cover you.* She felt all alone. Her faith was now duty-driven, not love-driven. That's what happens when we start to believe that God cannot connect with us, that He doesn't understand us.

And I want you to hear today that God has gone to incomprehensible lengths to prove to you and to me and that He does understand us, so that we can understand Him. He does connect with us in infinite places of tangent points, so that we can touch Him.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

Look what it says in Hebrews chapter 4: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses." We do not have that kind of high priest who is unable to

sympathize with our weaknesses. “But rather, we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, and yet without sin.” And yet without sin.

The point of this passage and the point of our lesson today is—distant? Unknowing? Uncaring? Au contraire. So much so, that it says in this passage that in your heights and in your peaks and your troughs, God has these infinite points of contact with us. He understands us so that we can understand Him. He is never closer, quite often, than in these places of significant highs or in these dreadful depths of low.

Passion Week

Here’s an example that I’m going to use, because as we go through our Bible reading we have Passion Week, or the Great Week, as some churches call it. Passion Week because of all the passion all over. And we’re going to look at the Passion Week and survey it and see all the ways that God can relate to the various expressions of our own experience. And as this week progresses, the emotions digress, or they get deeper and more isolating. You feel more alone than you did on Sunday. There’s a progression, or a digression. And the point is this: that God has gone to great extremes to relate to us so we could relate to Him. That’s the point.

Palm Sunday



Palm Sunday: that's when Jerusalem was swollen with Jewish believers and they had realized that Jesus was the king and they had a coronation in some respects. They put Him on a donkey colt and ran Him down from the Mount of Olives and they're all screaming, "Hallelujah! Here comes our king! Here comes our king!"

Have you ever felt like you've had special favor and been gifted in some kind of great celebration? You've achieved what you've hoped for. This is a flavor of aloneness that's somewhat unusual. But there is an aloneness that comes from being on top. When you've worked hard and you've fought and you did what you needed to do, and sometimes you get to that place because since second grade people have been saying, "Most likely to succeed."

Or maybe the people at juvenile detention said that you're never going to live to twenty-three. Either way, you end up on top, and when you get there and you have that championship belt and you're kind of just coming over the intoxication of the celebration itself; when the crowd leaves and it's just you and your thoughts, you'll hear, *Is that all? The belt is not enough. Is this really me?* And no one else understands. Because if you complain about being on top, people will resent you for that. *Man, if I had what you have ...* So, you can't tell anyone.

And in this case, it happens because the roar of the crowd, and like most crowds, they're all chanting His name on Sunday. On Friday, many of these same people will be screaming, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" That's a college football coach right there. And they have nowhere to go. It's called the lonely whine of the top dog. And some of you have had power or wealth or popularity and have felt this kind of aloneness. And Palm Sunday comes to you and says, *Oh, yeah, you're not alone. You're not the first to experience this.* You and Jesus may have more in common than you think. You're not alone.

Tuesday: The Temple Cleansing



Then comes Tuesday. Is anybody here angry, so raging angry at these hypocrites in power using their bully power to take money from us? Anyone? The people in power who are supposed to be serving the people are actually using that influence to illegitimately steal from the people they're supposed to be serving. And that's why—me? John Wick for president. Boom. (I think we just lost our tax-exempt status.)

We can certainly be angry about that in the context of politics, and rightfully so. In this case, these are religious leaders using their bully power to extort people who just want to come to the temple and worship God in the way it's been described and required to do. Jesus comes in and says, *No, no, no. This no more.* And on Tuesday there's the temple cleansing. And He turns over the tables and He is expressing what happens in the Bible where it says, "Be angry but do not sin."

Anybody here angry and trying not to sin? Jesus says, *Yeah, I know what that's like. That's a good thing, but you're not alone in that.*

Thursday: Jesus Is Betrayed

The betrayal of Jesus comes next. Fifteen hundred years before Shakespeare penned in the biography of Julius Caesar where he says, "Et tu, Brutus?" Jesus says, "Judas, do you betray

the Son of Man with a kiss?” Wow. In all of human history there has never been a stab-in-the-back betrayal that is more macabre or more immoral than that day. Judas’s kiss.



Anybody here invested in someone, grew them up, mentored them? And the bitterness that happens when you’re stabbed in the back—that knife—it leaks bitterness. They didn’t just take your trust, they took your client list. And how do you live with that? Here’s a way to look at it; here’s how to live with that. You listen to what Jesus says in this. You put your ear down to this passage and you’ll hear Him say, *I know. I know. I’ve felt that too. I can relate to you and you can relate to me. So just let it go. Let that go.*

Thursday: Jesus Abandoned by Friends in Time of Need

And the next passion in Passion Week is the betrayal from his friends. The most braggadocious rooster among the disciples, Peter, is called down by a rooster crowing three times.



Anyone here ever turned and looked at your friends when you needed them the most and they were staring at their shoes? That is a lonely day. It is a long walk home. Your ears are ringing. You thought they had your back. And Jesus says, *Yeah, I know. I can relate to that. And you can relate to me.*

God has gone to extreme measures so that you would know this: that He can relate to you so that you can relate to Him.

Friday: Jesus Falsely Accused by Authorities



Jesus goes to the next stage—it's the kangaroo court. He's being accused of something He didn't do and He has to live with the consequences of that fake trial. You don't have to go far from here to see that happening. In Williamson County it happened again! It keeps happening that people are being accused of things, the trial takes place, all the witnesses are lined up, and injustice thrives. Have you heard the interviews with these men and women who have served these crazy sentences and are released later when justice is done appropriately? Here's what happens. I think it probably has to happen to every one of them. But when I listen to them, I'm always leaning in listening to this. The interviewer says something like this: "What were you thinking, like, where's the justice now? Where's the justice now?" And they have to give justice over to the Lord, sovereign God. Because on that day they're free. When they hear God say back to them—when they're screaming, "Where's the justice, Lord? Where's the justice?"—they'll hear the Lord say, "Oh, I know. I know. It's not here and it's not now, but it's certain and it's soon. I understand. Now let's move on together."

Friday: Jesus Is Beaten and Humiliated



Part of Passion Week is the beating and humiliation of Jesus Christ. He wasn't just beaten—He was humiliated. He needed to be embarrassed in this storyline. That's how they did that, but the Lord in His sovereignty chose that kind of death with the extreme measures so that He could relate to us and then we could relate to Him.

You know, when people come here sometimes, I'll have this conversation with them. People will want to get more involved at Grace and they'll say, "I don't know—I just don't feel like I can fit in at Grace because your campus is beautiful, your buildings are beautiful, all the people are beautiful. I don't know if anybody has gone through what I've been through and suffered the things that I've suffered. It seems like everybody has their stuff together here."

And I'll say, "You're visiting, right? Or maybe I just know too many stories. No, we're not a church where people have never suffered and have their stuff together. We just practice hygiene mostly, except for Ralph over here. Ralph could shower more. But other than that, we just put on a good show for Sunday because we're dressing up to go to the Lord's house."

But listen, friends, in this church we have people—the two most beautiful smiles in this congregation belong to people that are part of the Victim Protection Services. And they have suffered—put in a dungeon, beaten for months. And their smiles are pretty because their teeth

are fake. They had to be replaced. But the souls behind their smiles ... it was in those dungeons that they saw that they were not alone. Jesus says, “I know what that’s like. I do.”

You know that friend that I started with, the woman who was humiliated on that gurney in her nakedness, people staring over her, she thinking that they are laughing at her? Well, her stalling faith continued for months and that went on to years. Again, it was perfunctory—going to church for the kids and for the husband and all that stuff. And then one Lent they were studying the Passion Week. And they were going through and reading and looking at some of the paintings that we’ve been showing on the screen. And she saw Jesus naked or near naked, being drug through the streets of Jerusalem for the sake of humiliation. And she looked and it startled her, and she saw Him. And she saw all the shame that she had never seen that He had always carried. She realized, “I understand Him. I know that shame.”

And it’s like you know that shame because He knows your shame. He could relate to you and now you can relate to Him. Do you see?

And it was as though whatever the screwdriver was that fell into the gears of her spiritual life finally came unclogged. And then she could see God and experience God in ways that she never knew she could have. In other words, she couldn’t have known Christ the way she does without the shame and the humiliation that she went through. Because now the event that separated her from intimacy with Christ is now the thing that binds her to Him. It’s an infinite point of contact. It was their shame that brought them together.

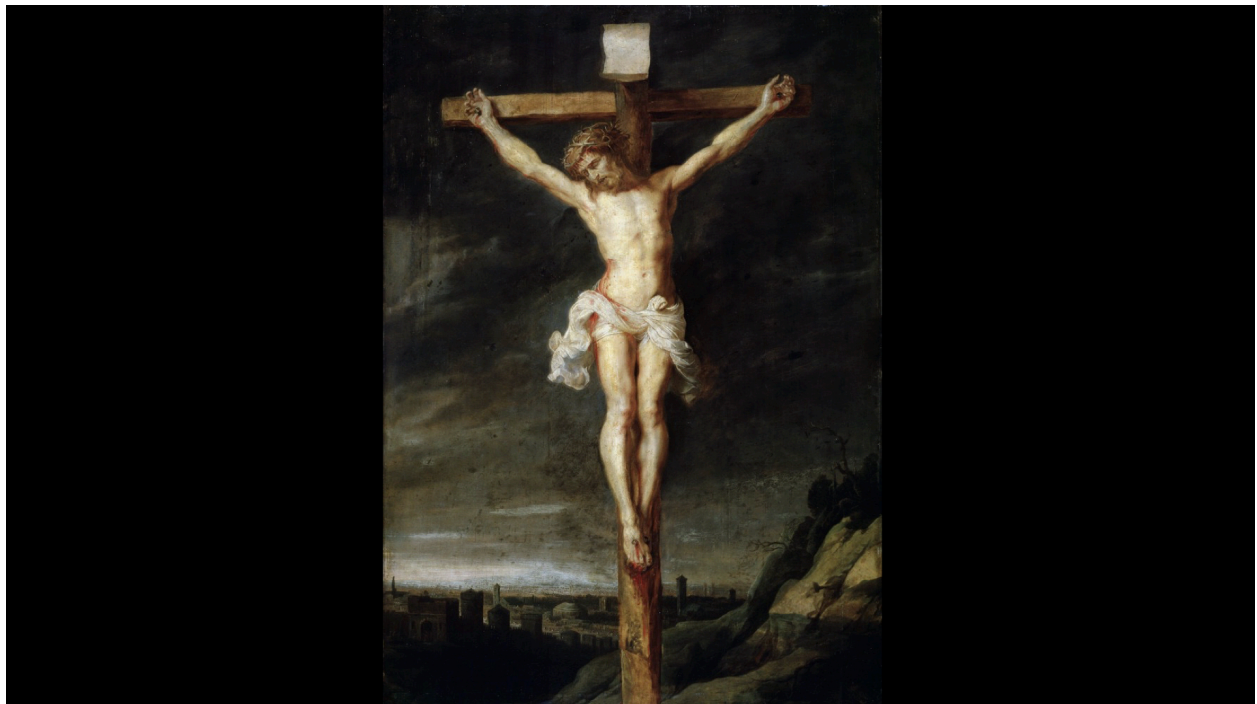
Philippians 3:10-11

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death,¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3—that’s what it means, verses 10 and 11: “I want to know Christ. I just want to know Christ. Yes, I want to know the power of His resurrection and the participation in His suffering, to be like Him in His death, somehow attaining to the resurrection of the dead.” I’m going to become like Him somehow in His suffering and His death so I can enjoy that resurrection too.

Look, He's the suffering Savior. That's how you connect with the suffering Savior—you suffer with Him. You cannot know Him unless you have suffered. He has not left you alone. He is there in those moments. He is hunting us down, friends, so that we might call Him our Lord and King. The extravagant depths of what He has done so that we could experience this intimacy together is inexplicable in many ways.

Friday: The Crucifixion



The crucifixion is the climax of that because here is something that the angels do not understand. So, I won't try to explain this. But this is where Jesus chooses this: He chooses to relate to us in a way that He doesn't have to and has no concept of really understanding. He's going to relate to our sin. That's what the crucifixion is about. He's going to relate to our shame. He doesn't have shame. He doesn't have guilt. He doesn't have frailty. He has to go outside to us, to me, to anyone else who puts their faith in Him, and says, *I'm going to have to take that from you because I know not of those things.*

And so, He takes that on. He chooses to take that on, that shame and that guilt and that frailty, so that we could relate to Him. And that day when He takes on that burden is called Good Friday. We call it Good Friday. And it is not good for Him. But it is good for us. He became like

us so that we could become like Him. He relates to us so that we could relate to Him. He identifies with us so that we can identify with Him.

Resurrection Sunday



This is all bringing this together. That's how it makes it complete. And friends, it doesn't end on Friday. Every once in a while, I hear a national speaker say, "Two thousand years ago Jesus died for our sins..." And they leave it there. That's not how it ends. It's not about Good Friday. It's about resurrection Sunday. Two thousand years ago Jesus died for our sins and then rose again! And then rose again, according to His righteousness! On Friday He became like us so that on Sunday we could become like Him. That's the point of it. That's the story of the resurrection.

Romans 6:5

Of we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.

Look what it says in Romans. "If we have been unified with Him like this in His death, we shall certainly also be unified with Him in His resurrection." That's the tangent point. We're

in there in the tomb with Him. This is Christianity—this is the definition of Christianity. If you put your faith in these things, that you joined Him on the cross, you deserved to be on the cross—I'm on that cross with Jesus. He relates to me—He chose to—so I can relate to Him. We go to the tomb together. We're buried, we're paying the cost of our sin and our shame and our frailties. It's a crowded cross, it's a crowded tomb, and then Sunday—it's an empty tomb. And in that empty tomb we are granted honor and peace and power. That's quite an exchange. That's a good trade, isn't it? He related to us so we could relate to Him. He took on our sin so we could take on His righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Look what it says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Look how it makes sense now. “He made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf...” Right. “...so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Have I convinced you that God has gone to extravagant, extreme lengths so that you would believe this: that He can relate to you, so that you can relate to Him; that He has done whatever He has to do so that you would never feel a sense of isolation and aloneness in whatever your experience might be, good or bad?

Application: You Need to Trust Him

So, what do you do with that? What do you do with it? This is the mindset. This is the way that a person who believes these truths lives.

Hebrews 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Look what it says in Hebrews chapter 4. I'll read the first sentence, because we've already read that. But he does this huge "so that". Watch this. This is how to apply. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses." No, no—Passion Week—we get that. "We have one that in actually every aspect has been tested as we are except without sin, so that ..." – so that, so that. "Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need."

What's the application for everything that we've talked about so far? So that we could go to the throne of grace with boldness. So that we could receive grace and mercy to help in time of need.

My brothers and my sisters, how do you approach that throne? Are you walking into the throne room of the most holy God with your head down? Are you cowering your way in from hiding behind pillar after pillar, like some six-year-old girl who's afraid of her own shadow? Because this passage says that we have a high priest that understands us, so that we could understand Him. He took on our sin so that we could take on His righteousness, so that, no matter what we've done, where we've been, what we've fought in the last five minutes, we can walk the center aisle of that throne room with our head up and our shoulders back. Because listen—what does it say?—it's a throne of grace. It's not a throne of justice. It's a throne of grace, so that we might receive grace and mercy in that place.

So, get back up. Get up, get up! Stop wallowing in whatever was two minutes ago or twenty years ago. Get up! You say, *I don't feel like I can do that. I don't feel like I can approach the holiness of God with all that kind of boldness.* And here's what the Bible says: *Don't care. I don't care what you feel like.* The Bible says what is true. These are true facts: that you are not alone in your feelings, you are not alone in your experience, you are not alone in these transcendental moments, these existential feelings of highs and lows. You have not been left

behind. You can't be left behind. He promised otherwise. And so, because He has related to us and we can relate to Him, we pray. We pray with boldness and with courage. We pray with confidence. We pray with certainty that the Bible is true. And in our places where we're feeling like we're helpless or alone in a violent world, we just say, *But we are not alone*. We have a Lord Jesus Christ who is not like a priest that can't identify with us, but one that has identified with us in every single way and more, and is inviting us into the throne room of grace to have a meal. Bon appétit, Grace. Bon appétit. Let's enjoy that.

That's Passion Week—God becoming man so that we could become like Christ. Let's pray.

In your own mind can you imagine a place and time in your life that was maybe like my beach trip, where you felt like you were without God, that His silence was destroying your hope in Him. Can you think of a time? Have you lost a child? Can't you hear God say, "Yeah, me too—my son, my only son, the one that I love. I know what that's like. You don't cry alone. You don't weep alone. You don't even celebrate and dance alone."

God has become like us so that we could become like Him.

Lord, I would ask that You would help us reimagine some of the things in our lives where we have projected on You a distance or ambivalence or lack of care or concern in our lives. And yet that's when we were the closest, infinite places of touch, these tangent points. Lord, we'd love to re-remember Your presence in our lives. Lord, I'd ask that we would learn to boldly approach Your throne, not because of what we've done but because of what You've done for us; that we would find ourselves regularly, like a small child, talking with You, about You, throughout the day, because we can; that we would share those feelings and those dark recesses of deep passions with You and find ourselves at a table with someone who completely understands. And I'd ask that You would help us gain wisdom from those moments. Just like we sang this morning, "I know that You are with me and You are for me. I know You've been behind me and You go before me. You walk beside me in the darkest valleys. I know You are with me. You led me here where it's dry in the desert because You've been in the desert. You bring bones back to life. Bring my bones back to life."

And so, we sing in Your delight and because we know that You are with us. Lord, I pray that we would believe that promise that You would never leave us or forsake us, in the best times, in the worst of times. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Wow, that's good, huh? Jesus loves us and know us.

Well, listen, I thought before we go I would talk to you guys as your pastor, I guess, and as a friend. First of all, I'd like to say thank you very much for being so patient with us and the leadership and everybody on staff. This is our first global pandemic and honestly, we didn't really know what we were doing. So, there's that.

And then those of you who helped us with the survey that we just sent around—it only took a couple of minutes to do it—that's given us a lot of great information about how to go forward and those sorts of things, and where to go forward. So, I'll tell you more about that in coming weeks. We're doing more of that data analysis.

But what I want to talk to you today about—this little family time thing—is I was remembering in Acts chapter 4 where Peter and John are boldly proclaiming the gospel. And the audience response--the religious leaders are saying, *You know, these guys don't have much education. And they're not all that well-refined.* And yet it says, "They were astonished because they recognized that they had been with Jesus." They were astonished because they recognized that those two, Peter and John, had been with Jesus.

And it reminded me of the definition of a disciple. A disciple is when you become like Christ in all of life; when you become like the person you're being disciplined by in all of life. That was the nature of it back then, and it still is today. And so, these guys are acting like Jesus, and so—*Wow, you're acting like Jesus.*

And then it occurred to me, *Wow, we act like whoever we're being disciplined by.* And I'm bringing that up because I watched some things going on nationally, but also even locally, and even kind of within our church. And I've seen people go back and forth on social media. And I'm watching the whole thing happen, and I'm thinking, *Oh, now I get it. He's a disciple of Rachel Maddow and she's a disciple of Sean Hannity.* Because they're acting just like them. They're only taking pieces of the truth, they're using condescending language, they're abusing terms, they're name calling, for the point of division. And I thought, *That makes sense. You get Rachel Maddow and Sean Hannity in a room and it's going to tear the place apart.*

But what was sad is that these are both brothers and sisters in Christ. They weren't disciples of Jesus ... no, no, not that day. They were disciples of these organizations that literally make money off getting us to be addicted to anger and fear. And they keep us as users by keeping the fear and the anger coming.

I really recommend you listen to a sermon we did: "Opinion, Belief, and Conviction," three weeks ago. It is the idea of technology literally using scientific methods to get us addicted to social media and other forms, and then they're also using abusive language and spiritual warfare to destroy sacred things like the Church and the families. And I'm watching this.

And then it occurred to me this week that it is an addiction. It's absolutely an addiction—an addiction to click on something that will make me angry or afraid. And so, I thought, *Well, if it's an addiction, I know stuff about addictions. Let's just treat it like an addiction. Let's go.*

Because it's kind of like getting in shape. You cannot get in shape unless you stop doing bad things and then start doing good things. You've got to stop the bad. You've got to quit the two packs of cigarettes and all of that other bad food. You cannot out-exercise a bad diet. That's just true. You cannot get healthy—I'm talking to myself here—I cannot get healthy unless I put away the anger and the fear.

So, here's what I'm doing. I'm looking at this just like an addiction. "Hi, I'm Matt and I'm addicted to media-driven anger." You say, "Hi, Matt." You guys are pretty new to this. Okay. This is how addiction things work. "Hi, I'm Matt and I'm addicted to media-driven anger."

[Congregation responds.] Hi, Matt.

Here's what I'm going to do. I'm looking for people to join me. I'm not going to watch anything but local news, if even that, until November 4th. Nothing. And I'm going to go on social media and if somebody's doing stuff on social media, like I care, I'm going to unfollow them. I've unfollowed a couple of people. I have to tell you, it's kind of cool. I don't think it's a good feeling, but it's a feeling. And I'm looking for more people to unfollow. So, I'm just saying ...

And if you know the twelve step or CR crowd, there's a thing you start off with: it's called a desire chip. It like, I just want a desire to be free from anger, and I want to be free from fear. And I wonder if there's anybody else out here who wants a desire chip, who just wants to stop this nonsense.

Here's what I want to do. I want anybody who wants to, to join me. No national media, no social media. Get this cancer, get this addiction behind us. One day at a time, just like addictions are. Maybe next week we get a one-week chip. I don't know how that works. But if I have a conversation with somebody it will be just like if I were an alcoholic. I'd say, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm in a bet with this friend at church and I'm not going to do any of that stuff until ...". And I'm going to shoot for November, Thanksgiving ... and then Christmas ... and then maybe New Year's. I'm getting greedy on this. I really am. Because here's what I have to lose. I have to lose my anger; I have to lose my fear. Here's my cost benefit analysis. Here's what I'm going to pick up: happiness, unity, freedom, and maybe a couple of friends.

Anybody want to join? Let's do this. Say, "Hi, my name is _____. " (Fill in your name.) "And I'm going to stop this addiction."

Everybody: "Hi, my name is Matt, and I'm going to stop this addiction." All right? Let's come back next week and let's get our one-week chips together, okay? Let's hear some music on the way out. Let the ushers release you. Keep your masks on until you leave the worship center. That would be great.

See you guys next week. One day at a time—one day at a time! See you next week.