Hungry For More — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 9:14–17 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 3, 2022 · *21 Days: Fast & Pray*

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Thanks to the team for leading us. I'm not real good at the old old fashioned sayings, but you hang around Broadview long enough, you hang around enough older people, you learn a couple of old sayings. And there's a saying that preachers used to say, old school preachers used to say after a really powerful moving time of worship through song, that if you couldn't if you can't preach after that then your wood's wet. Has anybody ever heard of that saying before? And let's let's hope the wood ain't wet. So that was a great time of worship.

Thanks to Crystal for leading us and the team as well. They did a great job. And we want to continue that spirit of worship through the preaching of the word. I don't have nearly as awesome of a voice as Crystal does. But it's a similar kind of act of worship. We sing praise to the Lord and then when we open up the scriptures we receive from the Lord. I believe I'm just old fashioned that way, that when the scripture speaks God speaks. And if we can understand what the Scripture says, what it meant to the original audience, and how it applies today, then we can get a pretty good idea of what God wants to say today.

Certainly he speaks in unique ways to people individually. I'm not discounting that. Certainly there are ways in which this text will apply to you individually that I have no idea how it will do that. But my goal as your preacher this morning is to try to extrapolate what I believe God is saying in any individual text. And the text we're looking at this morning is in the book of Matthew. So if you have your Bible, we're in Matthew chapter nine. For those of you who are visiting with us, we typically go through books of the Bible in our church, and we're not going through the book of Matthew right now.

We did go through the book of Luke several years ago. It took us about three years to do that. I guess it was about three years ago. And for whatever reason, this current season we're in, we're going through the book of Revelation. We started that last Easter and we just go work line by line, chapter by chapter, and it's been a great experience going through Revelation.

But going up to Easter, we pressed pause. We were at a natural stopping point in the book of Revelation, and we I sensed the Lord in my own life leading me to engage in a season of extended prayer and fasting and as I sought the Lord and prayed about that and how that was going to work, he made clear to me that w it should be something we opened the whole church up to and to call the whole church to fast and to pray.

And so I've been doing that over the last couple of months. And last week we started officially our 21 days of prayer and fasting. And I was praying for 100 people to commit. And you said, well that seems kind of low, no, we have like three hundred, four hundred people on our church on any given Sunday. And yes, that is true. We do have anywhere between three hundred and four hundred on any given Sunday. But not all of those three to four hundred people are super excited about fasting. In fact many of them were very unexcited about that kind of deal.

The idea of fasting has fallen out of favor in Christian circles for whatever reason. And it presupposes a level of a commitment and desire for God to do something in your life that quite frankly not everybody's at that place. Not everybody is so for a lot of people who come to church on Sundays, it's just. This is my Sunday thing, you know. It's not necessarily that I want to go deeper in my relationship with God. I just like going to church on Sunday. I like listening to the music. I like learning about the Bible.

But in terms of Eagerly pressing into their relationship with God, they kind of let take it or leave it's not that big a deal to them. Or some others have medical reasons why they can't fast. Some others have theological reasons why they may be opposed to it or whatever the case may be. So I thought a hundred was a pretty safe bet and was praying for that and was pleasantly surprised on Monday when all the cards came in and kept on counting. Over 100, it kept going up and up and up.

I think the last count I got of physical cards was right at 125 and then we've had lots of online submissions that I have not added to that count. And so over 125 people who've committed themselves to this season of 21 days of prayer and fasting was such an encouragement to me. And just by way of testimony. When we defined fasting last week, we said fasting was a means by which you deprive yourself of something physically important like food for the sake of something spiritually important. If you've taken notes today, it's a voluntary deprivation.

Of something that you need physically for a spiritual purpose. And I want to give testimony to the fulfillment of that spiritual purpose in my own life over the last couple of weeks. On day one, I felt the hunger pains immediately. I thought it might take a while. Anybody else thought it might take a while? It was just real fast. And Allowing those hunger pains to drive me to a deeper dependency on the Lord and more extended times of prayer. Monday was a tough day, but a really good day. And then I noticed Tuesday things different about my

spirituality, which I'm kind of basically paid to be a spiritually knowledgeable person and a try to be a spiritual person.

Like as a pastor, I'm supposed to live in this fish bowl and present a good example or whatever. But I noticed Tuesday things about my relationship with God that had been absent prior to that. Even in writing the sermon, Tuesday's a study day for me. I try to work on the sermon Tuesday mornings. And I was at Panera Bread studying away and in prepping for the sermon. There was just a moment I was working on a preaching point that I'm going to about to preach later. And the Lord just struck me with an overwhelming sense of his love and my sin and his forgiveness.

And I just had to stop. I couldn't write. I couldn't keep writing, I couldn't keep talking, I just had to stop and worship the Lord for a moment, I was just overcome with a sense of his presence. And then later that day, like most most spiritual highs result in a spiritual low. And so I was picking up the kids from the gymnasium place over there at Blaze does parkour and Addy does some kind of something with gymnastics. And I was taking 'em home and they were just doing what kids always do, which is make their parents angry and frustrated and my youngest boy Briggs was losing his head for whatever reason.

I have no idea. He was just screaming his head off super loud. Audra was on a girl's night out. That was nice. I've heard her go on a girl's night out. So it's just me and the kids and I remember getting really frustrated and wanting to just yell and scream and you say you're such a terrible dad and you know I know point is I didn't and I usually don't. I'm not a very expressive person. Emotionally I'm not very expressive. At least not like I don't get mad very often, but I was getting frustrated and I it immediately sensed the Lord's conviction in my heart and it was just different, you know.

That to be that quick, to be that spiritually aware is it was different, it was new. And as I went on the next day, Wednesday saw the Lord answer some very specific prayers of breakthrough in some very specific ways. And if you're taking notes, the main reason for this twenty-one days of prayer and fasting, if I had to sum it up in a word, the main reason that our spiritual purpose is breakthrough. Breakthrough in our relationship with God, break through in our a breakthrough in a demonstration of God's power in our worship services when we call for a response that people would be saved, that people would be baptized, that people would come to know the Lord.

And I begin to see in my own life personally some things that I had been praying about for greater discernment on some things. The Lord answered those prayers and very concrete specific ways that was encouraging in my heart. Even as I was super hungry, I was encouraged in the Lord and deepened in my just satisfaction in the Lord. And then I saw in some other people and the lives of people that I've been praying with, some things that have

been prayed for six plus years. Very specific, concrete answers to those prayers of a breakthrough.

And I don't know about you, I don't know what your experience has been over this last week, but mine has certainly been encouraging. And some of you may be praying for similar kinds of breakthrough and a relationship that is kind of capped a ceiling of its intimacy or there's some complexities and you're asking the Lord to create A breakthrough. Some of you are praying for people who are far from God. Maybe it's your own heart. You're feeling distant from the Lord. You're spiritually dry. And you're praying for a breakthrough in your awareness of God's love for you and communion but and intimacy between you and your Heavenly Father.

Others of you may be praying for something a little more material related to a financial situation or some situation in your workplace. And in the last week, you know, it just grew and grew and grew with each passing day seeing the Lord answer those prayers to breakthrough and be I believe the reason is because God responds to desperation. He responds to desperate prayers and putting yourself in a position where you rob yourself of all other creaturely comforts and all other physical comforts that you used to go to. All you're left with is the Lord Jesus.

You learn more and more profoundly how he is all you've ever needed, and how his grace is sufficient and his presence and power enough in your life. And even as the physical body struggles, their spiritual sensitivities grow in their power, and there really is something to it and I've just been so encouraged by it. On the other hand, there are others who have hesitated on this whole idea of fasting and they say, I don't know why we need to do this and this is just crazy and you're just trying to strong arm God and you know, we're not Catholic and I've heard every other kind of thing.

And so I wanted to address that sentiment because there is generally two errors that people make when it comes to prayer and fasting. They're not new with our generation. They have been around for a long time. In fact, it was crazy. And reading and studying this week, I came across a quote from an old school theologian by the name of John Calvin. Anybody ever heard of John Calvin before? He's famous for Calvinism. Anybody ever heard of Calvinism? Any any five-pointers out there? I'm just kidding. Don't do that Anyway, John Calvin, founder of Calvinism, actually it came up after him, but he kind of paved the way for it.

He insightfully talks about two excesses that people need to avoid when it comes to fasting. I want to read this quote and then I want to You know, throw it out there. He says, let us say something about fasting, because many people, for want of knowing its usefulness, undervalue its necessity. And some reject it as almost superfluous. In other words, I don't

know why this is all that good. Let's just not even do it. While on the other hand, where the use of it is not well understood, it easily degenerates into superstition.

So if you're taking notes. Some, he's saying, and I agree with him, some devalue fasting and treat it as superfluous. This camp would basically say, we have Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit, we're not saved by works, we don't have to prove ourselves to God. We're not under that old covenant. We don't need to do those old covenant things. It is it is since it's not necessary, let's not even do it. It's superfluous. Take it or leave it. On the other hand, there's a whole nother camp within Christendom who goes to the whole other side of the pendulum, and because they don't really understand what how fasting is different today.

And how Jesus did transform our why of fasting and our how of fasting, they almost treat fasting like it's some kind of magical bullet. And if I just starve myself enough, and if I just show God I'm sorry enough, and if I just have enough faith, and if I can just demonstrate it strong enough, then I can twist God's arm. Then he'll have to do what I'm praying for him to do. Then he'll command a blessing on my city or my family or whatever the case may be. It's almost like it's some sort of voodoo.

And that's also an error. But both sides of the pendulum are erroneous. This side that sees it as superfluous has a point. Yes, Jesus has changed the game fundamentally as it relates to how we fast as God's people. But just because he's changed the game doesn't mean fasting isn't something he wants us to do. It just means he changes the game. And so what we're going to see in our text today is how the earthly ministry of Jesus Forever changed the reason we fast and the way we go about it.

And Richard Foster, who wrote a book on all the spiritual disciplines, he in reading him this week, he said this is maybe the most important text to understand as it relates to how followers of Jesus today ought to fast because we don't want to fall into either of those erroneous camps. It isn't a magic bullet. But neither is it totally superfluous. John Calvin went on to say, and I think this is my this has been my experience this past week. He says holy and legitimate fasting accomplishes three purposes. It'll restrain sin.

He uses flowery language. He says, it preserves the flesh from licentiousness. Aren't you glad I don't talk like that? He says it's also a preparation for prayers and pious meditations. And then finally it's a testimony of our humiliation in the presence of God when we're desirous of confessing our guilt before him. In other words, fasting is helpful for restraining sin in your life. It's a way to starve the flesh. It is a way to expose those little sins that you normally don't pay attention to. Fasting is also a good for sharpening prayer.

It makes you more spiritually attentive, more spiritually attentive, more spiritually perceptive. And then finally, fasting is a good means by which you can expose your desperation. For the Lord and the Lord does r respond to desperate prayers. And so what

we're going to look at today, Matthew chapter nine, is how Jesus tells us to fast so that those three things can actually surface in our life. So chapter 9, starting in verse 14, this is Jesus has already given the Sermon on the Mount. He's called Matthew, the tax collector, to be part of his camp.

He has been partying with tax collectors and sinners. He's kind of gotten a bad reputation for himself by the religious establishment at this point. And so what we find in Matthew chapter nine is some of John the Baptist's disciples come up to Jesus and basically ask him, how come you're not acting very religious? How come you're not doing what we think holy men ought to do? And so they ask in chapter 9, verse 14, John's disciples come to Jesus and say why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?

And then Jesus responded to them, well, can the wedding guest be sad when the groom is with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one patches an old garment with unshrunk cloth, because when the patch pulls away from the garment, it makes the tear worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. No, they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved. So you've got three groups of people, right?

You got John's disciples on this side, you've got the Pharisees on this side, and then you got Jesus and his disciples. We talked about the Pharisees last week. Remember, the Pharisees were the religious marines of the day. They fasted twice a week, usually on Mondays and Thursdays. They would weep and they would wail. They would put ash over their hair, they would stink up their body odor. Their armpits were like sewage drains. Everyone thought they were so spiritually because they were so adamant about their fasting. And basically Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 6, that's nonsense.

They're not fasting for God. They're fasting to be seen by people. Don't fast like that. But Jesus didn't discourage fasting. He says when you fast, just do it the right way. And that's John and his disciples. John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus. His message was one of repentance, one of a creating spiritual fruit in your life that was in keeping with a hunger and thirst for the coming of Messiah. And so when John's disciples come up to Jesus, they're essentially saying, Jesus, we agree there's a wrong way to fast, but you're not fasting at all.

What's up with that? Your disciples don't even fast. We're fasting. We're fasting better than the Pharisees are fasting, but at least we're fasting. You party a lot. You eat a lot. You hang out with people who drink a lot. You're a holy man, you're a rabbi, you're supposed to be connected with God. What's up with that? And essentially Jesus says, well, here's what's up with that. And he gives this analogy of a wedding feast. He refers to himself as the

bridegroom of the wedding feasts. And he says, my disciples aren't fasting because nobody fasts when they're at the wedding feast.

Now we kind of get the basics of that, right? If you were to go to a wedding feast, you would not fast, right? You don't nobody goes to your best friend's wedding and says, I'm sorry, I'm fasting right now. That would be an insult, right, to the person who invited you. Maybe want to fast. You know, in our day and age, weddings are very short. They're like 30 minutes and the reception's like maybe an hour. And you get, if you're lucky, soups and sandwiches sometimes. Depends on whose wedding you're going to, but then you like it what it used to be.

In Jewish ancient Near Eastern cultures, you're talking wedding feast for days. We're talking catered by the Shed Market for a week long. How would that be? That would be nice, right? No, you want to feast, you want to take it all in, you're in the you're rejoicing, you're celebrating. It could not get any better. Why would I want to fast? Why would I want to express hunger or thirst for anything more than what I have everything I've ever needed right here, right now. I'm at the feast. And Jesus is basically saying, that's why my disciples don't fast, because they're feasting.

Because I'm here. Now that response is way more provocative than what it sounds. It tells us two things about it tells us one thing about their culture. It tells us one thing about how they thought about fasting. It tells us something totally different about how Jesus thought about himself. Alright. What does it tell us about their approach to fasting? It tells us that in their culture. Well, first off, if you're taking notes, the first thing it tells us is that Jesus was unorthodox. Alright, so get that down. Jesus was unorthodox in his approach to spirituality.

He did not fit the mold of that culture. He fellowshiped with tax collectors and sinners. He invited Matthew, a tax collector, to be in his inner circle. He was just counter cultural. When it comes to being a religious person, he broke them all. Okay, that's the first thing it tells you. The second thing his response tells you is that in their culture they saw fasting primarily through the lens of consec of contrition. Contrition. Fasting was a way of saying, God, I'm sorry. Fasting was their way of saying, God, I stink.

Literally, I'm going to make myself stink because of how bad I stink at life and how much sin is in my life. And it was a way of essentially saying, God, if I'm sorry enough, will you forgive me? God, if I express enough repentance, will you give me a second chance? Will you give me your presence in my life? And then the third thing it says, and if you're taking notes, this is number two, but the third thing Jesus' response shows us is the way he understood his own mission and identity.

He understood y'all my disciples aren't fasting because the way y'all fast is to express contrition. My disciples don't need to express contrition. They don't need to get in the

presence of God because God's already here. I'm here. And I'm the bride. I'm the bridegroom. Now that part's the part that's lost on us because we, a lot of us are not as steeped in our Old Testament as Jesus and John's disciples were. But you can look throughout the Old Testament and you'll see instances in which, I listed some of them there on your note sheet, you'll see instances in which Yahweh refers to himself as the husband of Israel.

I'm the bridegroom. You're my bride. In fact, I've got one. It's in Hosea chapter 2, verses 19 and 20. I'll just read you this. You can look up the rest on your own time. This is the Lord speaking to Israel. I will take you to be my wife forever. I will take you to be my wife in righteousness, justice, love, and compassion. I will take you to be my wife in faithfulness, and you will know the Lord. He goes on to talk about new wine and new wineskins, just like Jesus does.

And I said I essentially think that's what Jesus is talking about. He's saying, I'm the bridegroom. It's just crazy. He's making a veiled reference to his own divinity. He's essentially saying, You say I'm the Messiah? Good, you're right about that. But not only am I the Messiah that Yahweh said he would bring, I myself am one with that Yahweh. I am Yahweh. I am the Lord. And the reason my disciples don't have to fast for God's presence is because they're already feasting on the presence of God because I'm here. God is here.

He's on the stage. He has arrived. The long-awaited Messiah, the one you've been praying for, the one you've been asking for deliverance. You've been craving for God's presence in your life and in your church. And I'm telling you, I'm right here at the table. So why would they fast when I'm already here? So he would have ruffled some feathers. That's all I'm saying. Then he makes a statement that I want to hone in on this morning. When he says in verse 15, but the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken away.

I'm the bridegroom. I'm God in the flesh. That's why my disciples aren't fasting. They don't need to express contrition because I'm already here. They don't need to ask for more of God because the fullness of God is in their midst. But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken away. And then my disciples will fast. Now that last part, then they will fast is the part that I want us to hone in on. When he talks about being taken away, he's talking about his death. He's talking about his ascension, his going away, right?

And when Jesus was crucified and buried. The disciples they prayed and they fasted. They were scared to death. When Jesus rose, hung out for a while, but forty days later he ascended to the Father and he went away. Between the time that Jesus ascended to heaven and when he comes again, you see followers of Jesus fasting You see it in the book of Acts chapter 13, Acts chapter 14,[1] they fast and they pray. They fast and they pray. Why? Because the bridegroom has been taken away. So the time between Jesus' death and his second coming is the time in which followers of Jesus ought to fast.

That means for you and for me, the time we ought to fast is now. Now is the time for fasting. And you don't have from Jesus a clause that says fasting's not important or f or fasting's not as big a deal. Here is Jesus plain as day saying, Yeah, they didn't fast when I was with them, but now that I'm gone it's important you fast. And why wouldn't you fast? It's an expression of longing. It's an expression of the heart's desire to say, I long to depart and be with Christ.

I wish I could be in heaven with the Lord. This world is a terrible broken world and there's nothing more that I would want in my life than to be in the presence of God in heaven to depart and be with Christ is far better. Fasting is a way to express that after Jesus says all of that, he makes two illustrations that basically I think explain not only that my disciples should fast. But how they're going to fast differently because I've changed the game forever. And that's the bit about the wine and the wineskins.

So let's read it again real quickly and make a few points and then we'll be done. Jesus says, no one patches an old garment with unshrunk cloth. Because the patch pulls away from the garment and makes the tear worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the skins would burst and the wine spills out and the skins are ruined. No, they put new wine into fresh wineskins and both are preserved. Now what Jesus is talking about here is that you have some obvious instances in this world where when you try to take a new reality and you force it into an old system, not only do you mess up the new reality, but you also mess up the old thing that we were trying to force it into.

And he uses the analogy of a unshrunk piece of cloth. We all get this right. If you put an unshrunk piece of cotton denim or something like that and you and you put it to patch up your jeans but it wasn't it hadn't shrunk yet then when you patch it and it shrinks it's going to tear the patch and ruin the jeans worse and ruin the cloth you used to patch it that's why if you're going to patch a pair of jeans you use some old washed up denim that's already been shrunk.

The wineskin thing that's maybe lost on us. How many of you are carrying your wine in a wineskin? Yeah, not very many people. I use cardboard. No, I don't know what you use. I don't use anything. I'm not supposed to drink. But people who drink wine they say, how do I — there's cardboard and then there's plastic and then there's glass, there's all sorts of ways, but we don't carry it around in leather pouches anymore, right? But back then they did, they would take leather and they would tan it out and then the reason leather was good is because it would have some elasticity to it.

You put wine in there, before it was wine, it was grape juice, right? And what's it going to do? It's going to ferment. And during the fermentation process it's going to expand and the girl there's going to be gases that kind of suppress out and that leather is going to stretch and stretch and stretch until the fermentation process is over, and then boom, you've got good

wine. But if you were to take an old wineskin that had already been stretched out and done its thing, and you're going to put new wine in there, meaning unfermented grape juice.

And then that fermentation process starts happening and stretching and gases get released and all that stuff. What's going to happen to the old wineskin? That old bitter wineskin that's already been stretched out and done its thing? It's going to burst. And not only will it ruin the wineskin, which was perfectly good for old wine, but it's also going to ruin the new wine because it's going to spill out and get everywhere. And so Jesus says, is my kingdom and your old traditions. You've got to understand when Jesus came into the world, he changed everything.

He brought in a new way of relating with God And Jesus is essentially saying, my kingdom, the new reality I'm ushering in with my kingdom doesn't fit your old traditions. And so a new kingdom requires a new approach to fasting. And so should you fast? Absolutely you should fast, but don't fast like they used to fast. Now, what was the way they used to fast? Gotta remember, right? It was about contrition. If you're taking notes, the second word I want you to think about is the word consecration. Old Testament fasting was all about consecration.

We have an old song, we still sing it today, an old hymn, consecrate. Actually, I don't even remember how it goes. I'm going to mess it up. Basically consecrate my heart to you, Lord. Set me apart. Make me holy and that's a fair enough song to sing, but in the Old Testament, the way they made themselves holy was if I try not to sin and try really hard to be good. There's God's law. I'm going to try my best to do God's law, but you never measure up to God's law.

So that's why you had the sacrificial system. God, please forgive me of all my sins. You had the day of Atonement. You had all that stuff. But by and large, the reason people would fast was to try to make themselves holy Jesus comes on the scene and says, we're done with that. And no more do, do, do, try, try, try, earn, earn, earn. All that's over. Because you'll never be good enough. Even if I gave you 100 million new chances, even if I let you live for eternity and gave you a second chance every third Thursday, you would still never meet the threshold because you're a sinner and God is holy.

It's hardwired into the system. You cannot save yourself. And that's why I'm here. I'm here to do what you can't do. I'm here to live the life you can't live, a sinless, perfect life of love and obedience to my Heavenly Father. I know you want to deep down. I know you try so hard, but you fail. And so I've come to do what you can't do, and then I've come to die the death you should have died. Sinners, the wages of sin is death, eternal death. Because of our sin, we should be eternally separated from the God who created us.

But what Jesus does when he comes through his earthly ministry, not only does he live the sinless perfect life that we couldn't live, he dies the sinner's death that we should have died.

He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God. He was rejected so that we could be accepted. He was cast out so that we could be brought in. He, a son of God, a beloved son of God, cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? So that you and I could hear from our Heavenly Father, even though we're clothed in sin.

We feel the warmth of his embrace. We get a kiss on the cheek. We are covered with a robe of his righteousness, and we're told, welcome home, my son. Welcome home, my daughter. Our spirit testifies with the Holy Spirit that we are children of God. Why? Not because we were as good as Jesus was. We would never be able to be as good as Jesus was, but because Jesus, by grace, by mercy, credited to us, even though we didn't deserve it, he credited to us his life if we would just repent and believe.

So, Old Testament fasting was God make me more holy. We don't have to fast to be made more holy because Jesus is our holiness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame. I wholly trust on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground the sinking sand. We don't fast to become more holy. Well we fast, our reason for fasting is to get more of Jesus. That's the fundamental difference. That's how Jesus changed the game. We don't fast to sh to earn God's favor. We don't fast to twist God's arm.

We don't fast to say, God, now we're good enough. Now are we serious enough? Now do we have enough faith? Jesus has done all of that for us. He's fulfilled all of that in us by faith. When we repent and believe, all of that is ours in Christ. Now we fast because I've already tasted and seen how good it is. I've already tasted and seen how good it is to be forgiven by grace, not of works. I don't want to boast. Give all of the credit to Jesus. I've already tasted and seen how good it is.

When I'm worshiping the Lord, when I have my eyes opened and enlightened to see how good he is and how great his grace is, I want more and more and more. And so I'm fasting because I've already feasted. On the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want more and more of his presence in my life and in my church and in our family. And that's why we fast. That's the newness of our fasting. So the primary purpose of fasting under the old covenant was consecration under the new covenant.

Jesus is our holiness. We don't fast for holiness, we fast for more of his presence. There's a quote from another John, another Calvinist John too. His name's John Piper. Anybody ever heard of John Piper? He's a good, you might listen to him from time to time. I he nails it. I can't say it better than him. I want to read this quote and then we'll be done. Talking about the newness of our new fasting, this is his commentary on this text. He said, we have tasted, the reason that we fast today is because we have tasted the powers of the age to come.

And our new fasting is not because we are hungry for something we have not tasted, but because the new wine of Christ's presence is so real and so satisfying. The newness of our fasting is not because we have never tasted the wine of Christ's presence, but because we have tasted it so wonderfully by his Spirit and cannot now be satisfied until the consummation of joy arrives. We must have all he promised, and as much now as possible. In other words, he's essentially saying, if you are a Christian, you're a disciple of Jesus, then you've already tasted.

You've already gotten a taste of how absolutely amazing Jesus is. The Spirit has already borne testimony to your spirit that you are a child of God. You have already felt the sweet release. I no longer have to carry my shame. I no longer have to wrestle with this guilt. I no longer have to find my identity and this or that or being attractive or being accepted or having a certain kind of family. I've already experienced the sweetness of having Jesus as my righteousness. But once you've tasted and seen that the Lord is good, you'll always be hungry for more that's the already not yet tension of the kingdom.

That's what we're living in right now. That's why we fast. We fast because we've already gotten a taste. We fast because we know there's coming a day where Jesus will come again and establish his kingdom in its fullness. We will dine at the table once again. We will feast once again. It will be the most beautiful song we've ever heard. It will be the most delicious meal we've ever eaten. But until that day comes, we long for him to be here. We long for more, more of his presence, more of his power, more of his healing, more, more, more of Jesus.

And that's why we're doing the 21 days of prayer and fasting. Because I need more Jesus in my life. If you, if you're honest, you would probably say, I need more of Jesus in my life. I definitely need more of Jesus in my family. We need more of Jesus in our church. Without the power of Jesus, this thing that I'm wrestling with in my career or workplace is absolutely futile. Why am I even doing this if Jesus isn't present? The financial situation that you're looking at, Jesus is pretty good at math.

I'm not saying that Jesus is going to fix all your financial problems. But if you have more of Jesus, whatever financial problem that you're wrestling with, all of a sudden you'll find yourself having a level of contentment because who cares if I have a plenty or if I have lack, I've learned to be content in the Lord Jesus Christ because He's satisfied me. That's why we fast. And what I believe will happen when we fast and pray, when we rob ourselves of earthly comforts and creaturely comforts, and we create a environment where all that we have left is pouring ourselves into Jesus and sustaining our life on Jesus, not living by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

When you do that, you begin to learn. Your spiritual faculties beg become awakened in ways that they were not awakened before. And you realize with a new level of seriousness and

profundity how Jesus and Jesus alone is all you've ever needed. And you'll want more and more and more and crave more and more and more. And even if I have to fast for another seven days or another 14 days, whatever I have to do to get more of you, Jesus, that's what I'll do. Now, am I saying that you only got fifty percent of Jesus right now and until you fast and pray you don't get the full hundred?

I don't that's bad theology. Okay. I'm not saying that. When you become a Christian you get all the Holy Spirit you're ever going to get. I believe that. But it is obvious there are different experiences of the Spirit's power in your life. There are different experiences of communion with your Heavenly Father, of communion with Jesus. And a lot of that discrepancy is based on not how much of God you have in you or how much of God is willing to give to you, but rather how much of you yourself you're willing to give to him.

How much of you're holding back because I don't want to do it God's way, I want to do it my way. I know that God's got a blessing for me and my sexuality. I just got to do my sexuality God's way. I just don't want to do that right now. I want to do my own way. And so you don't experience the power of God. You don't experience the presence of God because you haven't given yourself fully to Him. And so as we respond, as we enter into a time of invitation, I think that's the invitation.

Certainly there's an invitation for every single person. If you haven't done the 21 days, if you haven't made a commitment, then let today be the day you say, I'm going in. But maybe some of you want to make this commitment because you know deep down there's areas of sin in my life that I'm either unaware of or I'm not capable right now of releasing that to the Lord. And I want to create a climate in my life where God's power I invite God's power to enable me to overcome the stronghold.

And so you commit to fasting for that reason. Some of you don't need to commit to fasting. Some of you need to commit to Jesus for the first time. You're not a Christian. You go to church, you do the religious thing. But you thought Jesus was just another layer in that old system. Another layer of trying harder and doing better. And maybe Jesus can help me. Maybe Jesus can give me a second chance. But you've never trusted Jesus to be your righteousness. You never said I don't stand in anything else or anyone else other than the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

When people say are you confident you're going to go to heaven? I've always said no I'm not confident because maybe I wasn't good enough. If that's your answer, if you don't have absolute confidence, then you don't understand the gospel is not your record, not what you've done, is what Jesus has done for you. And you've repented and trusted in him. And since he's been resurrected, since he's ascended, you have every confidence His sacrifice was acceptable to God from me. And so I'm with him. That's where my confidence is. And if you

don't have that confidence this morning, then Jesus is inviting you by his spirit to repent of your sin, to put your trust in Jesus And to surrender everything to him.

And in surrendering everything to him, you will find in you a new contentment, a new joy, a new power. That is unlike anything else you've experienced before. And so wherever it is that you find yourself on that pendulum, I want to invite us to respond. There's maybe a breakthrough that you need in your life, something you're praying for a breakthrough and a relationship or a situation you're facing. And if you want someone to pray with you about that, I'll be happy to pray with you. But let's respond as the Lord leads.

The altar's open if you want to pray. Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you that Jesus has changed everything and that we don't have to you know we don't have to put on some front or carry the anxiety of never knowing were we good enough or not. Were we strong enough? Were we talented enough? Were we impressive enough? Thank you that we can come to you as a father who loves us as we are. Warts and all. You knew we weren't what we needed to be, and so you met us in our mess.

You picked us up. You made us alive. Even though we were helpless and incapable, you filled us with your spirit. You cleansed us by your the blood of your one and only Son. And so if nothing else this morning, Lord, would you open up our eyes to see just how amazing that is. Open up our eyes to see how wonderful a Savior we really have. And then would you create in us a hunger and a thirst for more and more of his presence and his power in our life and in our church.

A breakthrough in our wisdom and discernment for how to live so that's possible. A new demonstration of your power in our church and in our life. And a new seed of faith to trust you for even greater and greater manifestations as you take us forward in the days that are ahead. Would you bring it about for your glory, for your kingdom? And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to have a time of response. Crystal's going to play. There's not going to be any singing or anything like that.

But it's an opportunity for you to respond.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Acts chapter 6, Acts chapter 13"; in Acts 6:4–6 the apostles pray and lay hands on the seven, but fasting is not mentioned. The church fasts and prays in Acts 13:2–3 and again in Acts 14:23. Source: Acts 6:4–6, 13:2–3, 14:23 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩