

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Ecclesiastes
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Submitting to Authority

Ecclesiastes 8

1 Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation of things? A person's wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance.

Obey the King

2 Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. 3 Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. 4 Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

5 Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.

6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a person may be weighed down by misery.

7 Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come?

8 As no one has power over the wind to contain it, so^[a] no one has power over the time of their death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.

9 All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own^[b] hurt. 10 Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise^[c] in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.

11 When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong. 12 Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him. 13 Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

14 There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless. 15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.

16 When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on

earth—people getting no sleep day or night— 17 then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

So a fun fact about me is I that I have never - not once in my life, not for a single second or moment - I have never in my life ever been compared to Bear Grylls, because I am just flat out not an outdoorsman. And I have actually this condition that makes me allergic to camping. And it's a condition called having a brain! Because for some of you in this room you choose to go somewhere without power or electricity or food or a bathroom. Meanwhile there are these things called hotels. You can go there and it is fantastic! Thank you. Let's pray. That is all I wanted to share with y'all this morning.

But anyway, I am not much of an outdoorsman. I am not really a hunter or a fisher, but I wanted to prove to my wife one day that I could be an outdoorsman, so we decided to go on a walk. I grabbed my wife, grabbed two of our closest friends and we found this trail somewhat near our house in Waco. And it's this trail that leads down to the lake. It's a hidden trail - not many people know about it - but if you walk all the way down the trail there is this like dirt ravine and then you get to the lake. So we had walked all the way down to the bottom of the trail and we hit this dirt ravine. And I am like "Well I'm going to cross this thing". And my wife is like "Well, I don't know. This thing about the outdoors is that sometimes the lake will rise and sometimes the lake will fall. So even though it looks like dirt, it really might be mud." And I am like "What do you know about the outdoors? Like I am going to prove to you I know what I am doing." I really wanted to go out and see the lake. I wanted to see all that the lake had to offer. But she and our other friend just kept saying, "Hey Nate, don't go out there. Don't go out there. Don't go out there." And when I heard that, all I thought was "But I want to go out there. I want to go out there. I want to go out there." So I did.

I took a few steps into this dirt ravine and boom, like sunk like I have never sunk before. It was truly like a sinkhole, like sinking sand. I have never experienced this ever in my life. My shoes were completely ruined. Like absolutely filled with mud. I was knee deep in mud.

So after I got out, I had to look at my wife and realize "you were right" - which are three of my least favorite words in the English language (you were right). Especially with my wife, because I don't like listening to orders from anybody, let alone her. I want to prove to her that I am right. I don't like taking orders from anybody. And I can't be the only one here in this room today, because we are in Texas. The land of freedom and independence. We don't like taking orders here! But the problem is you have to live with orders all the time in your life. In fact, just this morning you were ordered by the government, or whoever is in charge of time I guess - the timekeepers - that you had to spring your clock forward, backward, whatever it was. I've got a young kid so I didn't get extra sleep today. Congratulations to you who did.

But not just that, you are under the authority of us here at Harris Creek. We told you when you

could show up this morning - either 9:00 or 11:00. And then you got in your car and then you were told by the government that you had to wear your seatbelt. And then you were told by the government how fast you could drive down the highway. Then - this is what really annoys some of you - you were told by our parking lot people where to park. You see, we don't like being told what to do, but the problem is we are under authority. We're not just under the authority of our government. We are under authority in all sorts of areas of our life. Maybe you are under the leadership of your boss, or bosses. Maybe you are under the direction of your HOA. Maybe you are under the authority of your parents, if you are still at home. Maybe you are under the guidance and direction of your professors or the leadership in your fraternity or sorority. Or if you are a member here at Harris Creek, you are under the leadership and the guidance of our elders. We, as people, are under authority all the time. And the question we want to address this morning is "What should we do as believers in Jesus, as people who are under authority?"

Because I know that there are some people in this church who really like being under authority. You like laws. You feel safe with laws. In fact, I know someone in this church who literally does not drive a mile per hour over the speed limit. I know other people in this church who do not drive less than 10 miles per hour over the speed limit. Because there are those types of people who don't like rules. They don't like laws. The very word "mandate" sends a chill up your spine. You don't like being told what to do. So what should we do? What is the right answer? What is the correct response as believers in Jesus? Should we submit to laws because our God is the God who has given us laws? Or should we resist laws because we don't belong to this world? We belong to another world. What should we do as believers in Jesus? What should we do as people who are under authority?

That is what we are going to look at this morning, as we are in this sermon series called Ecclesiastes. We are going to be in Ecclesiastes chapter 8. But if you are just catching up with us this morning, we have been going through the book of Ecclesiastes. And Ecclesiastes is written by King Solomon. Here is a man who had it all. He had access to whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted it. And his desire was to search for meaning in this life. So he searched for meaning in all sorts of things. He searched for meaning in wealth, in power, in education, in possessions, in rebellion, in profession, in pleasure. He has searched for meaning all under the sun, and so far he has come up with nothing. He said that nothing apart from God is meaningful. And today what he is going to do is he is going to look at the systems and structures of power under the sun. He is going to examine them and he is going to tell us what we should do as believers in God, as we are underneath them. And he writes this passage from an interesting perspective, because King Solomon was a king. He was used to ruling over people and he knew what a good servant was – what a bad servant was. So he is writing this as a king, from that experience. But he is also writing it with the wisdom that God has given him. We have learned in scripture that God has given King Solomon profound wisdom. And it is with that perspective that he writes this chapter. What should we do as believers in Jesus who are under the authority of people on this earth?

We are going to start reading in Verse 1 - Ecclesiastes chapter 8, verse 1. King Solomon writes this: **¹ Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation of things? A person's wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance. ² Obey the king's command, I say,**

because you took an oath before God. ³ **Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases.** ⁴ **Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"** So just to show you my cards from the get-go, I am not drawn to these verses. My personality doesn't love this. He says "Obey the king. Don't stand up to the king. That the king's word is supreme." I am not necessarily drawn to those verses, because I approach leadership and authority with a fair amount of skepticism. Because I don't like people telling me what to do. And in my cynicism and skepticism, I read these verses and I'm like of course King Solomon is going to tell his people to obey and submit, because he's the king. And this is what people in authority will always do. They will always tell the people beneath them – whether they are a king, a boss, HOA, whatever – they are always going to tell the people beneath them to submit and obey. And even though this rubs me the wrong way, this is what we see in scripture.

1. We Are Called to Submit to Those in Authority

And while I may want to resist, what I see in scripture is that as Christians we should begin our approach to those in authority with humility and not hostility. Let me say that again: as Christians we should first approach those in leadership with humility and not hostility. So often

we've got it flipped. Our immediate reactions to those above us is hostility rather than humility. And that is not God honoring, because what these verses are saying - and all across scripture we see this – that as believers in Jesus we should be a joy to lead. We should be a joy to lead. We should be the first people to submit. The first people to be obey. The first people willing to obey and submit to those in authority. So let me ask you a question, "Are you a joy to lead?" Like if we were to ask your boss, what would they say about you? Is your first reaction to always second guess, to always push back? Or are you a joy to lead? Are you a joy to lead as an employee? Are you a joy to lead as a citizen? Are you a joy to lead as a son? Are you a joy to lead as a student? Are you a joy to lead? Do you primarily approach authority with humility or with hostility?

You know I think, I really do think, I can be a joy to lead but it is only if I respect you. Like if I respect you, then I'll do whatever you say. Then I'll follow you. But we've got a problem. Because I don't think this is a political statement. I don't think this is a shocking statement at all. I think that all of us can get on board with this - is that, in recent years, there have been people in authority that I have struggled to respect. I think regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum, you probably can say that there are people in authority where you struggle to respect. So what do you do when Solomon, King Solomon, in scripture says obey those in authority. But then I am like wait a second, I don't really respect those in authority. What do you do?

Well here is what biblical wisdom would tell you. Again, this is not my opinion. This is not my first response. If that is your first response – to say man I don't respect those in authority. I don't respect my boss, my professor, my parent, that politician – if that is your first response that says a whole lot more about you than it does them. That says a whole lot more about your heart than it does their heart, because you're approaching them not with humility but rather with hostility. And what I so wish we could do, my personality would be to just cut out these verses in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and say King Solomon was off his rocker. There are times when he just doesn't even make sense. I'm not even sure if he really knows God at times. But we can't cut those verses out, because we see this theme across scripture. Romans 13 – everybody loves

Romans – Romans 13 says this: Verse ¹ **Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.** Think about that. That is crazy. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² **Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves.**

But it's not just Romans 13. It's not just Ecclesiastes 8. It is 1 Peter 2:13-14. ¹³ **Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.** So what these verses are saying is that God, in His sovereignty and authority, has allowed us to be under the authority of humans on this earth. And through His Holy Spirit, He has guided and directed these authors of scriptures to tell us to obey and to submit to their authority. So this is going to be a wild statement. Some of you are going to hate this, but I just think this is what I see in scripture. If you want to submit to God's Word, you have to start by submitting to those in authority. If you want to submit to God's Word, you have to at least start by submitting to those in authority. Because if we believe what scripture says, that God has placed this person above me, he or she is above me and God has allowed it, or specifically placed them there then I am going at least start with respect.

But what if that pastor, that politician, that professor, that parent, simply isn't worthy of respect? What if they aren't worthy of respect – that is your first thought? Well, let me give you a fun fact. You're going to learn something this morning. 1 Peter was written by Peter and it was written during the time of Nero, while he was the Roman emperor. If you don't know anything

about Nero, he was evil, immoral, wicked. He was everything bad in a leader. Nero was the one who started the state-sponsored terrorism of Christians. It was a systematic slaughter of them. In fact, he would dip Christians in oil and then he would light them on fire so he could survey his gardens at night. This is how evil he was. Nero also had his mom killed, his first wife killed, he likely killed his second wife. And then he married a young boy who looked like his second wife and had him dress in women's clothing. And y'all thought Trump or Biden were bad! Like this guy was messed up! And yet, this is the time and place in which Peter was writing 1 Peter. He is under the authority of Nero, and he is calling on the church to submit. This feels reckless. And yet, this is what he is calling on the church to do. So if you want to submit to the Word of God, you have to start by submitting to those in authority. Because it honors God when we approach leadership first with humility rather than hostility.

But what does this mean? Are we just called to do whatever our leaders say? Are we just supposed to follow blindly? Well, let's see what Solomon says next in this chapter. Verse ⁵ **Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.** The wise heart will know what to do and when to do it. Verse ⁶ **For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, though a person may be weighed down by misery.** Well if you remember five weeks ago, this language harkens back to Ecclesiastes chapter 3 when Solomon said hey there is a time and place for everything. There's a time to mourn. There's a time to laugh. There's a time to sow. There's a time to reap. And this is what Solomon's saying here. He is saying the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure for

everything. He'll know, she'll know, the proper time to submit and the proper time to resist. So when should we resist?

Let's keep reading: Verse ⁷ **Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come?** ⁸ **As no one has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has power over the time of their death. As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.** So he's saying this, in Verse 8, he says as no one in time of war can just get up and leave. Because if you are at war, you are at the mercy of your commanding officer. You only leave when your commanding officer says you can leave. And then he says so it is with those who practice wickedness. Because with those who practice wickedness, they do not possess wickedness. Wickedness possesses them. We have to understand this as we think about authority.

He continues in Verse ⁹ **All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt.** And now he is going to talk about how leaders act in an evil way. He says this: ¹⁰ **Then too, I saw the wicked buried –those who used to come and go from the holy place, and they receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.** ¹¹ **When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.** ¹² **Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him.** ¹³ **Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.** So if you're following this chapter, Solomon starts out this chapter by saying you should obey the king. You should obey authority, but then there is this flip in the chapter where he talks about all the wicked and evil and immoral things that the king might do. He says that wicked people will be celebrated. People will commit crimes and not be punished. And this is confusing to me, because Solomon says you should obey the king but then there will also be times when what the king does is just flat out unfair.

2. Human Authority Will be Unfair

We should not be surprised when anyone in leadership does something immoral, evil, or wicked, because we, as believers in Jesus, believe that all of us are infected with a disease called sin and wickedness. And all of us have the capability of doing something that's evil, immoral or wicked. And yet in spite of our wickedness, God does something weird. He places us under the authority of wicked people. And this just doesn't add up in my brain. Why would God do this? Why would God know that we are wicked people and yet place us under those wicked people? Why would God do that? I think it's because He wants to see who we really want to follow. He places us under wicked people, evil people in authority, because He's trying to say "Hey who are you going to follow?" Who do you fear more, the king or the King of Kings? Who do you follow more? Who do you fear more? Your boss or God? Who are you going to follow? When push comes to shove, who do you fear the most? And this is what Solomon says in this passage. He is saying, "Hey fear the king, obey the king, submit to the king." But then he also says this in verse 12. He says **I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before Him.**

So we are citizens of God. We are citizens of God's kingdom, but we are also citizens of the state. Which one comes first? We are citizens of God's kingdom, but we are also citizen of the state. Which one comes first for you? So if you are wondering when can you resist, how should you resist, here is our framework for resisting immoral, unjust laws as believers in Jesus. Here is what it is: as believers in Jesus, we should gladly submit to those in authority and joyfully do whatever they ask. Again, we should be a joy to lead. Until they ask us to do something that is sinful or that might lead to sin. At that point, man we resist and we resist with gladness, with joy, and with courage. Because when your boss asks you to fudge the numbers on your company's finances, you should resist that. When the government asks you to do something immoral, you should resist that. Because when God's word and man's word contradict, what'll you do? Always, and for the rest of your days, follow God's word over man's word. In fact, we see examples all across scripture of people who resist authority.

While scripture calls us to submit to authority, it also tells stories of people who resist to authority. Just open up the book of Daniel and there's a number of examples. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down to the idol, and therefore they were thrown in the fiery furnace. Daniel would not pray to any god but his own, and therefore he was thrown in the lion's den. Rahab, a different book, would not listen to the king of Jericho and give up the Israelite spies. Esther, as we are about to read in the Bible Reading Plan, would not submit to the king's decree. And then you flip ahead to the New Testament and Jesus is thrown up on the cross because He would not do what the religious leaders told Him to do. These people resisted and pushed back against authority, because authority was asking them to do something that was immoral or unjust.

So if you are going to resist an immoral law, what should it look like? It should look like resisting by using the Fruit of the Spirit. I think so often we think we can push back against laws and we can also push back against the Fruit of the Spirit at the same time. Because you are going to resist a sinful law by screaming hateful things – you're still sinning! It's a lose-lose for the church, and you are not pushing back out of courage. You are pushing back out of recklessness. So here is what resisting an immoral law might look like. Here's just an example that I think could happen for me personally. There are laws currently all across our nation that are allowing boys to go into girls' bathrooms. It's a big discussion. Now as a follower of Jesus, and as a dad of a daughter, it deeply concerns me. I deeply care about this topic. And it's not here in Waco yet, but it probably will.

And if that topic comes to Waco, here is what I would do, as I think a believer in Jesus should do: I would first pray for my school board. Pray for those in authority. I will vote for school board. I will vote for those in authority. If that topic comes up here, I will speak up with hopefully with graciousness and patience and courage. And should that law ever be passed, then my wife and I will do whatever we need to do to parent our kids the best we can. We'll think about private school. We'll think about home school. We'll do whatever we can to do whatever is best for our kids, so that we might be submitting to God. Because here is what I am committed to not doing: I am not committed to submitting to anyone other than Jesus Christ. Because I am a sheep to no one else other than my Good Shepherd. So I will follow Him. I will follow God's Word, when God's Word contradicts man's word. But let me also say this: I think that the bar to resisting authority is a whole lot higher in scripture than what we want it to be. Because I think

one of us just want an excuse. We want an out to resist authority. And you're not resisting authority out of courage, or out of godliness. You are resisting authority out of arrogance. Because scripture places a high bar to resisting authority. And the bar is this: if it's sin, if it leads to sin, then you resist. Otherwise, you should start with submission and respect.

So we've talked a lot about being under earthly authority this morning. But really what I really want to talk about is being under God's authority. And this is what happens next in this passage. Solomon turns and he talks about what it's like to be under God's authority. In Verse 14 what does it mean to be under God's authority? Verse ¹⁴ **There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. So, I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.** ¹⁶ **When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth—people getting no sleep day or night—** ¹⁷ **then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.** So what he is saying is none of us can really understand what's going on in this life. This life just feels like a huge jumbled mess. The righteous get what the wicked deserve. The wicked get what the righteous deserve. And Solomon has surveyed everything that God has done under the sun, and he said "It doesn't make sense". Let's just look at this chapter and he is saying there are evil people in authority and there are people who commit crimes and get away with it. And God doesn't do anything about it. Solomon looks at God's authority and he says "I just think God's authority is flat out unfair". Which is so important as a follow of Jesus to understand.

3. God's Authority Will Seem Unfair

There will often be times in your life when you look at what He does and you'll think "What's He doing?" Why is this person blessed? Why is this person punished? And many times in our life what God will do won't seem fair. And here's why – here is what you've got to understand about God – we do not serve a God who's all that concerned with fairness. Because look at Verse 14. This is what Solomon says. He says ¹⁴ **There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.** So friends God is in charge, and the wicked are getting what the righteous deserve and the righteous are getting what the wicked deserve. If you are thinking "This should not be", you are right. This should not be. The righteous should not get what the wicked deserve and the wicked should not get what the righteous deserve. This should not be, but praise God that it is! Because this is the heart of the gospel. And we often say, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" We have said that all the time. You have likely heard that before. Why do bad things happen to good people? That phrase has never been true once, except for one time 2,000 years ago. That phrase has never been true, because there is not a single good person on this earth. Romans 3:10 says **"there is not a righteous person, no not even one"**. There is not a good person on this earth except for the name of Jesus Christ. He is the only good person ever, and He had bad things happen to Him. He had horrendous things happened to Him. He was given the death of a sinner, but worse than that,

the worst of all sinners. He was spit on, beaten, bruised, whipped, and crucified until he died choking on his own blood. Bad things happened to a good person.

And if you were there that day at the cross, if you were John if you were Mary looking up at Jesus dying on the cross, I think your words would sound a whole lot like Ecclesiastes chapter 8. Your theology would sound like Solomon. You would say this is meaningless. What is God doing? The righteous are getting what the wicked deserve. God's wasting our Savior. God's throwing our Savior aside. What God does is meaningless and no one can comprehend it. What God does is simply unfair. And what God does, let me say this, is unfair. Because looking at that moment now 2,000 years later, the crucifixion of Jesus on this side of the resurrection, what God did in that moment was absolutely unfair. God allowed a good person to experience bad things. Why is that? So now that He could allow bad people to experience good things. God allowed Jesus to be tortured, and beaten, and crucified so that we didn't have to be. God allowed Jesus to experience hell so that we could experience heaven.

And you've got to know this about God's authority – there will be times in your life when you look around at what God has done and you will think man this is not fair. What God does is not fair. Again, praise God we don't serve a God who cares about fairness! Because scripture says that God treats us not as our sins deserve. Because God, in His ultimate authority and wisdom and knowledge, He knows who we really are. He knows that we are people who are unsubmitive, disobedient, traitors to the King of Kings. And yet, because of what God did through his Son, Jesus Christ, we are not cast away because of our sins. Instead we are reeled in. We are not called slaves, but sons. We are not called distraught, or deceived, or deficient. We are called daughters, because this is what God does. He treats us unfairly and it is for our good and for His glory.

So whenever we think about being under authority, we need to remember these three biblical points: Point #1 We are called to submit to those in authority; Point #2 Human authority will be unfair; and Point #3 God's authority will often seem unfair. God's authority will seem unfair.

You know I opened this message by saying I don't really like when people tell me what to do. I don't like listening to commands that I don't understand, that are confusing to me. I just want to do whatever I want to do, whenever I want to do it. But recently I have been reading through the gospels and I have been reading through them in a way that I've never done before. I have been reading through them chronologically. So one day I will read John 1 and Luke 1, and the next day I will read Mark 1 and Matthew 1. I will be reading the same stories in the same day, in different gospels. And by doing that I have been struck by something. I have been struck by something that Jesus does. I don't know if you have ever noticed this, but Jesus will often command people to do things that just don't make sense. It is like on purpose Jesus is trying to be confusing. In fact, He frequently speaks in parables. And there is this one instance where He tells this guy to go and pick up dirt, make it mud, and put it on his eyes. Like He does things that are on purpose confusing for people. And what I have noticed in scripture, in the gospels, is when Jesus does this – when He purposely confuses people – there's two different responses from people.

One example is in John chapter 6. In John chapter 6 there is this large crowd that has followed Jesus all the way out into the desert. And Jesus is teaching them and he says some weird stuff. He says if you are going to follow me, you must eat my body and drink my blood. It's like on purpose He is trying to confuse them. He doesn't explain it like we might understand today. He says if you are going to follow me, you've got to do some things you don't understand. You've got to eat my body and drink my blood. And then in John chapter 6:60 this is the people's response. They say this **On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"** Then in Verse 66 it says **From this time on many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.** That is one of the most devastating verses in all of the New Testament. They heard something they didn't want to do, they didn't understand, so they bailed.

There is another example in scripture of how people respond to commands from Jesus that they don't understand, that they don't like, that seem confusing. And it's in Luke chapter 5. I don't even need to set it up. The story explains itself. ³ **He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.** ⁴ **When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out in deep water, and let down your nets for a catch."** ⁵ **Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything."** Jesus who are you to come on our boat tell us what to do? We're fishermen. You're just a religious teacher. Who are you to tell us what we should be doing? We've been doing this all night long, and in your ignorance you say we should go out and try again? **"But because you say so, I will let down the nets."** ⁶ **When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.**

Friends, there are five words that differentiate the Jesus follower from the Jesus deserter. There are five words that differentiate the person that will follow Jesus to the end who will follow themselves to the end. And the five words are this: But Because You Say So. Jesus, I don't understand why you've called me to physical purity, but because you say so, I will. God, I don't understand why you've called me to be generous, but because you say so, I will. God, I don't understand prayer, I don't know why you've called me to do that, but because you say so, I will. God, I don't understand why you have placed this person in authority over me, but because you've called me to submit and obey, this is what I'll do. Jesus, I don't understand, but because you say so, I will. And let me close with this question – are you a joy for Jesus to lead you? Like is that what He hears from you every single day? Jesus, I don't understand, but because you say so, I will. Or is it like pulling teeth for Him to spend time with you? Do you resist His authority at every step of the way? Or is your response, but because you say so, I will?

Are you a joy to be led by Jesus? Because if nothing else we can learn in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 from Solomon is that we are not the kings, we are not the queens, of our universe. We don't get to do whatever we want, whenever want to, because we're not the king. We serve the King of Kings. And scripture says that one day this King of Kings will come back and establish His authority forever. And it says that every knee will bow on that day. My question is for you when you're knees are bowing on that day, will it be out of joyful submission or will it be out of forced submission? What's your posture to Jesus today? Do you want to submit with gladness and joy? Or are you going to submit to Him with hesitation and resistance? My prayer for you is that God would soften your heart and that you'd be a joy to lead. That you'd be willing to submit, because

you know that when you submit to Jesus it will point other people around you to your Good Shepherd. Let me pray that that would be true for us as a church.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your Word. That your word doesn't just tell us what we want to hear, but instead it tells us what we need to hear. And God, I just pray that we'd be willing to set our opinions aside every single day and that we'd just search out the scriptures for how you want us to live. And God, I pray that you would soften our hearts towards you. That you would soften our hearts towards those in authority. That we would be a people who are a joy to lead. That we know that we don't have all the answers. That we don't know what's best. And may you just remind us right now of those times when we have followed our own desires, and we have gotten stuck in the mud. Would you remind us that we don't have all wisdom, but you do? So Father, I pray that we would be a church of "but because you said so" people. That we don't follow our own desires, but we follow every single word that you've spoken, and that we do it with gladness and joy and not resistance and hesitation. Father, give us the wisdom to know when to submit and when to resist. And may the church be a bright, shining city on a hill. And may we be known by what we love more than by what we hate. May we be a people who other people might look at and see and say "man what do they have"? And we can point them to our good God who's leading us every single step of the way. So God we just pray that you will lead us, even now. You'd give us wisdom in what to do, clarity in what to do and that we would take steps boldly, trusting that you will light our path every step of the way. And God, thank you above all else for your son, Jesus Christ. That He's alive and with us and for us. It is in His powerful name that we pray. Amen.