

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Ecclesia
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What is the Church?
Matthew 16:13-26

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ He asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Then, He ordered His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah. From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke Him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

One thing you might not know about me is I love cruises. Like, love to go on cruises! And so, when Monica and I got married it was kind of one of the most cost-effective vacations that we could go on. To go over there to Galveston and you can go on Carnival cruises. You’d get these last-minute deals. They were great! And if you haven’t been on a cruise, it’s awesome because you can hit golf balls off the back of the boat. You can play bingo, karaoke. They have this entire staff that’s just there to make sure that you are fully entertained. And I go all in.

And so, there’s all of these activities. But then, there’s the food. And so, there’s just this buffet of food, any kind of food that you want. Every meal you can order whatever you want according to your preference, you know. And there’s this chocolate fountain. They’ve got this dessert table, big dessert table, all kinds of desserts. And there’s a chocolate fountain. You can just dip stuff in there like twinkies, or banana, or potato, or whatever you want to cover in chocolate.

And then they have a stop at these different places along the way where you go, and you can get off the boat and you can do what they call ‘excursions. You want to ride an ATV in the jungle?

You got it. You can do that. You want to ride on a zipline? They got you. You can sign up for these excursions. And so, it's so much fun!

How many of you—anyone else love cruises? You're all in, my people. And some of you I bet you are like no, 'I hate cruises'. How many of you are here? Anybody who's never been on a cruise? You don't know what you're missing out on. Well, I'd love to—just so you understand, watch this. Would you watch this with me?

Shows a carnival cruise commercial - <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JMTnoJ6iKwM>

Carnival – Choose Fun! I want to choose fun. I want to Carpe that Diem, you know? And I want to be—the promises of that commercial to be a better parent—no be a better person—a better parent, a better friend, like I want that. And that's like what a lot of churches do, right? They say, “Hey, come sail with us. Learn to be a better person. Learn to be a better parent. Learn to be a better friend.” In fact, some of you, that's why you love to go to church. You get in your car and you're like, “Man, there's a little chicken soup for the soul, and I just kind of feel refueled and I can get through my week and I'm going to be a better person. Right? I'm going to sail with them again, I want to do that.” What I hope happens this morning is really an unlearning, an unlearning. As we kind of redefine church to be what Jesus said that it was.

Imagine if I came to you and I said, “Hey, let's go on a cruise out of Galveston” and you were excited about it. You got the get-up that I have on and you like you can't wait to set sail because you're going to go all in. And I told you about the bingo, and I told you about the karaoke, and I told you about the excursions, and the golf balls off the back of the boat. You're like, ‘Yes!’.

And the food, it's going to be amazing! And you get down there, and you park your car in that little parking lot, and you walk over there to the little person-bridge. The bridge that goes from the dock to the boat, and you're walking across that bridge and as you get on to that ship you start to look around and it's different than you thought. It's not bright white with colors and rope lights, string lights, and people wearing bright colors.

It's all grey. And there's people there but they're all dressed the same. And they're all marching in unison and they all seem on mission. And you look up and you see artillery. You start to think man this ship is very different than what I expected. And you begin to stand out.

See, I imagine that's how some people feel when they come to Harris Creek and they've been in church their whole life. Man, this is different. I thought this was a place that exists to serve me; make sure I'm comfortable; that I'm having fun. They're really going to call me to be on mission. And you start to stand out kind of like I do right now.

In fact, look at this. If I was on a battleship, this is what it would look like. (Picture of Hawaiian dressed JP on a battleship next to soldiers is shown). There I am. We got another one. (Another picture is shown). There, just standing around on mission. Let's do work!

And so, what I want to do is give you fifteen seconds or so to say a prayer. Everybody—every single person in here—came in and like some of you, you've gone to seminary, some of you,

you've been in ministry, some of you, you've been in church your whole life, we all have an opinion of church. I want you to ask God for just a minute to strip you of your opinion of church that's not consistent with His. That might be different. Truly, just pray. Ask Him, say, "Lord I certainly have something I think of when I think of church. If it's not what You think of or not what You intended, would You remove that and would You allow me to rebuild your opinion of what church should be."

When you think of it, it might start with worship. It might be like "well do they do hymns or praise and worship? Is it a rock band or do they have an organ? Smoke? Lights? I don't like that. I like that! I really want to sing. I like this worship here or this one. You think preaching. Well, it better be exegetical. We need to go verse by verse through the Bible. I want it to feel like a Bible study. It needs to be like a seminary. Or it better be really entertaining. The pastor better be willing to dress up like he's going on a cruise. There needs to be someone who comes in through a zipline. Or what are people wearing? They got khakis on? Suits? Ties? Better not be in flip flops. Is it serious? Is it funny? What's the kids' ministry like? Is the preaching gospel centered?"

Listen I listen to the podcast. I've read the books. I've seen the same things that you have. I know the same opinions that you have. Can I tell you something? We learned them. We learned those opinions from people. Really smart people, some of them. They taught us what church should be. But what if we stripped all of that away and we looked back at what Jesus said? Some of us...some of us wouldn't go to Jesus' church. We wouldn't like His illustrations. We'd be bored. We wouldn't like His kid's ministry. We wouldn't like the fact that parking was a problem. When He preached, thousands gathered. We wouldn't like the way He handled scripture. We would be smarter. We'd say, "Hey, Jesus come here let me tell You what I learned from John McArthur." We'd want to teach Him something.

What if we got it all wrong? What if we've got to unlearn something? What if we need to come and wipe the whiteboard clean and say alright, Spirit of God teach me. What did You intend for church to be? If I was going to ask You to come with me and live on a boat, a ship. You're going to want to know, and I'm like "Hey let's go and let's do all the things that the people do on that ship. Let's get into it." You're going to want to know what kind of ship it is. Is it a cruise ship? One that exists for your entertainment? That feeds your preferences? Allows you to consume? Or is it a battleship? One that's going to call you to mission? Call you to more than just something on Sunday. Those are two very different things.

And so, we're in this series Ecclesia. I love the subtitle, a people not a place. Ecclesia, if you don't know—that's the Greek word that has been translated into the word that we now use as church. And I'm going to show you why that's problematic today. That's right. I'm going to show you why at least initially, that was a bad translation. And as we dive into the series I hope, again, there's an unlearning. Because you grew up with this right? Here's the church, here's the steeple, open the door and look at all the—what? The church! You hear me? Here's not the church, here's not a steeple, it might be a steeple but that's (the people) the church. That's what Jesus said. We've got to unlearn. We all grew up with that little nursery rhyme, or whatever you want to call that. Here's the steeple, here's the church, here's the steeple, open the doors and look at all the people. No, no, look at all the church. The church is what's on the inside.

Hang in with me. We're going to be in Matthew 16 if you want to turn there. I'm talking about what is the church. And here's why I can say this with such passion. Because Jesus said what it is. And if Jesus started it...and He's the head, He gets to determine what it is. Regardless of what we think it is, if what we think of church is different than what Jesus said it is, we're wrong. And we've got to unlearn, and we've got to relearn to conform our thinking of what this subject is to whatever Jesus said that it is and what it will be. And He's going to say it here in Matthew chapter 16. As I move through this text, we're going to talk about what makes up the church, what the church cares about, and our role in the church.

Verse 13, **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ He asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”**

Does anybody's Bible say anything other than church right there? If you have a Bible and you're reading it, I mean real question. Does anybody's say anything other than church? NIV says church, NLT says church, ESV says church, NASB says church, NET says church, Scofield says church, King James says church, New King James says church. Let me tell you something crazy. The word that He used is absolutely not church. The word that He used is Ecclesia. But what you need to know is that word didn't even mean church. It was a secular word. He used a secular word—He spoke this in Aramaic. It was transcribed into Greek and the word that they used in the Greek it was not a religious word. It was not a church word. It was a normal, secular word. A word that you would have used every day as an assembly, more like an army. And somebody asked well did He really say army? What He said was more 'army' than 'church'. That's the word He used right there.

We now in English put 'church' but very few translations will—for example the literal standard version (LSV) says this, **“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My Assembly, and [the] gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”** We define Ecclesia as assembly today. When Jesus used it, it didn't even mean *assembly*. It meant *called out*. It was basically a term of enlisting, of recruiting. He's like, I'm going to gather my soldiers on this truth that you declare. It's so important. As we begin to think about church, we have to go back...this is the first time the word Ecclesia shows up in the Bible, right here. And He says, **“...and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”**

Gates of Hades is a real place. I've been there. I've stood right where Jesus was or at least in close proximity to where He was when He said this. It was a place where they'd worship Zeus, a place where they would worship other Greek 'gods', like Tyche and Nemesis. You would make offerings or sacrifices there. So, it was a place of pagan worship.

And so, what Jesus is using is called a metonymy. It's where you would use something literal to describe something else. And so, He's saying, “Hey this place, I'm using this to define death, this is death, it symbolizes death. I'm going to assemble my troops and not even death will stop

them. They're going to live forever. They will prevail against any force that comes against them."

And so, my first point - the church is... How would you fill in that blank? The church is...? The church is...? You think about that for a second. Somebody asks you, "Hey what is church?" What would you put there that church is?

1. The Church is People Who Belong to Jesus.

The church is people who belong to Jesus. Every word there is important. The church is people. You need to know that. And the people belong to, they are possessed, they are owned by, they are the property of Jesus. He is our Lord. He is the Head. We do what He says. We are His hands and feet. In a more literal sense than I think we've ever understood.

He says, verse 18, "**On this rock I will build My Assembly [church].**" It says church, but it's assembly. His people, the people belong to Him. So, what is "on this rock"? What is the rock? Roman Catholics believe that Peter, He's saying Peter you are My rock. And because He says whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven —Roman Catholics believe Peter was the first Pope and the Pope has the authority then to add to Scripture. So, in the Roman Catholic church, you see traditions that are extra-biblical. Meaning they're not in the Bible, but they're held on an equal plane as the Bible. And that's because they believe that He's saying, 'Hey Peter, you are the first Pope, and you have the authority to create traditions that are on par with Scripture."

What I believe He's saying is, "on this declaration that I'm the Christ, the Son of the living God", so on a person who professes that Jesus Christ is Lord, I will assemble people and those people will march forward and not even death will stop them. That's what Jesus is saying here. That on someone who declares or understands who I am, I am going to gather people around them and not even death will stop those people. So, this church is a gathering of people. Right? I'm going to use you to group up people, not a building. Remember, He says to Peter "I want to make you fishers of men. Peter, feed my sheep. Peter, you tend to my flock. That's what I want you to do is to care for my people. Equip them, train them, and deploy them, empower them, and allow them to march forward."

And it's confusing. Because we say things like, when today at lunch the server says, "What did you do this morning?" you are going to say, "I went to...church." Or for those of you online somebody says, "Hey, what did you do this morning?" You're going to say, "I watched..." I can't hear you. "I watched church. Well, I watched church." You cannot watch church! You cannot go to church! Jesus never would have thought when He's saying this, "Oh people are going to go to church. They're going to watch church. It's going to be a church service." If you even think about the problem with that is, I come; I show up to a building that I call church; and I'm served. That not it—nobody would have heard Jesus say this and thought - oh man, that's really powerful. Potlucks and Sunday school. I got it; I got the vision. That's amazing. Kids' ministry, coloring books, and like being entertained. That's awesome Jesus, we get it. We got the vision, we're going to do it, we're going to move forward. And the disciples would leave that gathering and be like let's go.

What happened to us? A categorical mistake, that's what happened. Imagine if I said to you, "Did you see AT&T stadium beat the Eagles? Wasn't that awesome? Did you see AT&T stadium play the Eagles? The Philadelphia Eagles? Anybody? Did you see the AT&T stadium play the Philadelphia Eagles?" You'd be like what are you talking about? "AT&T stadium they played the Eagles. Do you mean the Dallas Cowboys? The Dallas Cowboys...the Dallas Cowboys, oh! I saw Coldplay there. I actually saw a Coldplay concert at the Dallas Cowboys. What? Yeah, in the Dallas Cowboys I saw Coldplay. Man, I'm so confused." It's because we don't make that categorical mistake anywhere else. You understand what I'm saying? We think that the church is a building, the church is a place we go to consume. There has to be an unlearning.

And some of you, and some of you, you're here right now, and you're nodding your head and you're like yeah, I know that's right and yet you're not affected. I know the church is not a building. We're going to go to the building. And we're going to compartmentalize this area of our lives: the church. And it is the greatest evil in Waco, Texas. Tweet it out. Put my name beside it. I believe the greatest evil in our land is cultural Christianity. You come at me with any problem: the foster care situation, adoption, racism, prejudice, economic development, poverty levels, the highest crime rate in the country, one of, top ten in Texas: #7. I'm going to say to you the greatest evil in our land is cultural Christianity. And some of us believe that but what are we going to do about it? What are we going to do about it?

See like no one would have heard Jesus say this and think He's talking about what we know church to be today. You would walk away from that conversation and think, man is He talking about SEAL team #6? Is he talking about SWAT? I mean He's going to assemble some kind of soldiers that are going to march against death, right. There was something we got right when we were little. If you grew up in VBS, let's see if we can do this together. Don't let me do this by myself, please. Sing it with me.

"I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery. I may never soar over the enemy but I'm in the Lord's army, yes sir!"

That's right, that's where we nailed it. We crushed that one. Growing up, that's it, that's what Jesus is talking about. That's what He says—you want to be in the Lord's army? You wanna go? Let's go. That's what He's saying, and they've got to be really confused. Like that would be a right response to what He's saying. There's twelve guys and they're like, "Jesus, wait hold on, man. What are you talking about, brother? No, Jesus, like you did some cool stuff, man, when that guy was lowered through the roof and you said, get up and take up your mat, like we thought you were crazy but then when he got up and walked, I was like man that was amazing. And that whole fish and loaves thing, we're never going to go hungry again. You're like a walking Chick-fil-a, man, that's amazing! And, Jesus, you've got to teach me that walking on water trick. That was—my mind is blown. That was some David Copperfield stuff. I mean if I can learn that I will entertain all my friends. But Jesus, you're talking about building some unstoppable force, man, I mean come on, bro. I don't know if you noticed but one - religious people don't really like you. Two - there's only twelve of us. I mean we're like standing rabbi rejects. I mean, fishermen and

tax collectors, you're talking about using us to build some army with only twelve of us? We're not even so sure about Judas. We don't even know what team he's playing on."

Fast forward the tape and buckle up. Verse 19, **"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Then He ordered His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah."** He's saying, when you do the work of God that He's going to give you power. I've seen it man, when you live in the will of God. But when you settle for some counterfeit club, it's the greatest evil that works against the Church is the church. I mean truly. The counterfeit, the club, the country club, like show up and let's pretend like we've got it all together. You know? Act like we hadn't done anything wrong and let's play the game; when our weekend doesn't match our Sunday, our Saturday night doesn't match our Sunday morning. That's problematic.

In the Greek here, this comes from the *missiona* what He's saying in bound and loose language. It would be translated, "Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbid in Heaven or whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in Heaven." But it's actually reversed in the Greek. There are some crazy things happening here. He's really saying, "What is forbidden in Heaven, you will forbid on earth and what is permitted in Heaven, you will permit on earth." Here's what He's saying - You have the authority, followers of me, to bring the kingdom here: in your work, in your marriage, in your parenting, in your communities, in your neighborhood, wherever you are, in your household, wherever you go. You now have the authority to bring Heaven to earth. You can show it you can put it on display. You are my ambassadors, rulers, and reconcilers.

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." He begins to proclaim to them the gospel what is about to happen. I'm going to die for your sins, I'm going to come back to life. **"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke Him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'"** You can't suffer, you're a king. You're my king! I followed you! **"Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns.'" He says,** "You've been taken over by some other force. It's not you talking, Peter. The enemy is using you right now to try to come against me" to prevent me from the same thing we talked about last week. "Hey, you don't have to go to the cross. Just bow down and worship me. You don't have to go to the cross." Get behind me Satan, He says.

2. The Church Cares About What God Cares About

The Church cares about what God cares about. And the reason I say that is because Jesus says to him, **"You do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns."** He presents a dichotomy. Do you have in mind the concerns of God or are you thinking about yourself?

What would it look like today to have on our minds merely human concerns? What do I like? What do I prefer? What's my preference? What kind of music do I like? How long do I want the

service to be? Do I like it under an hour, or did I grow up Seventh-day Adventist and I want it four hours? What is my preference? How loud is it? Can I tell you how many e-mails I've gotten in the past twelve years and the subject of those e-mails was the volume of music? I've learned more about decibels and the science of soundwaves through angry e-mails. And I get hearing loss is a real thing, you don't have to e-mail me again. I get it, but we show up and we're like what's my preference? What's my preference? What do I like?

The first force, listen, the first force to oppose the church, the first satanic force to oppose the church was selfishness. It showed up right here right after Jesus cast a vision for it. And in 2021 the satanic force that opposes the church is still selfishness. It's you, feeding your preference.

Monica and I recently went on vacation to Mexico. This is the trip that was cancelled because I got Covid and then we rescheduled. And so, we were celebrating our anniversary. And so, we went to one of these all-inclusive resorts which I'm a fan of, you know? I mean they just show up, "It is my pleasure" "How can I serve?" Like that's awesome. I could get used to that. And you know all you can eat. You can order room service at three in the morning if you want. I'm not saying I did it, I'm just saying you can. And so, it's amazing, it's paradise. It's beautiful, a beautiful place, a paradise. And one of the things I didn't even expect when I went there is something they call 'turn down service'. Wow, like that's incredible. They go—they sneak into your room when you leave in the evening and they do a "turn down service". Which is, they not only make your bed but then they fold down the sheets so you can—they make it easy for you to get in your bed because I needed help. And they put two pieces of chocolate on your pillow and they set the lights all right and they put some music on just so when you come in. And man, I'm like "Monica we've got to learn how to do this". I'm kidding, I'm kidding. I'm just playing.

And so, one day, one evening we come in and they hadn't done the "turn down service" and I just felt robbed. I mean all of a sudden, I am a victim, you know. I'm just like wait hold on, how dare you. There has been a great injustice committed against me. I need to talk to somebody's manager, or the manager of the manager, you know. Like this is not okay. And it was this thing that I didn't even go there expecting but I got used to it and when I got used to it and it wasn't there all of a sudden, it's like hold on. And that's what we do with our preferences. When we feed our preferences for a long time and all of a sudden, our preferences or expectations aren't met, we feel like victims instead of soldiers.

And so, that's why I say don't let your preferences rob you of paradise. I mean I get it, man. You've got some music that you prefer. You want the pastor to be wearing something, that's what you prefer. You want a level of seriousness to the sermon that you prefer. You want the gospel, even the word, to show up some amount of time. You've got a quota in your mind that you prefer, I get it. You want the preaching to be a way that you prefer, I understand. You want the building, and the location, and the parking to meet your preference. Don't let your preferences rob you of paradise. That's why there sometimes has to be an unlearning. The church has so much more to do with what you do Monday through Saturday, than it does even what happens on Sunday.

The call on you, is to be on mission and are you responding? Because I don't know what the future holds, friends. Man, you've got to hear me on this one. It's heating up. Our world, I'll just say our country, is increasingly more hostile to Christian values and beliefs. That's not even a

political statement, don't be distracted thinking 'oh he's gone political on me'. No I'm not. This is under multiple regimes, multiple offices. The world is heating up. And you holding the line just means we're losing slowly. You're going to have to go on offense. You understand? You're going to have to lower your shoulder, you're going to have to push through some comfort, begin to share the gospel even when you don't feel like it. Don't let your preferences rob you of paradise. You're going to have to be equipped, right? You're going to have to know the truth. You're going to have to be winsome. And you're going to have to be willing to be hated. Are you okay with that? People aren't gonna like you. They're coming to come against you on Twitter or Facebook or Instagram. They're going to call you names. Are you okay with that? They may call your children names. You okay with that?

People willingly go on battleships because they believe in a mission bigger than themselves. They're concerned with what the Commander in Chief is concerned about. And that's why our mission statement here, mission, think about that word even - mission. Like that's a military term, mission. Our mission statement here is we want to help everyone follow Jesus by engaging the lost, equipping the saints, and empowering members for service. You check that and make sure it's biblical and if it's not biblical, if it's not rooted in the scriptures, if it's not what the scriptures call the church to be, then you should run. You've got lots of options. But if it is, you should dig in, dive in, and let's go.

Verse 24, **“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”** If you were gonna put a word around that, what would that be? **“Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me”**. The word I came up with is sacrifice. That's what I see in that text. Because we care about what God cares about, we make sacrifices. We live sacrificially. That's why I would say my third point is the church is always marked by people making sacrifices.

3. The Church Is Always Marked by People Making Sacrifices

Since the very beginning, of the beginning, of the beginning, the church has been God's people having been marked by making sacrifices. Amongst the Israelites, right, they would make sin offerings, they would kill animals, there would be these sacrifices. There was this sacrificial system that set God's people apart. And then at the center of our faith, right there in the gospels, is the greatest sacrifice in the history, of a history. His story, His son on the cross, dying for our sins, paying the price for our sins, raising from the dead, so that we have the promise of eternal life.

But then, His followers now come to Him and say, “Jesus is my Lord”, that means He is in control, I do what he says, so I sacrifice my life. It's Romans 12:1 and 2. **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.”**

Do not conform to the world but be different. Live as a living sacrifice. Take up your cross and follow Him.

And so, you say I don't know what to do. It's so much easier to take a brand-new convert who's never been to church and define it for him correctly. It's very, very difficult to take someone who's been in church their whole life and say everything you learned, or a lot of what you've learned, is wrong. It's different. It's almost like sometimes, sometimes people are nodding their heads, you know. But it is like I don't know. The Holy Spirit has got to work because I feel like I'm up here with the shock paddles. (Makes the sounds of a machine detecting no heartbeat). That's what it can feel like sometimes preaching to religiosity, churchianity, cultural Christianity. It's like what if it's different? What if it's different.

And I'm not saying that we can't have fun. Because the apostles devoted themselves to the breaking of the bread. They enjoyed gathering in the temple courts daily, watching God do amazing things. That's happening here. A friend brought someone who had never been to church in Waco, Texas. They'd never been to church. Came to this place and had never been to church in their entire life. And they came in here and they got in the car afterwards and they said, "That was amazing! How much do you have to pay to go there?" And I just thought, man, he gets it. That's awesome. Praise God! I talked to another friend after the service yesterday or met someone after the service yesterday and they said, "If you would have told me that I would enjoy, that I would look forward to going to church and if you would have told me I would be reading my Bible every day I would have told you you'd lost your mind. And yet somehow that seems to be my reality today." Like God is changing lives. But it's not just through what happens here on Sunday. It's through the faithful work of the soldiers being deployed and empowered.

When I was in Mexico, I'm sorry, not when I was in Mexico. When we were going to Mexico, we stopped at DFW and in the airport I bumped into an old friend of mine, someone I hadn't seen in two and a half years. He's a Navy SEAL. So, he and I did some work together in the church and then he enlisted, he went through BUD/S, and he became a SEAL. And so, we were catching up, he's got a family, a wife and kids. And we were just catching up on all things and I said, "Where are you headed?" He told me. And I said, "When are you coming back?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I've got a one-way ticket. Guess I'll come when the work is done." "You've got a wife and kids?" "Yeah, we'll see." You know why? Because when he enlisted, the United States Navy then determines what he wears, who he hangs out with, how he talks, where he goes, what he does there, what his mission is, who's in charge of him. The second he said, "Hey I'm in." He's sworn in, his life is no longer his own. And that's a greater picture of trusting in Jesus than just about anything else I can think of. And to say it different to Christians, that's a greater picture of joining a church than just about anything I can think of. What does it look like to become a member? Look at my friend who enlisted in the United States Navy as a Seal. Man, what do you want to do on mission, what do you want me to do?

In Waco, there's a lot of problems. You got one of the highest crime rates in the country. You've got one of the lowest graduation rates in the country amongst high school. You've got poverty, right? Per capita, household income of about \$14,000 and change. 27% below the U.S. poverty line. Foster care system. I mean there's more churches in Texas than there are kids waiting to be

adopted by the CPS. I mean if every church in Texas took one child, there wouldn't be anyone left to adopt. You've got all of these prostitutions, about 300-400 arrests in the past few years. Drugs, all kinds of things that go with poverty. But the biggest problem? The biggest problem is cultural Christianity. Check me. Like I'll be right up here afterwards if you want to come up and say "Hey I disagree I think it's x." I'd love to learn from you. I think the biggest problem is cultural Christianity and I think once you solve that problem, those other ones are solved. We begin to solve other issues. And you say how do we solve that problem? You draw a circle around yourself and you change everything inside. You start to live on mission yourself and people will follow you. This thing is stronger than any virus the world has ever seen. When Jesus told twelve guys, He was going to build an unstoppable force, you fast forward the tape and it's the greatest prophecy in the Scriptures because here we are man. Here we are.

And so, in summary the church is a people who belong to Jesus; who care about what God cares about; and sacrifice their own interests to serve others. I feel a little out of place this morning. And I'm glad. I don't think it's cute, you know just wearing a Hawaiian shirt up here. I'd go to any lengths to help call you to mission. If we were going to create a commercial of Harris Creek, I'd hope it'd be different than the one I showed you up front. I hope it'd be a little bit more like this.

Shows a U.S. Navy recruitment ad - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Q7fxXKpu1E>

It's just a different calling. You know what I mean? It's just kind of a different uniform. It's a different understanding. I don't want to do a bait and switch, man. It might not be what you signed up for. You might just want to go somewhere and be entertained. You might just want to consume. But in doing so, you miss out on your purpose. You miss out on God's greatest calling on your life. I'm not playing. I've seen it, I've seen it work. And there's some of you, even as I'm preaching, I'm emboldened because I make eyes with you and you're doing it. You're living on mission. You're sharing the gospel, you're calling people to know Christ, you're recruiting. But this place is not like - 'What can it do for you?' It's 'are you ready?' I mean I get it. Some of you, you're wounded on the battlefield. You just got shot. You can't walk and so that's why we're going to come around you. We're going to pick you up. We're going to carry you to the hospital. We're going to nurse you. We're going to see you back so that very soon you can carry others. And that's what we do. We're in it together. We care for one another. We love one another. Let's go!

Father help us. Would You undo anything in our hearts that we've learned from humans that's inconsistent with what Your Word teaches. Would You help us to repent of anything like judgmental in our hearts against your bride? I pray the thing that would frustrate us the most is our own hypocrisy. That when we show up to a place on Sunday and then really throughout the week not tell anyone about our Jesus, not live on mission, not serve others in the name of Christ, would You deal with our own hypocrisy. I don't say that, God, would You protect them from me shaming them. That's not my heart. But would You hold up the truth. God would You—my charismatic friends would say - put a special anointing on this place—I'm going to ask for that. Would You anoint this place in a special way? Would You protect us? That when we go out into the world, would You deliver our enemies to us? And would You teach us through bold action that we can be even bolder by showing us converts; by allowing us to make disciples. Which I

think is the calling of Your church. Father, if I said anything, if I said anything inconsistent with Your heart, Your spirit, or Your Word before they stand up to sing in a moment, Lord, I pray that it would be erased from their minds. But if there is anything that I said that is consistent with Your character and what You desire for us as a church I pray that it would spin in our hearts, that it would churn, that it would create in us a holy angst that we're not able to let go until we conform our life to it. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

COMMUNION:

One of the things that has always marked the church is a tradition we call communion. There's probably an unlearning that needs to happen with communion too. Nothing is magic about these elements. I don't know if Jesus ever, well He did because he's a sovereign God—all knowing. But I'm not sure this is what He had in mind when He was sitting around that table with His friends. But Jesus was a great teacher. I mean in addition to being God incarnate. He was an amazing teacher and so when He wanted to declare the gospel to them, He used the elements that He had available to them. Which that specific night was a piece of bread.

Now, before you take communion, there are a few things you should think about. One, if you are not a believer, a follower of Jesus, if He's not your Lord, don't do this. I mean there's no need. You'll have better things to eat in just a bit. And if you are a follower of Jesus and you realize there's unconfessed sin in your life, there are some things you haven't repented for, or some conflict between you and someone else the Scripture would call you to run and be reconciled with them prior to you participating in what we're about to do.

But as Jesus sat with His friends, He took the bread and He said, "This bread, this is an example of my body which is about to be broken for you. Whenever you eat of it, do so remembering what I'm about to do for you." The gospel. So, He took it and ate it. And He said, "This cup, this is the cup of My new covenant. A symbol of My blood which will be poured out for you. Same blood that's going to cover your sins. The same blood that allows you to stand before a holy, perfect, righteous God, all powerful God. And so, whenever you drink of it, do so in remembrance of Me."

Father, would You fix our hearts on the reality that You gave Your only son as a payment for our sins. That when we assemble when we come together, we do so under His name. For there is no other name under Heaven by which we can be saved and that at His name every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. It's the same name. The same I Am that knocked the soldiers down in the garden. It's the same name that soldiers assemble under; that the gates of Hades will not prevail against; that not even death can stop us. That you've given us power and authority in that name, the name of Jesus. It's in His name I pray and it's in His name we worship. Amen.