

Harris Creek Baptist Church

Luke Lezon

Series: AWE

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What Keeps Us from Fearing God?

Jeremiah 12:1-5

Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive? ² You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit; you are near in their mouth and far from their heart. ³ But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter. ⁴ How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, “He will not see our latter end.” “If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?

All right, well, good morning, Harris Creek. How's everybody feeling? We doing all right (audience cheers)? It is great to see you and to be here with you all this morning. Let me just say I am so grateful to you and to this church. I am a part of this young preacher's cohort that is here and so they brought 11 of the best preachers in the world and me to be here with you this Harris Creek Baptist Waco, TX

morning. So thank you for allowing the least of these to be able to share the word with you this morning. In all seriousness, thankful for you, thankful for the leadership team here, and specifically just want to say I'm so thankful and want to honor your pastor JP. JP is a big brother in the faith to me literally and figuratively; he is an encourager, he's a challenger, he's a safe place to ask questions around marriage and ministry and life and leadership. He's a real gift not just to your church, which is his assignment, but also he's a gift to the body of Christ as a whole and so just want to honor him and say how much I love him. Would you give him a round of applause? Let him know how much we love him and are thankful for him (audience cheers). I did what he asked me to do, I told him I said, I will ask them to clap for you, yes (audience laughs).

So anyway, I am seriously so glad to be here. I'm from Orlando, Florida. Again, my name is Luke Lezon. My wife Lindsay and I live in Orlando with our oldest son, Judah and another child that we're cooking right now that we're fighting over the name about. We are so excited about being there where I have the privilege of being the lead pastor of Life Bridge church in Orlando. So, if you're ever in the area, come on through, we would love to have you. But I'm here with you this morning because I believe there's something really beautiful that God wants to do in our time together. I know that you've been walking through this series over the past couple of weeks, called "AWE". JP and Miles have done a masterful job of walking through what it means to fear God and how it is that we fear God. So I want to continue this discussion around what it means to fear God by talking about something that's a little bit niche a little bit nuanced, maybe a little bit specific. I want to talk about three specific things that we can tend to do that end up keeping us from fearing God and walking with that awe and wonder before him. Three things that not

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only keep us from fearing God, but can minimize the impact that we can have for the kingdom of God, where he has us right now.

I would imagine if I went around the room right now and I asked the question, “hey, who in here wants to do great and faithful things to build the kingdom of God and make disciples for Jesus Christ?” I think all of us would be like, “that’s me God. Like, of course, I want to do that”. And yet at the same time, if I asked another question, I think all of our hands would go up as well, albeit a little bit slower. If I were to say, “and who in here has grown discouraged and tired and weary in that walk with God, sometimes?” And it makes you feel like you know what, I don’t really know that I feel like walking with that same obedience and fear and trembling before the Lord. I think we’d be like, “Yes, me too, a little bit”. I think we’ve all been there. So, we’re going to see that today as we jump into the book of Jeremiah. We’re going to be in Jeremiah chapter 12, beginning in verse one here. We’re going to eavesdrop in on this conversation between God and Jeremiah. God calls Jeremiah when he’s very early in his life, about 17 years old, scholars believe, to be a prophet. The call sounds amazing, but it doesn’t start off amazing. It starts off in his small hometown of Anathoth and people are rejecting his message, they’re threatening him, things are not going well. So, we’re going to be in Jeremiah chapter 12, verses one through five together this morning. We’re going to examine this relationship that exists between God and Jeremiah through this conversation that we’re eavesdropping in on. We will see three specific things that are interfering with Jeremiah walking with that fear and trembling before the Lord. There are three things that we not only see in Jeremiah’s life, but the three things that tend to be true in our own life, as well. So, we’re going to open up the word together. Y’all ready for the word? All right, this is where the power is people. If we don’t open this, why are we here?

So, Jeremiah chapter 12, beginning in verse one, it says this, **Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive? ² You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit; you are near in their mouth and far from their heart. ³ But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter. ⁴ How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, “He will not see our latter end.”** And I don't know what your copy of the scripture says here but mine has a subheading that says **the Lord answers Jeremiah**. It says in verse five, **“If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?”**

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for the opportunity to be here with these incredible people that are a part of this church, your larger church here at Harris Creek. Lord I just asked that however it is that we came in here we might walk out different today; by simply recognizing who you are and what you're saying through Your Word with a much more clear understanding of what it is that you've called us to. That we'd have a grand eternal understanding of the story that you called us into. That you purchased us into that story with your own blood that we wouldn't get so absorbed in our own stories and the little castles that we're building for ourselves that we miss out on the kingdom that were called to build, for your name and for your glory. Father, would we be restored and rejuvenated to continue the mission that you've called every single one

of us into that says that we're a believer in Jesus Christ. Lord, we love you, we praise you, we thank you. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, I don't know what you people did for fun growing up, but I will tell you this, when I was growing up, there was a period of time where my brother and I were growing up in Virginia, and I was like, 11, he was about 9 and we were living in this cul-de-sac and all the kids were playing this game called airsoft. Anybody in here familiar with airsoft? Can I see a show of hands? Okay, that's all my senators in the room. Great. So, I'm going to do my best to not make my parents sound like they were negligent and terrible here, but just bear with me. If you don't know what airsoft is, airsoft is this game where you have these fake guns that are modeled after real ones, and they shoot these tiny air compressed plastic pellets that hurt like you would not believe. If you got hit with one you needed to sit out. And the way that the game worked is that whoever was the team with the last player standing was declared the winner and, in our eyes, supreme ruler of planet Earth. And so that was the game. And you might think that we treated this game as if we were mere children and oh, no, we took this game for real. I mean, this was not a joke to us. I mean, we had backpacks that were full of pellets. We had fully loaded magazines ready to go for quick reloads. We put water in the sides of our backpacks, so that we could make sure that we could pursue enemy combatants that were trying to run away from imminent death. I mean, we were even in a position to where we were putting skateboard pads all over our body like it was Kevlar. Like we were ready to rock in this thing, like we were going into actual war. And after these games were completed that the Lord had placed before us, we would go to a friend's house usually, one of their mothers would make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and so it could have been any one of our moms, but we would pick somebody and we would be sitting at Harris Creek Baptist Waco, TX

that table discussing this battle as if it were actual war. And we would literally be like we lost a lot of good men out there. And their mom would be like, he's literally at the other end of the table right now. And we'd be like, he's with us in spirit. You know, I mean, like we did not take that as a legitimate answer. And you're going to find this absolutely shocking, but I was an absolute liability on the battlefield because whenever I saw somebody from the other team, I was like, here's the deal, why would we wait, right? Like, there they are, let's just go get them out of this thing right now. So, they would hear me huffing and puffing, pounding the pavement, and there's like no secrecy to this at all. They would just turn around and knock me out of the game pretty much first every time. And I was like this is a terrible game that isn't even worth playing, right, guys? I mean, they're all still in the middle of it. I'm sitting on the sidelines, like, I don't want to do this anymore. And so, I decided that I needed to get some help and advice, and there was a guy on the other team that we looked at like he was an airsoft God. His name was Drew, and now that I am thinking about it, I don't know why Drew was playing airsoft with us. I mean, he had like a beard and we'd wait till he got off work and stuff, but that's kind of neither here nor there I guess. I'll unpack that with people later on, I guess. It's great to be thinking through that as I am guest preaching. So, I decided I'll go ask creepy Drew for some advice on what it is that I need to do to be a better airsoft player. So, I didn't know exactly what he looked like because we were responsible 11 year olds with fake guns, and we wore face shields so nobody shot their eyes out right. And as I went to his camp, I was like, I'm pretty sure that's the guy because he was like Christ preaching to all of these people on the Sermon on the Mount, just soaking up his wisdom. And so, I was like, I guess that's him. And I just said, "Hey, Drew, we don't know each other, but I just I got to let you know, I'm the guy on the other team, I'm running up on people—heroically I

might add—and I'm trying to get people out and it's not going well. So, is there anything that you have, tips or tricks, Your Holiness, that would make me a better airsoft player? And he just looked at me in all seriousness and was like, “Were you trying to end the game before it even begins or are you trying to like set up your base camp or something?” I was like, “I don't know, man. Like, is that a trick question? I'm not 100% sure.” And he was like, “Listen, man, if you're this impatient this early on in the game, how are you going to make an impact in the game?”

And I bring that up to you this morning because I ended up growing impatient and tired and weary in the game of airsoft and it ended up costing me a little bit of fun. But I think everybody in the room knows what it's like to grow impatient and tired and weary in your walk with God and you feel like it's costing you so much more. And what we see in this passage with Jeremiah is that he's experiencing and feeling something that everybody in here has experienced and felt at some point in our life. When you're in the middle of those times where you're discouraged and tired and weary; honestly, it's difficult to walk with fear and trembling before the Lord. I don't want to be obedient to what you're calling me into God. I don't like the way that things are going right now. This is not good. I don't love this. You get to a point where instead of beholding God and all this glory and saying, “Lord, I will do whatever it is that you tell me to do, and I will go wherever it is that you call me to go”, we start to rather than behold Him, bewail Him. We start to just think about the way that things are going or not going in life and you can be like, “I mean, Lord, I thought my financial situation will be different at this point; I kind of figured I'd be married by now; God, I figured my family or my career; things would be different at this point”. And that's what Jeremiah is doing right now. Because Jeremiah answers this incredible call from God on his life and yet at the same time, things aren't going nearly as incredible as it sounded

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like they're supposed to go. So he's thinking, God, I should be doing something bigger and better than I am right now. God calls Jeremiah when he's 17 years old, and the call doesn't sound incredible for somebody that's just a teenager. It sounds incredible for any of us that are in here. Listen to this in Jeremiah one, beginning in verse four, says, ⁴**Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,** ⁵**“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”** It goes on in verse 10, it says, ¹⁰**“Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”** And as incredible as all of that sounds, Jeremiah answers the call, but things don't start off on this grand scale, not at all. He's stuck in a small hometown of Anathoth and before he's preaching all over Judah, and even sniffing the city of Jerusalem, he finds himself in this place where he recognizes the way that things sound like they're supposed to go and the way that things are going, does not make sense. It's not going nearly as stellar as the call sounded. We see that Jeremiah is in a position where he's not only stuck in Anathoth, but we see that he's in a position to where actually people are rejecting his message, and they're threatening him. So, Jeremiah is growing weary of doing the things that God's called him to do. And honestly, who of us wouldn't? I mean he's supposed to be preaching to Kings, testifying to nations, prophesying to his own country, and to kind of add insult to injury, the thing he's called to do is not going well. I mean, they call Jeremiah the weeping prophet. Like just cry Jeremiah, because you are a preacher that nobody wants to listen to. Things are not going amazing in his life. So he's looking at what's happening and not happening in life and he's struggling to understand with what he's

been called to and what he's having to contend through and how those are in any way, shape or form compatible.

Jeremiah is walking through a really difficult season of life where he's having to endure quite a few things and I think all of us know what that's like. Where you're enduring through some difficulty and you're feeling like, "how am I going to make it through this". You're struggling to walk with that same awe and wonder and behold, God rather than bewail him. We've all been there. And before we jump into these three specific things that can keep us from walking with that awe and wonder before the Lord, I want to just go ahead and acknowledge something that we see God acknowledges with Jeremiah. In the same way that God knew Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb and had plans for him beyond his wildest imaginations. God knew you and has plans for you well beyond what you can see in the struggles of the moment that you're in. I think sometimes when we're walking through seasons, where we're having to endure quite a bit, we can feel like, "you know what, maybe God set me apart just to set me aside". And that's when we're in danger of starting to think "you know what, I want to make an impact for the kingdom of God still, but I'm tempted to start seeking things outside of God to be the source of that. And so I think, "you know what, I need God but I also need those connections I think I need, or that money I think I need, or those relationships that I think I need, or whatever else it might be that I think I need". That if I see the subtraction of this obstacle, or the addition of this opportunity, well, then I can be effective for the kingdom of God where he has placed me right now. And I'm here to tell you that God did not set you apart to set you aside so that we could say I think I need God plus something else. For those of us that are saying, "you know what, I want to walk with that awe and wonder in the Lord. That I want to be obedient into all that he's called

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me to do” we understand God didn't set you apart to set you aside. God set us apart to set us up for impact in a broken and a dark world, and impact always comes with pain. You cannot make an impact without feeling the repercussions of that pain, and that is often the grace of God in our life because it clarifies the call and the purpose behind the call. Very often we can find ourselves being fixated on the extravagance, on what is it that God's called me to do. “Yes, Lord, I'll prophesize to my own country; I'll testify to the nation's. You want me to make disciples of all nations Lord? Well, I feel like Tahiti's calling my name father.” We just focus on the extravagance of the call. And the real question is not will you say yes to the thing that God's called you to do, Its will you endure through what you must endure through in order to stay faithful to that?

Yes, that's where Jeremiah is as we jump into this text together, and so what we see is that Jeremiah is going to pay our dumb tax this morning. That there are some things that can keep us from walking with fear and trembling before the Lord that we see happening in Jeremiah's life. And that can happen in our lives as well. So what do we need to be weary of? What do we need to be careful of? If we don't want to grow weary, what should we be weary of? And the first thing is this we need to be weary of complaining.

1. Complaining keeps us from the fear of God.

Jeremiah, chapter 12, verse one, do you notice this? He begins and he says, **Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you.** That we see Jeremiah has reasons here for complaining y'all. Jeremiah is in his hometown of Anathoth and he's being threatened. And it's not like some corny empty threat right? It's not like people are

saying, “Oh gee willikers Jeremiah, would you stop preaching that convicting stuff son, we're just not loving that. I mean, you silly goose. Why don't you just get on out of here and go have a snack, like grab a Snickers, Jeremiah, you'll feel better”. It's not like they're doing that. But instead, they're like, “hey, stop, or we'll kill you. If you don't stop saying these things. We will end your life.” And I don't know if you caught it, but the way that Jeremiah launches into these prayers and conversations with God is a way that you and I can tend to do so when we feel discouraged and tired and weary in our walk with God. You notice that? He approaches God as if he's in court. And we see that he says, righteous are you Oh, Lord, yet I would plead my case before you. In Hebrew that word before you can also be rendered as with you. And in the metaphorical context of a legal argument, which is what we see Jeremiah presenting to us here in verse one, not only could it accurately be rendered as before you or with you, but it could also be accurately rendered as against you God. Have you ever been in a difficult season of life where you're having to endure and if you're just being honest, you're going, “you know what, God I don't just have a problem with my problems, I kind of a problem with you. I'm struggling with you right now”. Some of the humor and the irony in all of this is, if you caught it, in verse one Jeremiah pretty much acknowledges, “Hey, I should never bring complaints against you, yet I'm going to do it anyway”. It says righteous are you oh Lord, which is to say; Father, you're perfect, you're just, there is no flaw in you, you are the perfect judge and whom I could not possibly bring any complaints against, and so I won't, except for this one thing, God I got asked about this. You ever done that before? And he just launches into these complaints in verses one and two. And we see that he begins by saying, Why does the way the wicked prosper? Pray tell Lord what's going on with that? **Why do all the treacherous thrive? 2 You plant them, and they**

take root; they grow and produce fruit; you are near in their mouth and far from their heart. Jeremiah is furious right now and he's asking legitimate theological questions. Yet at the same time, he's complaining so much that he's missing God's original calling and purpose for his life. And I don't know about you, but I have the remarkable propensity to do the same thing.

I know nobody else in here complains, but in Orlando, we complain and so I can do this. You ever started off a prayer and it starts off incredible and then somewhere along the way you're, like what happened? Where you truly start off a prayer and you're like, "Lord, You are so righteous. You're so good, so faithful. Father, you're perfect. I could bring nothing against you. Lord, I thank you that I love you. Lord, I thank You that You love me. Speaking of love, why haven't I found it?" You know, just like what? Wait a minute, how did we end up here? It's like, why does my kid not love you, Lord? You start unpacking all of these different things and you're like, I don't even know how that happened. And I think sometimes we misunderstand that complaining is a verbal declaration that God has no idea what he's doing. And is there anything wrong with bringing complaints and problems to the Lord? Absolutely not. But what is a problem is when it becomes habitual, and every gripe in our life, we feel like is justifiable to bring against God. And rather than us being a people where people look at us from the outside and say, "Man, that is a thankful gratitude filled people that just always seem to be spreading the fragrance of Jesus wherever they go." It just feels like "Man, there is just something different about them and every now and then they've got some issues, but they bring them to the Lord in faith." No, instead, people are like, "they like gripe a lot and I guess sometimes they're filled with gratitude. I don't know." It's the sin of the Israelites, isn't it? It's the sin of the Israelites. "Man, we ate better back in Egypt, let's just go back. What's up with this God?" We see

Jeremiah's struggling with this here. And let me just say I think our online behavior matters here. And very often, you can see the way that believers can behave online and it's like we think complaining is a fruit of the Spirit. We are all laughing a little too much at that. That's fine. Right? And it's like really, we're just discontent. Instead of bringing it to the Lord in faith, we're letting the whole world know. And when people see that they're like, if their God's only that great I don't know that I want anything to do with him." They're griping that much? We got to make sure that we're not complaining to that degree. The second thing that we want to make sure that we do in order to make sure that we're walking with fear and trembling before the Lord is we have to avoid comparing.

2. Comparing keeps us from the fear of God.

Jeremiah chapter 12, verse three, look at what it says, **³ But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter.** Jeremiah is saying, God, I'm following you. I'm kind of doing a good job at it, I felt like. These people are not, so why don't we go ahead and set them apart and kick them out of our life? What are we doing right now? Like I'm doing great. Why are they here? Like that's how Jeremiah feels. He's stuck in this game of comparison, which again, I know none of you do, but in Orlando we do. And so, you've got to be careful with that.

I'll never forget the first time I watched the Kentucky Derby. I'm not big into horse racing. You're never going to see these skinny jeans hop on a horse, alright. So, like the first time I watched the Kentucky Derby I don't know who was racing or what happened, but I remember that they had like these eye flap things over the horse's eyes. Have you seen those? I think we have a photo,

(photo of horse goes on the screen) they had like these things over the horse's eyes. And I just assumed, the flaps kind of keep the horse calm; you lead it into the gate, the gun goes off, and then they race around the racecourse, and we all celebrate after this right? But then the gun went off and they were racing around the racecourse and the flap things are still over their eyes. So, I'm over here like "hey guys, we got to stop the Kentucky Derby and we got to restart they left the flap things over the eyes." So, I don't drive blindfolded. I imagine jockeys don't want to ride horses that are blindfolded, but maybe that's just what they do. I don't know. And so, I stumbled across the Dallas equestrian Center's website because I had some questions about this. And by the way, equestrians, just a fancy word for horse riding. It was a shameful part of my life like how long it took for me to understand that. Like I grew up in Dallas, Texas, y'all I had no idea what equestrian meant. Somebody came up to me was like, "Hey, man, you equestrian?" I was like, "No, I'm a Christian, Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I'd love to tell you about him." So anyway, I hope he's not here if that's you, sorry, man. But it's kind of neither here nor there. But this is what the Dallas Equestrian Center's website had to say about the flappy thing's over the eyes. "Horses sometimes need to be made to focus. Blinders keep the horses' eyes focused on what is ahead, rather than what is at the side or behind them. That's why racehorses are often given these blinders. The blinders are for the purpose of keeping a horse focused when racing round a racecourse. And troublesome racehorses are fitted with blinders for their own safety." Sometimes blinders are what we need for our own safety when we're caught comparing.

In comparison, we often see compromise and rather than walking with awe and wander down the path our king has called us to we get really focused on our opinions rather than our obedience. If you're calling us to fly, but you're focused on how well other people swim, then you're always

going to be fixated on the way that they kind of use their gills and you can become a little bit prideful in your wings and have an issue with the way that they're doing things and feel like you're doing things in a different way. Where you're saying, you know what, why are they swimming like that? Why are they struggling like that?" And you're like, "well, you know, you should be soaring, and you should be flying like I am". And it can make things really complicated because we're caught looking here (points side to side) rather than here (points up). That in comparing, we can very often lose that awe and wonder as to who God is and what God does in our life and in the world around us because we become more enamored with our opinions about how other people are living their lives, rather than being focused on fearful and faithful obedience in our own. So, we see Jeremiah is unpacking this, he's struggling with this. And in verse four, it says, **4 How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, "He will not see our latter end."** Translation, Jeremiah wants judgment on these folks. He wants judgment. Lord, they're not following you the way I am, what is going on? The third thing that we need to be aware of if we're going to continue to walk with fear and trembling before the Lord is; that we not only have to be aware of if we're complaining or if we're comparing but probably the biggest one that we see in this text is that we need to make sure that we're not seeking things that are comforting.

3. Comforting keeps us from the fear of God.

Jeremiah, chapter 12, verse five, I told you as I was reading the scriptures up front that my subheading here says the Lord answers Jeremiah. And sometimes it's easy to read something like

that and you can get the sense that God is just really frustrated and wants to come in and kind of pummel Jeremiah, and just tell him what for and how many, and that's not necessarily the tone. You ever get in trouble growing up as a kid and you knew that your father was going to be having a conversation with you when he got home? Ever had that before? And it's kind of like I've got a healthy fear of my father in the way that he can drill holes in a mallet. And so I'm not sure how this is going to go, right? Like, it's difficult. You're waiting for it, right? And it's kind of like, "Hey, I know you're going to complain and explain your side do all these things, but Dad's here now and Dad's got to have a conversation with you and Dad's going to speak." And so, we see here in verse five, dad speaks. And God answers Jeremiah here with a question and he says, Jeremiah, **"If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses?"** God's saying to Jeremiah, "wait a minute, are you weary before we've hardly even begun the work that I've assigned for your life? Listen, I know that I've called you to something difficult, and yet at the same time, will you take the risk? Will you run the race that I've set before you or do you want to retreat to safety here?" God has not called us to live a cautious life that is filled with all of these comforts. God has called us to live a courageous life that is filled with purpose. And so, when we run forward in faith, we run with the horses because here's the reality, everybody wants to see a miracle in their life till you need one. Where it's like, "Lord, I want to see your split seas, I just don't want an army at my back. Is there any way that we could make that work, Lord?" And it doesn't work like that. That in that opposition that you face in life, that's often the opportunity that we see we can be overwhelmed by the glory of God. And I'm amazed sometimes how I will talk to Christians and it's like, "we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that he stepped down from heaven, that he lived the perfect life that you

and I could not that he died the death that you and I deserved, that he was nailed to a cross and that his blood covers our sins past, present, and future. That He was buried in a tomb for three days and on the third day, he rose to new life and because of his life, because he defeated hell, death and the grave, I can have new life in him. That I'm a new creation. I'm sealed by His Holy Spirit that can testify to this truth. Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, and he's seated at the right hand of power interceding for us right now." And we pause in the presence of puddles while we claim to worship a God who splits seas. God didn't call us till it gets difficult, he just called us. He just called us. And it's a fight. It's a struggle. It's a battle. It's not easy.

It's interesting in the original language in the Hebrew here, you see that that word men on foot was very often rendered as foot soldiers, which is battle language. All God's saying is that you got to fight for obedience, to continue to walk with that fear and trembling before him. That we have to actually work at that because God's saying to Jeremiah, "man, if you are struggling to keep up with the foot soldiers, how are you going to contend with the cavalry Jeremiah? How are you going to do that?" And just in case Jeremiah is like, "man, I feel like God is being intense on me right now." God doubles down and is like, "oh, you thought you misunderstood. I meant what I said." And he continues on in verse five, and he says the same thing in a different way. He began and he said, Jeremiah if you've raced with men on foot and they've wearied you, how will you compete with the horses? And Jeremiah's, like, I don't catch your drift here, father, and he says, okay, **And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?** God is reminding him and reminding us, crossing the Jordan River was an almost impossible task. It was a tropical environment filled with predators; the bones of lions have been excavated out of the Jordan River. And so, when he says this, you'll notice that in my translation,

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the ESV it says the thicket of the Jordan, yours might say the floodplain because in rainy seasons that Jordan river would begin to rise and the rapidness would get crazy. It would push these predators to the outskirts of the Jordan River, and it would put all of this overgrowth on the outskirts as well. And so, what would happen is that before you even dipped a toe in the actual Jordan River, you had to get through lions and tigers and bears oh, my, and all of the different things that were around before you could actually even do the difficult work of crossing the river. And God is saying to Jeremiah, “hey, man, I’m going to be honest with you, where you’re at right now is not really where I thought you’d be griping (even though I’m God and I did). This is peaceful. This isn’t even the overwhelming, overflowing parts of the Jordan River, of the call. So how are we going to handle this here?”

It reminds me of Hebrews chapter 12, verse three and four, when the author of Hebrews says, **³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.** Jesus endured. Isn’t that good news this morning? Jesus’ endurance is encouragement to us as we endure through this life. Yet what I love is that this is a real shot from the author of Hebrews at us. That we see that he’s saying in your struggle, you could almost put air quotes around that, in your struggle against sin, have you resisted yet to the point of shedding your own blood? I mean, he’d say, “hey, you’re saying that you’re being faithful to the call, and you’re trying to walk with fear and trembling before the Lord, but I’m going to be honest, I don’t see scratches on you. You’re not even bleeding yet. Like, you’re not even trying to put off all of that sin in your life. You’re not even trying to get through some of this difficulty. Like you’re just kind of thrown in the towel right now. You’re not even bleeding yet. Jeremiah,

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this is Anathoth. What are you going to do as we continue moving forward? This is relatively easy.” And yet Jeremiah is weary. And I know that we could hear this and we're like, well, that's awesome God I mean, that just means to just like pick yourself up by your bootstraps, like get after it, rub some dirt on it, stop crying, like what is that saying? Jeremiah is weary, and I know that we might be as well. And if you read this, without the proper perspective, you can get the sense that in this God's just picking on Jeremiah. And he's picking on him from the sense that he called him. He's not picking on him to be mean to him. He's picking on him to remind him of his purpose. God's not trying to tear down Jeremiah's confidence in himself as much as he's trying to train Jeremiah's confidence up in God. Because if we're trying to run under our own power, you can only hope to keep up with men on foot. But if the Spirit of the Living God resides on the inside of you, and you've said yes to Him, then it's not too much to think that we could run with horses. And in that discouragement, it's not a time to give in but dig in. Dig deeper into God's word, deeper into prayer, deeper into His presence, because the things that we're enduring through right now are strengthening feeble knees and weak hands to continue to run the last legs of the race that the Lord has set before us. Even those things that we haven't found ourselves encountering yet.

It reminds me of a young blacksmith, William Turner, the first time he ever crossed blades with the pirate Jack Sparrow (audience laughs). That as Jack was in this room, where William Turner had been a faithful blacksmith for quite some time, he's looking at all the swords and he's like, who makes all these? And Will says I do, and I practice with them for three hours a day so that whenever I meet a pirate, I can kill him. That he's endured through this time of private discipline and practice so that he's ready for this battle he has yet to face. Hebrews chapter 12, verses 11

and 12 says to us, **For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.** That word trained, is the Greek word of gymnasia, it's where we get gymnasium. And it's that discussion around athletes that have been disciplined and have trained through some difficulty preparing for the actual moment where those things are going to be needed. That proficiency develops in practice. That God's developing us. He's doing something in that difficulty, so that we might be faithful to walk before him with fear and trembling and run the race that he has set before us. That God's training us in the stables of his strength. That he's teaching us to gallop to his grace, so that we're not going to grow weary over some gossip in Anathoth. So that we're not going to be like, "man, my whole day is ruined because the waiter took forever to get me another Diet Coke." Some of y'all need to go apologize to her from yesterday, right? It's difficult. We say no I'm training you up for something more and yet I know that many of us are still weary.

And so what do you do with that and I'll close with this. What do you do? Is this message just like "oh man great, so glad you could come from Orlando to say rub some dirt on it, stop crying, have a good day Waco." Like that's not helpful. What if I'm weary and I want to continue to be faithful and I want to walk with fearful obedience to the Lord but I'm struggling. And what do I do? Our young adult ministry back home, it's called quay and it's an actual thing. A quay is, by definition, a concrete stone or metal platform that's lying alongside of or projecting into water for the loading and unloading of ships. So the idea is that whenever ships have been navigating difficult seas, that they will sail into a harbor and they'll land at the quay. And the quay is that stabilizing force that allows a ship to come and find rest, and you offload old cargo and crew so that you can onboard new cargo and new crew. Then you send it back out with new mission,

vision, and purpose. There's something different about you now. And so, what we find is that for us and for people in general, we want individuals to be able to land at a place where yes, you're being restored, but then also you're being sent back out to continue the race. And we believe Jesus Christ is the quay. Jesus Christ is the quay. Matthew 11 verse 28 Jesus says, **come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.** Not, “hey, all of you who are crushing it, living your best life, and just feels like you're just living your dream 24/7, come on through I'd love to just say keep going buddy.” And he doesn't say that. Does that mean that you can't come to him if things are going well? No, but it does mean that if you're discouraged or tired or weary, that's okay. The Lord expected you to come to him in moments like that. So I don't know how you feel as you step into this place today, but my prayer for you is that you would find yourself putting off complaining, putting off comparing, putting off that idea of seeking things that are comforting, or whatever it might be that is keeping you from walking with fear and trembling before the Lord in faithful obedience to Him. Because there's a grand story that God has called us into, and we need to make sure that we are equipped to run that race. And that we fear the Lord above everything else so that all fades into the background. Ultimately, fear of the Lord is fear from being far from him. And so yes, Father, we will go wherever you call us to go, even if it's terrifying, even if it's hard, even if we must endure and let everything else fade into the background, because at the end of the day, I've never seen anybody in this world go to a funeral with a U-haul. We leave it all behind because our whole life was emptied out to follow you with fear and trembling.

And so Father I pray it would be so that we would be a people in here today that walk with fear and trembling before you that nothing would get in the way of that. And Lord, I know that as I

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say that there's people that have very specific things that are keeping them from walking with that fear and trembling. And So Father, would you, just in a way that only you can, just do something new and a fresh in us that would remind us of the grand story that you've called us into that we might faithfully and fearfully follow you into all that you've called us to do no matter where that might be or what that might be. Because Father ultimately, this life is to be emptied out for your glory. That the whole world might know there is a God in heaven, and he did a work in me and he can do a work in you. And he's called us into something so much bigger than ourselves, that the world might know that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that he still says, Father, we love you. We praise you, we thank you, we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.