

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Upside Down Kingdom
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Salt and Light
Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Harris Creek, how are we doing? Let's go. Let's go. Through the generosity of a builder friend, Monica and I got to live the dream of building a home. And I love it. Like design kind of art, architecture, that's my thing. And so, I really enjoyed that process, but we were on a super tight budget trying to figure, get everything to fit in the budget. And one of the biggest challenges we ran into were around lights, or was around lights. They're expensive. Okay. Everything about lights, the wiring, the mechanicals, the fixtures. Like light fixtures. You can blow the budget on light fixtures. Whether you go Amazon, or some boutique, imported, whatever, right. We went Amazon. But I'm just telling you, you can get in big trouble with the lights.

And so, you look at this blueprint and you got to see where all the lights are going, and I'm trying. I'm in value engineer mode. And so, I'm like, “Okay, how can we cut costs?” And so, I'm looking at, they got two lights in the bathroom, one over the vanity and one over the bathtub, and shower and whatnot. I'm like, “Hey, we can just get away with one light in there.” And they're like, “You're going to be taking showers in the dark.” I'm like, “No, no, no. Here's the plan. Alright. We're going to strategically put a bright bulb and a mirror, and we're going to reflect it.” And this is what they're dealing with with me.

And they put three lights over the stairs. I go, “No, no, no, let's just do one light over the stairs.” And they're like, “JP, your kids are going to be coming down those stairs at night, you know?” And I said, “But here's the deal. My kids are resilient [laughs] and they're going to figure [it out], they'll be okay.” And so, I remember we moved in, and it's finished. We're doing the walkthrough, like moving trucks are on the way, and so we move in, and we're walking through, and I'm with the builder, and he's looking over the island and is weird and he's crouched down, looking at something. I was like, “What are you doing?” He's like, “Those are off.” He's pointing at the two pendants. He's like, “Those are off.” And I was like, “You want me to turn them on? What do you mean?” He goes, “No, they're four inches off. They need to, we got to move them.” And it's painted and sheet rocked and all. I'm like, “No, no, no, no. It's fine.” He goes, “No, no, we got to move them. Where you put lights matters. You got to get them in the right place.”

And so, you can think about the way a master builder, a craftsman, someone who cares about the final product is thinking about the things that they're building. He's like, “No, you got to

put lights in the right place.” And what I want to tell you as we dive into this section of the Sermon on the Mount, is Jesus is going to call us lights. And I want you to know that God, the master builder, the architecture of the world, the architect of the world, He put great thought and strategy into where He placed His lights. And as Jesus is going to call us two things, salt and light. We have to understand what that means and what it means is that He put us where He did in the place and the time in history that He did. And that's your purpose.

And so, we're really talking about what it means to live out our purpose. Because you'll hear this phrase today. There are people in Christianity who are burnt out. They are going through the rhythms. They feel like their heart has drifted from the things of the scripture, the Gospel, the things of God, as they go through the motions, they just don't feel it anymore. And I want to argue, because we think burnout most often comes from doing too much. I believe that burnout comes most often from not living your purpose in the right place with the right people. When you don't live your purpose, that's where burnout ensues. And so, you can think about that. I know I've said that in enough crowds to know that people will argue with me in their heads. Write it down, spend a quiet time on it. Think about it. What does it look like for me to live out my purpose in the right place with the people that God before creation has ordained for me to do life with?

If you were with us last week, we started the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon that has ever preached, a piece of ancient literature that has been quoted more times than any other ancient literature in history, and certainly the most quoted sermon of all time. Jesus sat down and He gave this sermon. He preached this sermon about the Kingdom of Heaven, and in fact, we're calling this series, the Upside Down Kingdom, because the things that Jesus is placing before us, it's so backwards to everything we experience in the world. It's so different than the way we think about and experience things in a worldly sense that Jesus is saying, “There's another kingdom. And for you to live in this world for that kingdom is going to look really weird.” And we started with the Beatitudes last week. If you missed it, go back and catch up. Listen to the message either on the app or on the website online. And as we set up that series, we're just saying, “Okay, what does it look like to live as a saved Christian? What does it look like to surrender to the kingdom of God?” And today, I think there's a reason Jesus turns from that introduction right into, “Hey, here's your purpose. Here's your purpose.”

I'm going to be in Matthew five, starting in 16, and we're going to talk about what it looks like to find your purpose, to find your place where you live out that purpose, and to find the people that in that place where you will live out your purpose. I think if Jesus preached this today, the illustration He would use is power, like electricity. I don't know if you, maybe some of you lost power recently, you lost electricity. First thing that happens is, hour one, you're starting to think about your food, refrigerator, freezer. How long will it keep? How long will it be good for? And if you figure that out, you get the dry ice, you get the cooler, you take it to a friend's house. Well then you start, at night, you all huddle around the light. It's like, you're thinking productivity. What is it that we need to do, but we need light to do what we need to do? We need power to do. And then about day two, you start realizing how desperate, how much you rely on power that it just impacts your showers and everything you do is impacted by the loss of power.

What Jesus is telling us in the scripture is where this power comes from. I don't want you to leave here this morning, and there will be a temptation to leave here, and you go, “I got to try harder. I got to do it. I got to do better.” The power comes from His Holy Spirit. That's what

He says in Acts 1, verse 8, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”** That there's this idea that we are taking the Gospel to the nations, and we have to start with the nation that we've been entrusted to. We have to start with the companies and the areas and the neighborhood that we've been entrusted to. What does that look like? What does that mean to live with that kind of power? So, let's dive into the scripture.

Matthew 5:13. **“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything.”** [He's saying it loses, it's lost its purpose. It's no longer living or being effective within the purpose that it had. It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. And then He says in verse 14,] **“You are the light of the world.”**

And so, He's going to give us two metaphors, salt and light. I want to argue or make the argument that these two are the same. They go hand in hand. Salt is the what we're to do. And the light is the how we're to do it. The salt, it's a preservative. Okay, so we preserve something, and the way that we preserve it is we shine, and we push back darkness. And so, He's using two metaphors really to make one point. This is often what Jesus did. These are two illustrations illustrating our purpose.

As we talk about salt before we get into the light, salt was expensive. You could be paid in salt at this time. It's where we get the word salary. If you've ever heard the phrase, “he's not worth his salt” or “she's not worth her salt,” it's where it comes from. Soldiers were compensated in salt. When we think about salt, we think about the little canister on the table. Makes our eggs or mashed potatoes taste better. It's not what they're thinking about. That would have been, if anybody used it for that purpose, it would have been a secondary usage. Salt in the first century was primarily a preservative. They didn't have refrigerators. So, what they would have done with a piece of meat is they would have wrapped that piece of meat in seaweed. Okay. And that salt and that plant would have preserved that meat, kept it from rotting, kept it from going bad. And when they consume that meat, when they were done with the seaweed, they would throw the seaweed on their roof and the roofs were thatched at this time. And also, they were kind of the sidewalks. So, houses were right next to each other. If you're going to go through a neighborhood, you would walk on people's roofs. Cities, as you're going to hear, or we're built on hills. They were terraced with the homes. And so, the roofs of those homes were sidewalks. Well, when you take that seaweed and you're done with it, you throw it on that thatched roof, people walk on it, it waterproofs the house.

This picture makes this passage come alive as Jesus says, “Hey, once it's done, once it's served its purpose, it's then trampled underfoot.” And His listeners would have been like, “Oh yeah, we know what you're talking about.” And so really what He's hitting at us is we have to know our purpose. And that's my first point. I want you to know your purpose.

1. Know your purpose.

As He hints at this idea of salt, He's talking about it preserving the land, preserving a culture. I read this passage for a long time, thinking that it was saying that Christians are to preserve Christian values and virtues in the land. That's what I thought Jesus was saying for a number of years. I think what He's actually saying is Christians' values and virtues preserve a land.

Does that make sense? You pull out Christian ideologies and practices. You pull out Christian values and virtues, and what you are left with is rot and decay.

I was just in Dallas a couple weeks ago with some staff members. We were at a conference there, and afterwards, when we finished at the conference, we were going to go eat and we were like, “Hey, where can we go eat?” And so, people, thrill seekers do different things, some people go bungee jumping, some people go skydiving. I eat at hole-in-the-wall, sushi places. That's how I seek thrills. And so, I was like, “Hey, I've got this spot. I'm going to take you out of my, this is my old stomping ground. I'm going to take you to my sushi spot.” And so, we go, and we go big. Call it a confession if you'd like. And maybe it is. We went big. I ate too much. And so, I don't eat sushi often, but at this particular sitting, went big. And I remember one bite tasting a little different than the others. It was a little lemony, there was something, a flavor attached to it that just really taste tainted all the rest of what I ate that night, really stayed with me. I left the place with that flavor still in my mouth. Didn't really like it. Wasn't super pleasant, a little fishy. And at about 12:30 in the morning, I just got so sick, and I'm not at my house, I'm at a friend's house. [Laughs] It was the worst, man. I'm like, “You guys are going to have to sell this house. I am so sorry.” And so, yeah, it was a mess. It was not good.

Why? What happened? What happened? I ate something bad. I ate something that had rotted, right? Something that was no longer good. This is the idea of what Jesus is hitting toward, right? He's saying, “Hey, there's this call on us to preserve the things of God, which actually preserves the things around us. That this is what it looks like to live out our calling.” If salt's a preservative, you think, “Hey, how do we do that?” Well, we do that by being a light. By telling people how they can live forever, by pointing others to Jesus. And you think, “Well why would I care about that?” Because, all of the things that you complain about, I don't want to overstate. So much of the things that you complain about are the result of you not doing that.

Okay. That's important. Let me prove it. Consider Amsterdam. Amsterdam in the 1700s was known for its cathedrals. People would come in, at a time that travel was very inconvenient, they would converge on Amsterdam to visit these church buildings, magnificent structures of worship. Okay. What is Amsterdam known for today? Secularization and sex trade. Okay. The church buildings, the cathedrals, they've been converted to museums and libraries, and here's one that is now a skate park. [Shows one photo of an old cathedral converted to a skate park]

Why? Because Christians didn't do their jobs. It would be incredibly foolish to think, “Oh, that's because a bunch of people got in a room and made some bad decisions.” No, no. It's not the people in the room making bad decisions. It's the people outside of the room operating outside their purpose. That's what happens. That's where we go wrong.

And so, I'm going to give you another, for instance, you see remnants of Christianity all around us: “In God We Trust” on our money, “One Nation Under God” in our pledge. And I understand that if you look backwards in history there's some real significant misses there, and all of those misses are from people not following Christ. And in fact, when someone follows Christ, Christians courageously stand up against what is evil and work. They spend their lives, dedicate their lives to correcting it.

I'll read to you from David Aikman. This comes from Jesus in Beijing. The bureau chief for Time Magazine in Beijing documents, Chinese economists and sociologists. Speaking of America's success. Brilliant people set out to say, "Why has America been so successful? What is happening?" And this is, I'm just going to read, this is a quote. This is what they said.

"One of the things we were asked to look into was what accounted for the success, in fact, the preeminence of the West all over the world, said the lecturer. We studied everything we could from the historical and political, economic, and cultural perspective. At first, we thought it was because you had more powerful guns than we had. Then we thought it was because you had the best political system. Next, we focused on your economic system. But in the past twenty years, we have realized that the heart of your culture is your religion: Christianity. That is why the West has been so powerful. The Christian moral foundation of social and cultural life is what made possible the emergence of capitalism and then the successful transition to democratic politics. We don't have any doubt about this." [He says, and then he goes on to say,] "Studies reveal that in rural, [talking about Asia] in rural areas where traveling evangelists or missionaries introduced the Christian faith, opium addiction goes down, crime drops, and Christian families grow wealthier than their neighbors."

And I'm not talking prosperity gospel here. Now, it just turns out when you do less opium, you have more money. Okay. [Laughs] That's what he's saying. Yeah. The simple idea is that when people go in and instruct and teach Christian values and virtues, people live in a way that gives them life. Now, we're not trying to make better humans, like that's not the end goal is to take a person and have them be more virtuous or operate according to our values. We want God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, to entrust to them the Holy Spirit, who then begins to transform them from the inside out. And once He transforms a person, it's contagious. They got the virus, if you will, and it's contagious. And it travels. So, they're looking at America, they're saying, "Why are you so successful? We thought it was your guns. We thought it was your politics. We thought it was your economy. It turns out it's your faith." And you can take this principle, I'm just appealing to logic right now, you can take it and apply it to anywhere. Where Christianity thrives, the culture, the geography around it thrives. And where it suffers, or leaves, vacates, the culture, the society, the geography rots.

What's interesting about David Aikman is he went to Oxford. Do you know what Oxford has in common with Princeton, Harvard, and Yale? They were all started as institutions to teach the Bible. Not the case anymore. Why? What happened? Christians stopped operating as Christians. They just became churchgoers. And without the potency of a salt that preserves, it rots. That's what Jesus is saying. That's where this goes.

And you see, again, remnants of it everywhere. Would you consider hospitals? I just Googled, "What are the best hospitals in the world?" Let me give you five or six. New York Presbyterian Hospital, St. Luke's International Hospital, The Mount Sinai Hospital, The University of Penn Presbyterian Hospital, Houston Methodist Hospital. Now, on the tops of these institutions that heal people and save people are denominations of the Christian faith or Biblical ideas and Biblical terms. Why? Because once upon a time, Christians said, "Bring us your hurting and your sick and your dying and we will care for them. And the remnants of that is still all around us.

You've got to make sure to hold fast to the purpose that God has called us to. Your purpose is to preserve life by offering eternal life in Jesus Christ. Let me give it to you from the

scripture. Second Corinthians five, verse 14, **“For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.”**

Do you understand what the enemy of you living out your purposes? Okay. This is the enemy. Like this is the thing that's going to keep you from living out your purpose: You living for you. And the only way that you will be able to leave here and live out your purpose, can't try harder, bootstraps, let's go, come on, locker room talk, we can do this! No, no. Only way you're going to do it is if you die to self, and you say, “I'm going to present my body as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. This is my spiritual act of worship not to conform any longer the patterns of this world but being transformed by the renewing of my mind.” This is what must happen with all of us. If it feels daunting and if it feels big, it feels high, remember, Jesus is giving us an impossible ask in the Sermon on The Mount. He's like, “You don't have the power to do this by yourself unless you have my power. And only then will you be able to accomplish this.”

And so where do we preserve, what are our places?

Verse 14, **“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”** He's talking about where the light is placed. Okay. Where do we put the light? He says, “You're a city on a hill.” Cities in the first century were built on hills, limestone hills to be exact. And in the same way, when you look at an airplane at night, you see the power grid converging in metropolitan areas. You see concentration of light in cities. In the first century, when you would walk up on a city at night or in the day, you would see that city glowing from afar from candlelight or fires, or during the day, you would see the reflection of the sun off the limestone mound. He's saying, “Hey, in the same way that you see a city on a hill, that's what it means to be a follower of Jesus. This is what it looks like for you to do that.”

And when you put a light in a house, lights in the first century were very expensive. Turns out, 21st century, still very expensive. You would never put that light around a corner or to be blocked by something. You would take great intentionality to put that light in a place where it gives the whole house light. The whole house can see. So, He's talking about, He's saying, “Hey, if that's how you place lights, imagine how God places lights.” And so, we're talking about place, know your place. That's my second point. I want you to know your place.

2. Know your place.

When the power goes out, at night, you want to be productive, you're going to huddle around, people are going to huddle around the light. This is the word picture that Jesus is giving us, saying, “Hey, God is very strategic at where He places lights and why. And He's put them all over this city, all over our town, all over our schools, all over our communities. And if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are a light placed on purpose by God.” And I want to show you, I'm in Acts 17, **“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out for their appointed times in history the boundaries of their land.”**

What He's saying is that before creation, God determined where you would live and when you would live. So, when I talk about purpose, I'm not talking about this grandiose calling, find the needle in the haystack thing that God wants you to do. I'm talking about you simply being faithful where God has put you. What does it look like for you to be as faithful as you can where God has placed you and where is that? That's your coffee shop. That's your carpool line. That's your neighborhood. That's your area of work. That's your family. Where has God placed you on purpose to live out your purpose?

We had about 40 students get back from the Dominican Republic this week. Our daughters were two of them. And it was an amazing time they had, it just sounds like a really effective week of ministry. God was gracious to them through a partner there in the Dominican Republic. And my conversations with our girls were very familiar to me, because I've been on trips, led trips, gone overseas many times for the purpose of mission and evangelism. And the challenges with that are, one, you have to raise money. It's very strategic to do so. It allows people to invest financially. So, they're investing prayers and being aware that you're over there. And so, the whole student team, they raise money to go. You have to buy flights and the support of the local partner there, a place to stay. You don't really understand the culture. And so, you're having to learn about a culture that's foreign to you, like there you don't want to wear long shirts without wearing long skirts. The women should wear skirts. The boys don't wear shorts or kind of highlight their age. They won't get the respect of another man. So, you're navigating all these rules that are foreign to you and that can be complicated.

And then you're also sharing the Gospel through an interpreter. I don't know if you've ever done this, but it's very cumbersome. Say, "Hey, how are you? My name is Jonathan Pokluda. [Long pause for interpreter to translate] And I've come here to share the hope of Jesus Christ with you. [Long pause for interpreter to translate] God sent His Son Jesus into this world [Pause for translation] to die for your sins [Pause for translation]. And it's a messy process. And so, what happens is everyone gets on the plane to come back home. And we're hopeful that you get to realization that you're going into a culture that you understand greatly to a people where you speak their language. And for a lot of us, we're actually going to be compensated to be there. We don't have to raise money to be there. Like they're going to pay us to be at our areas of work, or at least we'll be there to gain an education, and we'll have common ground with the people around us so that we can talk about things, and it helps to facilitate a conversation that we can then point to Jesus.

Right? And that a trip to H-E-B is a mission trip. A walk, a jog down the street in your neighborhood is a mission trip. That God has called us to live life on mission. And listen, I've been, I told you, I've been to Haiti, I've been to Africa multiple times, Haiti six times, Amazon jungle, Mexico, different parts of the world for the purpose of sharing the Gospel. And I can go to all of those places and be there before sunset, Africa tomorrow. But I can get there fairly easily. Where I can't go is back to my desk at AT&T. Where I can't go is the back room of Abercrombie. Where I can't go are those company trips to Sinscorp. Places where I was on mission, but honestly, I wasted it. The passion you hear in my voice is me urging you not to waste your calling there, your purpose there in those places like I did. God put you there on purpose. There's something that He wants to do through you there. It's the place where you live out your purpose. Why?

Verse 16. **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

It's one of the most important verses in the entire Sermon on the Mount. **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, [underline ‘others’] “that they” [underline ‘they’] “may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”** He's saying, “You want to talk about purpose? Your purpose, the reason your heart beats in your chest and you have breath in your lungs, has everything to do with how you influence the people around you. The way you live and what you share.

Some of the most depressed, anxious, burnt-out people are those that are just operating outside their purpose. And what do I hear? I hear the same thing all the time on these mission trips. People come up, my girls, they come up and say, “This is the best week of my life! Best week! It was amazing!” Superlatives, superlatives, superlatives. Teams would come up and it's like, “I've never felt so alive!” Why? You're living for the very first time. What I'm trying to put on you is not a heavy yolk. I'm trying to put on you joy and peace and purpose. That you wake up in the morning, you're like, “I know what I have to do today. Yeah, there's some stuff on the calendar, but I know why God has me alive today.” And it's different. And if you've never seen a human example of that, be the first one. You may need to be the only one, but I'm not talking about going to church. I'm not talking about a quiet time. I'm talking about you living a life that matters a thousand years from now. And it won't be your P&L or your general ledger. It won't be your IPO, products sold. There's something more than all of that.

And so, when He talks about others and ‘they,’ let your light shine before others, that they, He’s talking about people. And that's my third point.

3. *Know your people.*

Where do lights shine? Simply put, wherever they are.

And there are lights that shine to be seen, but there are also lights that shine to show the way. Right, in the same way that you huddle around a flame to see when the power goes out or if somebody has a beam as you're walking through the forest and people consolidate within that beam so they can see where they're stepping so they don't step on a copperhead, right? The light shows you the path, and so we're the light in the world showing people how they can live forever. Not only are we living our purpose, but we're showing to others their purpose, and we're the only ones that have it. The only ones. There's no one else in the history of the world, no other world religion, no cult, no other ideology that can sit someone down and say, “This is why you were created and by Whom and the purpose that you have.” Only we can do that. Don't waste it. Don't waste it.

And people. People love lights. This is why Jesus’s preaching is so effective for thousands of years because this metaphor, it still reaches to the 21st century. People love lights. Fourth of July is coming up. What are we going to go do? What? Fireworks! We're going to go look at these things shooting. Just lights is all they are, right? We're going to go look at the fireworks. You go camping, you get outside the tent so you can lay on your back, look at the sky at night at all the, what? [“Stars” heard from congregation] That are just lights. That's all

they are. “Oh, so beautiful!” Just lights. Christmas time. “Everybody, let's load up! Get the hot chocolate. Let's go drive around and look at the... [“Lights” heard from congregation] lights.” Lights. New club in town, strobe lights, right? “Hey, everybody come like a moth to a flame, right? Here's how you know that we're open.” “Hey, how did you know they're open?” “Because it's open. It says, ‘Open.’ The lights are on.” Right? The lights communicate something to us. You want to know if you're living out your purpose? The people come to you and say, “Man, there's just something different about him. Something different about her. She just helps me. She's helpful. She, he speaks life to me. I want to be around him. Everyone kind of consolidates. He helps me do my job better. She coaches me up. And so that I'm a better human being. Whenever I spend time around him.” This is what it looks like to be a light. People are drawn to that. They're drawn to that. They want to be around that, **“that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

Who are your people? Your family? Family's tough. The Prophet's not welcome in his own town. I get it. But you were placed there. You want to share the Gospel with your family. Show them something different. Stop stepping into the same arguments. You can't outgrow being the youngest or the oldest or whatever it is. Show them something different. I always tell college students when they go home, they're like, “Oh, my family's lost.” I'm like, “Okay, do the dishes, take out the trash, mow the lawn, make your bed, let them ask what got into you. You can say the Holy Spirit. Let me tell you about it.” Right? Show them change.

Your neighbors. It's amazing to me how many people have lived on in a place for a number of years and don't know the names of their neighbors. That you, that they would come into your house. You're one of the evangelism tools you have is that empty seat at your table, that they would be in your backyard. Oh, they come inside. I want to talk to people here at Harris Creek. I say, “How did you get here?” “Well first, I went into one of your member's houses. They had us over, they loved us. They were kind to us. And then we came and visited their church.” Your coworkers, your classmates, your teammates, your Greek life, whoever sits in front of you that you would work in such a way that they would say, “Who is your God? Who are they following? It's unbelievable.” It's the people you see every day that when they see the Gospel attached to the good deeds that they are just like, “Man, I'm listening. You're talking, I'm listening.”

Penn and Teller are a magician duo, magic duo. They have a show now in Vegas. They've had a TV show. And Penn, the taller guy is a well-known atheist, an outspoken atheist, an intellectual atheist. And so, he argues against the things of God. And yet he encountered just a Christian, just a normal run of the mill, completely ordinary Christian who just showed him some kindness. And he went back, and he shot this video, just talking into his webcam. Just listen. Just listen to this atheist. [Video plays]

“I get home from the show, and at the end of the show, as I mentioned before, we go out and we talk to folks and sign an occasional autograph. And there was one guy waiting over to the side. He had been the guy who has picked the joke during our psychic comedian section of the show. And he walked over to me, and he said, ‘I was here last night at the show, and I saw the show and I liked it. I wanted,’ [he was very complimentary] And then he said, ‘I brought this for you.’ And he handed me a Gideon pocket edition. I thought it was from the New Testament, but I also thought it was Psalms from the New Testament, right? Or Psalms from the New, just part of the New Testament, little book about this big, this thick. He said, ‘I

wrote on the front of it. And I wanted you to have this.' It was really wonderful. I believe he knew that I was an atheist.

But he was not defensive. And he looked me right in the eyes. And he was truly complimentary. It wasn't in any way, it didn't seem like empty flattery. He was really kind and nice and sane. And looked me in the eyes. And talked to me, and then gave me this Bible. And I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell, or not getting eternal life, or whatever, and you think that, 'well it's not really worth telling them this, because it would make it socially awkward.' And atheists, who think that people shouldn't proselytize, 'just leave me alone, keep your religion to yourself.'

How much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? If I believe, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe it, for that truck was buried down on you, there's a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that. This guy was a really good guy. He was polite and honest and sane, and he cared enough about me to proselytize and give me a Bible, which had written in it a little note to me, not very personal, but just, 'liked to show' and so on, and then five phone numbers for him and an email address if I wanted to get in touch. It's okay to have that deep of a disagreement. I still think that religion does a lot of bad stuff, but man, that was a good man who gave me that book. That's all I wanted to say."

Yeah, an atheist preaching to you. Okay. And I love it just because he makes the logical connection that hey, if anybody believes this, it's like, how hateful can they be to not share it? They're just operating out of their belief. And he's right. If you believe it, you share it. I don't know how, I've never heard a really good argument how it's possible, those two things don't go hand in hand. I've asked the stadiums of people why we don't share the faith. And you'll get answers like too busy or don't know how. I think the number one reason is, as he said in there briefly is it's awkward, you know, it's awkward.

And if you think back to last week and you think back to the apostles in the beginning of the church and how they died, like you can imagine, Peter coward turned courageous, he's being crucified upside down. That's awkward. Andrew being crucified on the X. Awkward. Okay. Them putting a knife to Paul's neck and just slowly sawing it off. That's awkward. Unbelievably awkward, right? James, Jesus's brother, being thrown off the temple mount. And then they go down to the ground and he's still alive. He's still breathing. The air is knocked out of him. His bones are broken, and they hold clubs over and say, "I want you to deny the resurrection." He says, "I can't. I saw my brother came back to life. Do what you got to do." They beat him to death right there. That's awkward.

And I say that not to put this heavy feeling of guilt on you. Really, the fact that we don't is it's simply evidence of the salt losing its saltiness. That's what I'm trying to highlight is we're in a bad spot, and we've got to get the saltiness back. We've got to get the power of the Holy Spirit back operating through the church so that we go out courageously, and we're not afraid of the awkward. Okay. We have to understand that our purpose is to preserve the world that's been entrusted to us by displaying how they can live forever through Jesus Christ, attached to kindness. We have to understand that the place where we do that is where God has put us, that we would bloom where we're planted that we don't move jobs because it's convenient or

it pays more. I mean I don't think like in the beginning of creation, God ever would consider his followers that they would just change schools or change a neighborhood out of convenience that they would first say, "Is He done with me here? Is God finished with the work that He wants to do through me in the place that He put me, and I'm going to process my decision first and foremost through that lens." Right?

We have to understand that it's all about the people in those places that we're to live out our purpose with. That's what God is after. Those are the ones that God wants to bring to Himself. And so, before you leave here, can we just feel the darkness? What I would love to do is just hang tight where you're at and just, yeah. [Lights go out] Let's feel the darkness in the world. Because I know that some of you are going to be like, "You don't understand where I work. We're not even allowed to talk about these things. And I'm really struggling with how to apply this." And what I want you to know is God didn't make a mistake when He put a light there. Like He knew what He was doing when He, and you're thinking, "But my neighborhood, my neighbors, they're angry atheists. Like they've got church hurt." And then what I'm saying, "But God, when He put your address on that street before creation and knew you'd live there, He put a light there. He knew what He was doing. He did it with tremendous intentionality and you think, "But my family, okay, my family, they hate Jesus, and they don't want to hear me talk about things of the Bible." And I just think about how much God loves your family to put a light there.

There it is. [Turns on a small light in the dark room]

And you think, "But my school, my anthropology professor. They just, I'm so tired of the debate and they're antagonistic towards all things of the faith. And my, and I'm like, "But God put a light there." I missed an opportunity there because that's what happens. I think that sometimes. I'm like, "Shine! I'm trying!" It's the power of the Holy Spirit. It's not a trying, it's a surrendering. That server or that barista, that place that you go that looks so much different than you, and you're so intimidated by their path, but you have so many questions, and I'm like, "God loves them so much to put a light there."

Your joy is going to be found when you live out your purpose in the places where you were intended to live it out with the people that God is wanting to bring into a relationship with Him. And it really is that simple. Let me pray that we would get it.

Father, would you help us get it?

I just want you to think about for a second, your places. Where is your place? Where is God wanting to do work? What are the places that you're going to? Coffee shops and neighborhoods, apartments, and communities, where are your places? Family reunions, your people, who are your people? Now just ask Him, just ask the Holy Spirit, "What is it that you want me to do that I'm not doing?" You ask Him, don't be distracted. That's a conversation you're having with God right now. What is it you want me to do that I'm not currently doing? That thing that popped into your head you may even push it. "Oh, not that." Double down on that. Say Lord, "Would you give me the courage to do that? Would you help me to have that conversation?" Just ask Him, I just want to give you a second to ask for His help.