

Experiencing God

Looking to God – April 5, 2020

Hello Southeast family and thank you for joining us online for the third week. We are figuring this out as we go and we're getting better at it. It's a lot of fun to be able to join you in your home and I'm sure that this church outfit that you're wearing right now is way more comfortable than the church outfit that you wear when you actually come to the building. I am looking forward to the day when we all get to come together and I know that for a while we were really hoping that was going to be next weekend. It doesn't look like it's going to be that, but, I'm excited about having Easter services, same times just virtually and I'm excited about just being able to look forward past the end of this, this virus, whatever it is -- seeing everybody face to face. For the record you can, it's okay if you want to wear this church outfit on the day that you come back. It's okay. Some people would make fun of you, but we welcome all kinds. We welcome, everyone has a place in the family. And so, just looking forward to seeing everybody -- that is going to be some kind of worship service. I'm really excited about it. That being said, this is a time in our service where we focus on, our worship through giving and, and I want to be clear about something. This is an act of worship as much as anything else that we do as much as studying the scriptures as much as the songs that we sing and how we pour out our hearts to God. We pour out our hearts to God in our giving as well.

And so this is an opportunity for you to worship the Lord as God and, and give. We love to have you give online. We're going to keep pushing that. It's the easiest and most efficient way for you to do that. But if you don't, quite, if it's intimidating to you, if you're just not quite comfortable with it, that's totally fine. You can send your check in through the mail and we will get it and make sure that that gets deposited. I just want to say this, I'm super proud of our church for the way that you have stayed faithful in your giving to the Lord. These are uncertain times and, you guys have made God the priority and what he's been able to do. And a lot of these stories won't show up until we're on the other side of all this.

But what he's been able to do through this has been really, really amazing. And so I'm just so thankful. I'm so proud of our Southeast family, for doing that. And for the stories of how they're taking care of people above and beyond that. It's just really cool. It's really cool to be a part of this group of people. And that brings me into an interesting point. So, this morning as we're recording this, it is Thursday, April the second, and you will be watching this on Sunday, April the fifth. But, I was looking up some information for our elders meeting coming up next week and I went back in and one year ago, we had an elder meeting on April the second 2019. And so I was, well, what were we talking about one year ago? And so I pulled it up.

Here's what we were talking about one year ago, today the elders called me right about now. It was right about this time.

Right now it is 6:46 PM where we're recording this. They called me and said, Aaron, we'd like to extend to you an offer to come and be our lead pastor. That was one year ago today. And I keep thinking, so I found that this morning and I was like, oh, that's interesting. It kinda set me back. I wasn't expecting it to. I was expecting to not have that effect me much at all, but it's actually, I've been really reflective all day, just kind of man, what a difference a year makes. And on so many levels. I don't think any of us expected to be here. For sure where we're here in the world right now, like where nobody, none of us expected it to be here, but wherever we are as a church in the, the incredible things that we're seeing happen right before our eyes that God is doing in our church. I don't know that any of us could have imagined that we would be able to be a part of this. And I remember, you know, next Sunday is Easter resurrection Sunday one year ago on April 21st resurrection Sunday was the first Sunday that I preached here. And that was a real pivotal point for me, because I remember after preaching four times and I was just walking through the lobby and observing the people and, and the Lord hit me with, it's going to be okay. Which was a bit of a question for me. I'm wondering, what is this transition going to look like? And are we going to make it? Am I gonna make this go downhill? And they're going to close their doors and wish they'd never hired me? All those kinds of insecurity questions I had, and God just hit me with this moment in the lobby when after the day was over, it's all gonna be okay. And man has it been more than I could've ever imagined. So it's been really cool to be a part of this adventure over the last year and I'm thankful to be doing it with, with all

of you that are joining us online. And so I want to jump into this sermon and I, you know what, I planned this series. I thought this would be really good for people to know. I had no idea how appropriate this sermon series was going to be to the time that we're living in right now at the time.

One of the fundamental questions that we wrestle with as people is when we step into these difficult circumstances in life, whatever they are, whether that's things that are like death in a family or trauma or something else or something as big and scary as like the global economy could collapse. Or we have this virus that is no respecter of persons, people, it has leveled the playing field. It's this massive amount of uncertainty in the world right now. And it comes in waves. Sometimes I'm really good with it and sometimes I'm really not good with it. Sometimes I'm really concerned. Sometimes it gets the best of me. And so, how do we have peace, the Bible promises peace? How do we have that? And so that, that's really going to be laced through everything that we're going to talk about today.

And I think it's really interesting. The Bible talks about the peace that passes all understanding, may the peace that passes all understanding be given to you. And we treat that kind of like a Christian vitamin shot. Like you come down with the sickness of suffering, whatever that is, and then somebody goes to your house and prays with you, which is great, we should do that, but we pray for them. May the peace that passes understanding come over you so that you can be comforted

and dah, dah, dah, dah, and so it's like my life is a train wreck and that my heart is a shambles and then you pray for me to have the peace that passes understanding and I get the spiritual vitamin shot and Oh wow, I wasn't good, but now I'm good. The problem with the peace that passes understanding is that it's not a heat of the moment decision.

It's not something that comes over me in the midst of a mess. The peace that passes understanding is mine because of a series of decisions that happened months and years before that trauma ever happened, so that when I come to that place of uncertainty, I've already got a perspective that allows me to have peace in the midst of it. If I don't have that perspective going in, I'm not going to have that perspective in the heat of the moment. And so these are the things that we want to talk about today. Today as we work through this. What does it mean for us to have peace in these uncertain times? Where does that come from and what can we do with that truth? And so we're going to begin in Matthew chapter six in this second unit of experiencing God, which is entitled looking to God.

And I think that title kind of gives it away where we're headed, but it's profound to me how often I hear people who've been long time, fairly solid, fairly stable followers of Jesus. They talk about their relationship with God essentially, as if what God does is, he kind of sets the rules. He fixed the earth, he created it, and then he set the rules for how it was supposed to function. And then he spun it up and he put us on the planet.

And then we say we acknowledge God that you set the rules, that you're the one that made this all function. Right. Got it. And then we just kind of go about our life in this world as if God is just standing off kind of distant. By the way, the theological term for this is deism, but that would mean that God's not really actively engaged in the world.

We act like we're kind of in charge of our own life. And as long as we kind of follow God's rules for it, it's all gonna work out. Okay. And what I would suggest is that the Bible paints a very, very different picture of what we're supposed to be about. And it's in understanding the perspective that we're supposed to have, that it enables us to have peace in these really, really difficult circumstances. So, let's begin in Matthew chapter six and we'll pull it apart from there. It says, therefore, I tell you not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink or about your body, what you will put on. By the way, nobody's cared about what they want to put on. Right now I'm sitting in your living room and your sweats -- pro, tip for quarantine. Put on your jeans once a week just to make sure they still fit. That's a pro tip. It's important. It can get away from you if you're not careful. Cause we're in sweats all the time. Why would you care what you eat?

It's more in line with Matthew six maybe we should all go to sweats. Don't worry about what you eat or drink or about your body. What you will put on, is not life more than food and the body more than clothing. Look at the birds of the air. They

neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns. And yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not more valuable than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to a span of life.

And, by the way, you can't add to their life, but you sure can take away from it. The more anxiety that you carry, the shorter your life's going to be. Because, literally, physiologically, it hurts you and why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field. How do they grow? They neither toil nor spin. Yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of these, but if God, so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you? Oh you of little faith. Therefore, do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear like the Gentiles? Seek after all these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them all, but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. These are Jesus's words about how to have peace when in this life where we call ourselves Christians, we are followers of Jesus, we are followers of the God of the universe. Then what happens is we've really got to be focused on him, on where he's at, on what he's doing, on how he thinks things are supposed to function. That it's not just about the fact that he

set the world in motion and step back to let you kinda run however you want it to run. As long as you kind of stayed in his boundaries, or generally speaking, stayed in his boundaries, this is about something that's way bigger than that. This is about not getting caught up in the pursuit that we believe gives us comfort and we live in a world that invites us to this. Don't do everything you can to stay away from pain, do everything that you can to stay away from discomfort, do everything you can to stay away from hard things. And so, what we've tried to do, is we try to emotionally bubble wrap our life and that's not how God would invite us to live in this world at all. In fact, I think that the scripture kind of clearly teaches that we find God in the midst of painful circumstances again and again and again. God meets us in the mud. And I remember when we go back to our advent series, God, Jesus is born in a stable because Jesus didn't come for the castles of your life. He came for the broken, messy places. He didn't come for the pretty fixed parts. Jesus came to meet us in our messes. And so that's where we find God. That's where we experience God in more profound ways. And so we can't avoid those things. We have to embrace them for what they are, but we don't have to lose our peace because we have a God that we call father that is way bigger than all those things.

We have a God that is bigger than economies. We have a God that is bigger than viruses. Of course, everything's bigger than viruses, which fascinates me, you know, in the thirties there was a crash of the stock market and they had the great depression and it was a mess and so they took measures to go,

okay, we're never going to have that again. We're never going to experience that again. And now we're having this threat of another collapsed economy and whatever, and depending on who you talk to, it's more or less true.

But it's so interesting to me that we're being shook up by something that we can't even see. This is such a, you'd have to have a special microscope to be able to see it. This is the, it's fascinating to me that we work so hard to build our security, our peace, our safety can only come from God. I love the Psalm that David writes, "some trust in chariots, but we trust in the name of the Lord, our God", some trust in men, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. David writes this right after God tells him not to count his army and he counts it and it costs him a bunch of people. Because the truth is, God wants his people to trust them. God wants his people to walk with him. God wants his people to know his name, to know his character, to know who he is, to have relationship with him so that we can experience his best for our life.

We fall in love with him. God made us to love us and for us to love him back. And the truth is, I believe, that if you could see God for who he really is, you'd love him. It's like, what's not to love about God? And so, I want to look at some things out of this second chapter of this workbook, Experiencing God and, here's what I want to say. This workbook is awesome and there are things in there that I'm like, Oh my gosh, that's life changing. And then there are things in there that are like, ah, I

don't really agree with that. That's true of every book I've ever read ever. I've never read a book where every word I have agreed with. And so, if you're doing this study, I hope you enjoy it. I hope it changes your life for the good. I hope you're so excited about it. And all that stuff. Just understand that you have the freedom. And if there's a point that you disagree with, it doesn't mean that all the rest of the points are bad. You don't throw the baby out with the bath water just because you have one point where you're like, I don't know what to do with that. There's so much good in it and the principles are true and that's why we're spending time with it. But we're going to kind of walk through this unit to have a look and kind of see what they're talking about. And so, first of all, we want to talk about if we're going to look to God, we've got to understand the difference between what God centered living is and what self-centered living is.

And so I have a list. Here's what it might look like. Self centered living would be -- life is focused on self, on me and on my accomplishments. So accomplishments, this is a look at the empire that I've built for myself. Look at that. It's self confidence. I have confidence in my own ability to figure it out. Um, depending on self and one's own abilities, affirming self seeking to be acceptable to the world and its ways. I want to do things in a way that the world is okay with looking at circumstances. From a human perspective, this is a big one, but if you're low right now looking at the world and where we're at from a human perspective, this is the scariest point in my life that I can remember.

We're looking at circumstances from a human perspective and, and here's the deal. And I'm not saying we're all perfect at this cause for me, I vacillate. There are times where I have God's perspective on it and I'm okay and I know God's got this. And then there are times where I look at it from a human perspective and I get scared. What does this mean for our church? What does this mean for the employees that we have that I love, I have, what does this mean for all the different things that are going on? Like what does this mean? What does this mean for my future, for my family? What does it mean? These are things that can get the best of us when we look at them from a human perspective, we're selfish and ordinary in our living. This is what it means to be self-centered.

It's a focus on self protection, on living for the self, being proud of the self. I walk into my home and I go, look at what my hard work has provided. Look what I gave to my family. I can tell you, I'm a guy. So I don't know if women struggle with this the same way or not. I do know that guys struggle with this because our ego to provide for our family a certain status of life is a big deal. And so we want to walk in, we want to be King of the castle and we walk in and no queen goes, Oh my goodness, I can't believe I'm married to you. Cause look what the house you provided me. Like, this is a thing for a lot of men, not all men, but for a lot of minutes a thing. It's a thing for me.

And the reason why I say that is because that is completely focused on self. Are we building our kingdom or are we building God's kingdom in the scriptures? There's this epic struggle, a struggle between empire and kingdom. Are we building an empire which is all about self or are we building God's kingdom? And so, there's all this struggle and all that. And it's a, it's a, it's a great, it's hard. Like there's a lot of give and take and push and pull in all of that. And I say all that because, what I want to make sure of, is that you understand in order for you to live this out well in your life, left to yourself, you'll never get it figured out. So one of the reasons why we push people towards life groups, because in those communities we can have the discussion on what's the difference between being self focused and being God focused.

What's the difference between living to build my own world and doing something that's God-centered, internal and value that, that's the conversation that we need to be having about the difference between being self centered and being God centered. Because I think for a lot of us, even that have been walking with the Lord for a long time, we don't know what that is. Let's look at a list that is God-centered. Here's what it looks like to be God-centered, so we looked at self-centered. Here's what it looks like to be God-centered. We have our confidence in God, dependence on God and his ability and provision. Life is focused on God and his activity. We're humble before God. We're denying self. We're seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. We're seeking God's perspective in every

circumstance we have. We have Holy and godly living, and this is a key, and I want to be clear about this.

I get that we don't earn our salvation. It's not a works righteousness, but as we live our life oriented toward God and his things, there is a holiness reality that begins to surface. And this is important for us because what we do in the church oftentimes is, we kind of go, I said yes to Jesus, but we kind of get real lazy about living the righteous life that he asks us to live. There is a life that God calls us to and it does matter. It does matter. The moments where we just kind of slip into mediocrity and our moral character, those moments become moments of being self centered in our living. The moments where we have the conversation that we shouldn't have. The moments where we tell the joke that we shouldn't have told -- those moments. Not a big deal, God forgives it. It's not the end of the world.

But those moments are moments where we chose to step out of being God-centered in our living and we stepped in to being self centered. And the more that we do that, the easier it is to do. And then when a crisis hits and we're all oriented on our self, we fall apart. God doesn't change. God's constant. God's power is over all things. I mean God wasn't surprised by anything that's going on right now. So, if we're God centered in our life, we can look at God and be confident, not necessarily that things are going to go great and that they're going to be easy, but we can be confident that the God that we serve has

things under control. And so whatever he decides is best. So let's look at another point here. So looking to God, we want to know the difference between being self centered to being God-centered and we want to know the difference between God's plans and our plans. So self centered living, God centered living. There's some differences, but God has plans for this world and I have plans for this world. We've talked a little bit about that. What God does with our happy little plans, he takes them and makes them not what we had in mind at all. But his plans are always better. So let's look at some scripture.

Psalm 81 I'm the Lord your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. But my people did not listen to my voice. Israel would not submit to me. So, I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own counsels. Oh, that my people would listen to me and that Israel would walk in my ways. I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. What we have to understand is if we would just let God be God; God lays out his plan or his commands, his boundaries for how the world is supposed to function and we're, "I can do it better". And God's like, okay, I'll let you have exactly what you want. Not because God wants you to pay for what you do, make you pay for doing the wrong thing, but because God wants you to understand that his plans, his rules aren't to control you. His rules aren't because he's rigid and inflexible. His rules are because he understands how this world is supposed to function and we don't. His rules are because he has a way bigger perspective than we have and my perspective is self centered. It's only

about my own good. It doesn't matter. There's an, I mean, I want the good for the people that I love, but then the next ring out and the next ring out in the next ring, I don't care about them. God has all of that stuff taken into account.

So, his plans for this world are better. They're not just right. They're better than anything. We could come up with our own even when we don't like it. And what God says is, I'll let you go your own way. You have free will, but man, if you would just trust me, how much more I would do for you if you would just trust me. I don't know. He says, I gave Israel over to their stubborn hearts tonight. I know a lot of us in our spiritual life, we're like toddlers.

There's two stages in a child's development where I think ought to be shoved in a footlocker and kept there until they're through that stage. One is that 18 months to three and a half years. That terrible twos they call it. Yeah, that's awful. If you're a parent with a toddler, win that battle then because you're gonna face that battle again, once they turn 13 and they're in that 13 to 19 range, you're going to have another stage where they should be shoved in footlocker and kept there until they figured out that mom and dad are smart again. They'll get there, they'll get there and we have, we have kids that are in all those different stages. Not the toddler stage anymore, but the ones that have figured out, that we weren't as dumb as we act, as dumb as they thought we were. And then the ones that are like, no, you're stupid. I'm gonna do it my own way. We have

kids at all those phases and this is how we are spiritually with God. We're like, no, I know, I know. I have it all figured out. I know. How the world functions. I get it. I have this all mastered and God's like, really? You don't know? You don't even know what clothes you're gonna wear tomorrow. How could you possibly understand how the world is supposed to function?

God has all that figured out. But we have a tendency to stay in that terrible twos -- I do, myself. I don't want your help. And God's says, okay, just know this...I can do more in 60 seconds and you can do in 60 years. I just know that not only can I do it, but I want to, I'll do it for you. It's like if you were going to get in a sailboat row across a Lake, you could do it. You could get there, you could row, but when you get to the other side, you'd be worn out. What if you just put a sail up and let the wind carry you? You might not get to the same destination, but when you get to the other side, you'll have so much more energy. God's heart is to do those kinds of things for you if you trust him, and that's what he says, how soon I would subdue your enemies if you'll just, if you'll trust me, just trust that what I'm doing is a good thing.

Next point is that God always takes the initiative, so if we're going to look, look to God, then we're going to have to know the difference between being self centered, being God-centered. We're going to have to know the difference between God's plans and our plans and we're going to have to understand that God always takes initiative in our life; we don't

have to go looking, searching for him. We don't have to go cut a trail to find God in these places -- God is not trying to be elusive. God's not trying to be like a whack a mole where you never know where he's going. God's not trying to be confusing. God wants you to know him and he wants you to know what he's up to. And he wants you to know how he desires for you to fit into his plan.

Look at Philippians two. This is a big love verse, therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed. So now, not only as in my presence, but much more my absence. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, which is a really stark statement. You work out your salvation, fear and trembling. But here's what he says next. It's so critical for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. God is working in you to desire to do good, more and more and more. And so the more that we pursue him, the more that we continue to live righteously, the more that God puts desires in our heart to live more righteously. So when you come to those verses where it says, God will give you the desires of your heart, that doesn't mean that you can pray for whatever you want and God will give it to you because a lot of people will do that with a self centered life -- they'll pray for self-centered things and then they'll feel like God doesn't love them because God didn't give him that.

Well, the problem isn't that the problem is a misunderstanding of the verse. It's not that God's going to give you whatever you want. It's that God, when you pursue him, when you make

Jesus the boss, not just your savior, but also your Lord, that he puts the desires in your heart and those desires are good and godly and God focused and eternal, and then he can bless those things in your life. God takes the initiative. Okay, next one. Number four point here is that God speaks to his people.

We got it. We know that there's a lot of debate about this in, "was that God?" Have you ever heard God audibly? Weeks five and six of this series, we're going to tear apart what it means that God speaks to us. But does God speak out loud? I've heard lots of stories of people that have said that God spoke to him audibly and they heard it. It's happened once or twice in their life ever. For some have never had that experience, but yet I believe that God speaks to me often and we can unravel all of that. But I want to take a look at this Hebrews one verse we looked at last week. Here's what it says. It says long ago, and in many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days he's spoken to us by his son whom he appointed the heir of all things through whom also he created the world. This is God speaks to us. John 14. Here's what Jesus says to his disciples right before he is arrested and then ultimately crucified. But the helper, the Holy spirit whom the father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I've said to you. This is one of the roles of the Holy spirit living in our life. So when we say yes to Jesus, when we make

Jesus the Lord, the boss and the savior of our life, we love Jesus as savior. We don't like him as Lord. And the problem is he's not your savior. If he's not your Lord, you don't get one without the other.

And we want to have, we want to be able to pick and choose. We want to say yes to Jesus as savior so we get into heaven, but we don't want to actually live for him. And that's a problem. When we say yes to Jesus as Lord and savior, then what happens is the Holy spirit moves into our life. We get what's called the indwelling presence of the Holy spirit and the Holy Spirit's job is to speak to us, to speak to our hearts on behalf of God the father. This is one of the things that the spirit does in our life. God speaks to his people. We then have to be dialed in enough to be able to hear it. The problem is in our life. If you're thinking, I've never, I don't, God's never spoken to me. The problem isn't whether or not God speaking the problem is whether or not we know how to hear and that's not trying to make anybody feel bad.

For a lot of us, we've never been taught how to hear God speak. We've never been taught how to discern God's voice in our life. And so we fall into kind of these traps on all different sides. Either God doesn't speak at all or we're like, well, you just want to divorce. God's like whatever, whatever feeling or sense you have in your heart, that's God saying, what about the word of God? Well, none of those things are accurate. None of those things are what we're talking about here. When God's speaking,

it all kind of works together because the spirit of God will never work contrary to the word of God. But we have to know is that God speaks to his people. Okay. Next point is that God speaks with a purpose, so if we're going to look to God, we're going to be looking to God and as we're looking to God, it's his world.

He's the God of it. He set the standards and he did it for our good. We're going to have to learn the difference between what it means to be God-centered and self-centered. We're going to have to learn the difference between God's plans and our plans and how God's plans are better. They're not just more important. They are more important, but they're not just more important. They're better and we're going to have to understand that God speaks first to his people and when he speaks, he speaks with a purpose. God's not great at small talk. If God walked into a room, there was a party going on, he wouldn't be captain glad hand, that's not how God speaks with a purpose. When God speaks, he speaks with a purpose. I want to show you this. This passage at Exodus three we, again, we looked at this last week, but we're going to keep reviewing these passages.

This is when God comes to Moses and speaks to him. Here's what he says. I'm the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, and Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God and then the Lord said, I've surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their

sufferings and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land to good and broad land. They will have land flowing with milk and honey, the place of all the "ites". Okay, I want to throw this out to us here. You have to understand that when God came to speak to Moses, he didn't say, Hey Moses, how's it going?

How are you doing? That's not God's conversation with Moses. God's conversation with Moses is Moses. Here's what I'm about to do, and I'd love to have you be a part of it. God speaks with a purpose. God speaks to reveal himself his purposes and his ways. Now that doesn't mean that every time God comes and speaks to you that there's like, and so now you're the next Moses. You're going to deliver the Israelites out of the hand of slavery. It's not some massive assignment every time, but God doesn't speak to us just to kill time. God speaks to us with a purpose. And so, if we're going to have God speak in our life, we need to be able to pay attention to it. We need to be able to pay attention to what's happening there. God speaks with a purpose for us. God spoke with a purpose for Moses. You're going to deliver the Israelites out of slavery.

Crazy. Egypt was the most powerful nation in the world at the time. This would be like one person trying to go up against the entire U S military and going, yeah. I'm just gonna take everything that makes your economy strong. I'm just going to take it. Of course the Pharaoh has a problem with it and yet God does what he does and lets one man be a partner with him in the instrument of doing this massive move cause you can't

stop what God's up to and so when God speaks, he speaks to his people. He does and you got to know that there's a lot of different ways that he speaks. We're going to talk about those coming up, but God speaks to his people and when he speaks, he speaks with a purpose. Now that purpose may just be that he wants to reveal himself to you.

It may just be that he wants you to know his heart for you, his heart for your family, his heart for your coworker that you're struggling with. It may just be that he wants to reveal himself his purposes or his ways, like here's how you need to function in this situation. That would be a great way for God to speak, not necessarily this massive assignment. It may just be that God wants to reveal his ways, which is actually significant because what we want to do in the modern world is take the teachings of Jesus and believe that they're right, but we want to divorce them from Jesus's methods for living in the world. And then we don't understand why we don't get God's results. You can't divorce Jesus's teaching from his lifestyle. You have to live like Jesus lived as much as you have to believe what he taught. You have to live how he lived. We get the results that he got. So, if we're going to look to God, we've got to be God-centered, not self-centered. You've got to put God at the center of everything that you do, every waking moment. This is why central Jewish prayer is the Shema. Hear, oh Israel, the Lord is our God. The Lord alone. You will love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind. This prayer is said at least twice a day, and usually four to five times a day by every practicing Jew still to this day.

All of our heart -- are we cleaved to God with all of our heart in this moment, all of our strength, all of our might in this moment, is God the center of everything or are we trying to pad our own life? Trying to protect it the way we think we'll make it safe because no matter how much money's in your bank account, no matter how many layers of protection you've put in your life, it doesn't matter if, in the end, it's all going to go away. This is the difference between focusing on temporary things or focusing on eternal things, but that sermon's coming up next week. I have some implications for us this morning and implication number one: we're called to live our lives focused on God rather than on ourselves and this battle will be so, this is the central battle of the Christian walk is that we are we in this moment, in this space, in this situation and whatever context we find ourselves, are we focused on God, or are we focused on ourselves? Is this self-centered or God-centered? And that conversation has to happen in community. It has to. You have to be in a group of likeminded people to figure that out because it's too easy to self justify. Implication number two, what God is about to where I am is more important than anything I can dream up to do for him. It's more important than anything I could dream up to do for him. You never ever hear God say in the scriptures to anyone, "Hey, what could you dream up for me? I don't really know what to do here. What could you dream of for me?" You never hear God say that. God's not trying to get you to conjure up something that he can bless. God's already got how the world is supposed to go figured out, and his invitation is for you to be a part of that. Not

for us to be smart enough and creative enough to get him to go, Oh, that's a great idea. I guess we'll do that. God is not reacting to us.

Implication number three, when God is ready for us to join him, he will be faithful to reveal his plan to us. That's the great news. We don't have to freak out about I haven't heard God speak for a while. We'll talk about this more later in another sermon. But if you don't know what God's saying to you in this context, do everything that you know he's already said to do, and then when it's time, he'll reveal to you the next step. When God speaks in scripture, a lot of different ways that God speaks, but what we're looking for is not a formula. What we're looking for is that when God speaks in scripture, there's two things that are always true. Number one, they knew it was God, and number two, they knew what he said. Those two things are true. Anytime that we're living God centered and God shows up, speaks to us, you'll know it was God and you'll know what he said and guarantee that you can't guarantee how he's going to do it, but you'll know it's God and you'll know what he said. Implication number four, when we're faithful in smaller assignments, we can be trusted to follow God in larger assignments. This is a biblical principle. If you're faithful with little, you'll be given more. We use this in all kinds of applications in the Christian life, but it is a generally true truism of life. That if you're not going to be faithful in the little things, then how can you be trusted with the bigger things?

I would say this, the world that we're living in right now, it's a scary place. But walking through where we're at right now in faith, I don't know that this is a massive assignment from God. There's bigger horizons to carry. Can we be faithful in this space to do what God's asked us to do now here and now, so that when the next time that God comes, we get bigger assignments and bigger assignments, and you start to get to watch as your faith grows. Your faith is like a muscle. Your faith in God is like going to the gym. And as we move into our communion time, I just want to give you this illustration to consider.

I've bought a lot of gym memberships in my life and some of them I've even used a couple times. And one of the things that's interesting in the gym is that there's different kinds of people that are in the gym, different kinds of guys. There are the guys that are this big around and they're tiny. They're just little, tiny, skinny. And though they'll walk around and they'll get all like this and then they'll grab a 15 pound weight and they slam it down and walk around. And then there's other people that need to scream a lot when they're lifting weights. And it's not that they're particularly strong or that they're moving that much weight, it's just they feel like that helps them. What's interesting to me is what I've experienced in the weight room is the guys that are like, you look at him and you go, Hey, you've lifted weights. You can just tell they're built in a certain kind of way. You look at them and go, you know what it means to lift weights. You watch them lift weights. They're not screaming, they're not freaking out. These are people that are doing their exercises and they're putting it on. What's

interesting to me is how many people want to be that guy without putting in the work of being that guy. It's the same thing in our spiritual life. We have the ability to move a 20 pound weight with our spiritual life, but we wish that God would use us in a 50 pound way. And what I would say is be faithful with the 20 pound weight of your spiritual life. Be faithful in the small things and then let the muscle of your faith grow, so that when the 50 pound moment comes, you're ready.

Don't get mad at God because he's not using you in a bigger way in his kingdom when you're just not ready. Do the work now to be faithful in the small things, the basic Christian practices, being in relationship. This, spending time in the word, spending time in prayer, spending time in worship, giving to the Lord faithfully, whether that's through your time or your money or all of it, like being generous towards God. These are the simple things of our faith. As we're faithful in those things that God has already told us to do, he begins to open up a whole new world for us and our faith grows and our faith grows and our faith grows. And pretty soon, if we're faithful, we will get to see some really, really cool miracles start to happen. Do we want the presence of God more and more and more at the center of our life? If we do, then let's think about the adjustments that we need to make in our own life to make that happen. Let's take a minute and think about that. On the night Jesus was betrayed. He took bread and he broke it and he said, this is my body which is given for you. So whenever you eat this bread, do it in remembrance of me.

And then after the dinner he took a cup and he said, this cup is the blood of the covenant which is shed for you. So whenever you drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me.

Let's pray. God, thank you for the fact that you have this all under control. Thank you that we don't have to solve it, that we don't have to come up with some predetermined solution that we don't have to get ahead of where you're going. We just have to stay in your hip pocket. And God, for all of us that are sitting in this really insecure time on a lot of levels, Lord, I pray that you would reveal yourself to us. Show us where you are so that we can move towards you. Show us how we can represent you well to the world, but show us where you are, so that we can be with you in this process. Your word promises that you will do things for us quickly, if we'll just trust you. And so, Lord, we want to say collectively, corporately, we'll trust you. We'll trust you. God. Just show us where you are in Jesus' name. Amen.

At the end of Ephesians three, Paul gives a doxology that I would love to leave us with in the midst of this world that we're in right now, and it goes like this: "to him who's able to do a measurably more than we could ever think or imagine, to him be the praise and glory forever and ever. Amen."

May we be people who, in the midst of all of the things that are going on in our lives, we never forget that God at any moment

is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever think or imagine. Thanks for tuning in. I hope you have a great week.