Alright. So good to see everybody. I want to welcome you if this is your first time to be with us. And right now I want to give a great big shout out to our Downtown campus. Could we show them some love from Northwest? Love you guys so much. Man, I have just been hearing so many great stories about what God has been doing in and through all of you. Your permanent facility is going to be ready next month and it’s looking absolutely incredible. Can’t wait for you to see it.

I want everybody to kind of keep in mind our North campus. Their facility is going to be ready next month as well. The seats for the auditorium arrived yesterday and we are so thrilled to get those in there—so excited.

Next month is a big, big month.

I want to welcome you regardless of what campus you may be at right now, so glad to have you here. We are in a series that we’ve been in now for a few weeks called Level Up. And basically what that means is that we all want to grow. And in order to grow you first have to acknowledge that you need to grow. And we want to move beyond well-intentioned New Year’s resolutions. I’m not the kind of guy who bashes on New Year’s resolutions. I think New Year’s resolutions are great. They just don’t necessarily go beyond February. And we want to take things to a new level.

Here’s the thing. I hope that some of you are getting this. I hope that you are seeing it throughout this series. There is not a single person alive on the planet who has arrived. Would you agree with that? Nobody has arrived. Turn to your neighbor right now and say: I’ve not arrived. Some of you didn’t say that so we’re praying for you. All of us have growth edges, all of us have things that we need to work on. We’ve got soft spots in our personality. We’ve got chinks in our armor.

As I look at my life there are a whole bunch of things that I want to level up in. I want to level up as a husband, as a dad. I want to level up as your pastor. I want to level up in generosity. I want to level up in my personal disciplines. And most importantly I want to level up in my relationship with Jesus and in my connection with God.

As I kind of do an inventory of my own life and some of the things that I need to level up in, there are some things that I can see. There are some things that if you were to call them out in me, or if you knew me really, really well and you go, “Hey, Aaron. You need to level up in that.” I’d be like, “Yeah, I already know. I’m already on it. I already see that.” But there are also some
things that I don’t see. And that’s when I need trusted people who know and love me to call some things out. But sometimes that can be really painful and it can be uncomfortable.

If you have a close friend or somebody who knows you really well and they call some stuff out in you, you might receive it but it still hurts, doesn’t it? It still makes you a little bit uncomfortable. In fact, Proverbs—it’s in the Old Testament and it contains all of this wisdom literature—even says that. In Proverbs 27 it says, “Wounds from a friend can be trusted.”

That’s sort of an interesting concept that if you have a really, really good friend and they say, “Hey, man. This is an area of your life and I don’t know if you see this or not,” and when they point it out it feels like a wound but the Bible says that you can trust that wound if it comes from a friend. I hope that you’ve got some people around you, some people in your group, in your family maybe some really close friends who you are allowing to speak into your life and help you to level up.

So we’ve been looking together over the past few weeks at this talk that Jesus gives. It’s found in Matthew chapters 5 through 7. It’s called the Sermon on the Mount. And Jesus climbs up on this mountainside or most likely it was a very, very large hill—sort of like a natural amphitheater—and crowds of people gathered around Jesus and Jesus teaches for three chapters and He says some challenging things. But He also says some things that are really practical, some things that every single one of us deal with in our everyday lives.

So over the past few weeks we’ve been working our way through Jesus’ talk back to front and front to back. What I mean by that is that on week number one we looked at chapter 7, last week we looked at chapter 5, and today we’re going to look at chapter 6.

And on week number one, in chapter 7, Jesus is talking about trees and buildings. And He says that if a tree is going to produce good fruit, and if a building is going to withstand a storm then you’ve got to get underneath the surface to look at that part of a tree or that part of the building that nobody sees but everybody is grateful for—the roots and the foundation. If you’re going to produce good fruit, you’ve got to have good roots. If you’re going to have a strong building, you’ve got to have a strong foundation.

What He’s really talking about is our character. He says, “If your life is going to produce good fruit, if it’s going to be productive, if you’re going to have thriving relationships, if you’re going to have peace and contentment and joy in your life then you’ve got to have a solid root system, you’ve got to have good character. If your life is going to withstand the inevitable storms that hit every single one of us, then you’ve got to build a foundation. And you can’t wait until you’re in the middle of a storm to build a foundation you’ve got to build it ahead of the storm.

We said it this way on week number one. We said that we want to cultivate the kind of character that can be humble when things are great and unwavering when things aren’t, unwavering when everything falls apart. And Jesus says that it’s not just about what you say, or
not just about what you say you believe, or even all of what you do. He says this is all in who you know. And Jesus is not inviting us into a religion. He’s inviting us into a relationship.

Last week we looked at chapter 5. And if I could summarize chapter 5—and that’s a tall order because chapter 5 has so much information packed into it—I might say it this way. You’re life and my life has a ripple effect in the way that we impact people around us. And depending upon your age, and depending on what you are doing right now for a living, or whatever season you are in life, you may not think that your life is making all that much of a difference, but it is.

It’s kind of like when you take a rock and you throw it into the middle of a pond. It may not make a real big splash but the ripple effect goes out exponentially. Jesus is basically saying, “Hey, the way that you interact with people, the way that you talk to them, the way that you treat them is going to have a major impact—more so than you might possibly imagine.

Right now I’m trying to work on this with my son. My son is a 14-year-old boy and he’s like any typical 14-year-old boy. He’s got hormones and testosterone running through his body and he’s growing up in a house with four women. He does not always recognize the way that he impacts them. And by not always, I mean never, right?

I was in the car with him on the way home last week. I picked him up from basketball practice and we’re talking. I’m asking him about his relationship with the Lord and I’m asking him what he needs and how school is going and all of that. And then I just started talking to him about how he’s coming across to his mother and his sisters. And it was so cool. It was just a nice little moment as a dad. I saw him level up, just a little bit. It was like a half step but I saw him level up and begin to recognize that his speech and his tone and his odor—it impacts them, alright? That’s true with all of us.

And so everything that Jesus says in chapter 5 is for our good. He talks about anger, He talks about lust, and He talks about how you treat your enemies. He uses this analogy for those of us who are Jesus followers (and I realize that not everybody listening to this is a Jesus follower right now). But to those of us who are He says, “You are to be salt and light.” We are actually to represent Jesus by our words, and our speech, and our actions—online and in real life. He’s like, “Be salt and light to this world.” We said it this way last week. We want to love people so well that it actually changes their stories.

Now as we come to chapter 6, and if you have a Bible and I hope that you do or maybe a device with a Bible on it, go ahead and turn to Matthew, chapter 6. If you don’t have a Bible you can follow along on the screen beside me as we kind of work through some of this. Jesus is going to shift His focus, the focus of all of His teaching from the influence that you and I have on people to the influence and impact that other people have on us.
Here’s what I mean by that. There is a desire within every single one of us to gain the approval and the applause of others. In short, this is how we would describe it—people pleasing. And there is kind of a people pleaser in all of us.

I realize that there would probably be some of you who would say, “Well, I’m not really so much of a people pleaser. I don’t really care what people think of me.” And I guess I know how you are wired. There are certain personality types who say, “I’m not really much of a people pleaser.” But you probably are a people posturer. So there is people pleasing and then there is people posturing. And I would say that probably covers all of us.

We all do it. When you walk into a room, when you walk into your workplace, when you are meeting somebody for the first time you are either people pleasing or people posturing. You’re sizing up the situation, trying to figure out if this person is dominant or passive, trying to figure out if you’re going to get along with him or not, trying to figure out his personality type—we all do it.

Jesus says in chapter 6 … He’s going to take a big spotlight and He’s going to shine it on our motivations. He’s going to say, “Listen. So much of what we do and so much of what we say is motivated by gaining the approval and the applause of other people.” In other words, He’s going to address some of the issues that are going on inside of the inner man and the inner woman. He’s going to kind of poke around in there and try to figure out what our motivations, what our fears are.

I don’t know if you’re like me but last week as we were studying through chapter 5 there were just a few times, even as I was delivering the message where I was just like, “Man, I am so guilty of that. I know I’m wrestling with that. I know that I’ve got that issue in my life. I’ve been trying to overcome that for so long. I’m just now quite sure if I’ll ever be able to overcome it. You don’t have to call it out in me. I already see it.”

It kind of reminds me of these words that a guy named Paul wrote in a book called Romans. In Romans, chapter 7, verse 15—I love these words. Paul says, “I don’t really understand myself ...” I’d really love to put that on a t-shirt. I think we’d sell out of those things. That might be the next Traders Point t-shirt. Humble and Hungry was last year, this year it’s I don’t really understand myself. And everybody would just be like, “Hey, Amen. I totally agree with that. I don’t understand myself, I don’t understand my motives, I don’t understand my words or my speech. I don’t know why I just did that.”

Then Paul goes on to say this. He says, “... for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate.” Yeah, I’ve been there. Maybe some of you have been there. And Jesus says to us in this chapter that we’re going to read through together, He says, “Look. You’re not going to change anything about your life, you’re not going to change your relationships, you’re not going to change your circumstances, you’re not going to change that thing that you’ve been wrestling with for years on willpower alone because if you could, you would have done it already.
If you have an anger problem, if you’ve got a lust problem, if you’ve got a selfishness problem, a pride problem the way to fix it isn’t to say, “Self, stop it.” That isn’t going to happen. You’re probably not going to change. He says you’ve got to go to a place that very few of us are willing to go. He’s like, “You’ve got to pop the hood and you’ve got to take a look at what’s going on in the inner man or the inner woman. In other words, what is going on inside of your heart? And that’s a place that few of us really want to go.

And when I say heart I think you know what I mean. I’m not talking about that muscle inside of our chests that pumps blood throughout our bodies. When I say heart, I’m talking about the seat of our emotions, our motivations, and our desires. It’s a place that very few people actually truly see inside each one of us because we can conceal it so well.

In Luke, chapter 6, verse 45 it says, “What you say flows from what is inside your heart.” Have any of you ever been in a conversation with somebody and you slipped and something came out of your mouth and you’re like, “I don’t know where that came from.” Well it came from your heart. Maybe you didn’t mean anything by it or maybe you didn’t mean to be offensive but it’s sort of a red flag that maybe there’s something going on inside that you’ve been suppressing or neglecting or ignoring that you actually need to address.

In Proverbs, chapter 4, verse 23—I love this passage. It’s kind of scary, actually. It says, “Guard your heart above all else for it determines the course,” it steers the course, “of your life.” He says, “Guard your heart. Guard what’s going on.” Or maybe another word for guard would be examine. Examine what’s going on inside of your heart.

The question that I just want to ask—you don’t need to answer this out loud, this is just for you alone—is: When was the last time you really did that? How often do you do that? How often do you examine your heart, guard your heart and to try and figure this thing out as to what is truly going on inside of it. I don’t know about you but my heart can deceive not only the people around me but it can even deceive me.

So here’s a way to sort of get at this in chapter 6. I think Jesus is going to address some core questions that we all need to face in our lives. Let me give you these three questions. If you have a phone you might want to take a picture of the screen or write these down. Or on the app there are message notes where you can get these as well.

Here’s the first question and this is inside all of us: What do you think of me? See when it comes to people pleasing and people posturing we’re all asking that question. What does this person think of me? And are they being honest right now? It’s amazing how this question can drive or determine what we say and how we act around them.

Here’s the next question: What am I living for? What am I pursuing? What would make me content if I could achieve it? What is the purpose of my life?
Here’s the third question: What am I afraid of? Our fears will often reveal what it is that we truly value.

I think that these three questions become the driving motivators behind every decision that we make. And if you want to know why you do what you do, or why you don’t do what you really like to do or should do, the answer can likely be found in one or a combination of all of those questions.

Look at what Jesus says, staring off in chapter 6, verse 1. Follow along with me or read this on the screen. Jesus says, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen …” so that’s kind of your motivation to practice righteousness is to be seen by other people, “… for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.”

So Jesus says beware of practicing your righteousness. Now righteousness or righteous is not necessarily a word that we use in our everyday conversations, unless you’re Keanu Reeves in Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure. Or that sea turtle from Finding Nemo. Alright? Righteous! Or maybe you expect to hear it in church, but it doesn’t often come up in our everyday conversations. But righteous, or righteousness, just basically means a desire to do what is right. I want to be a good person. I want to do good things.

And Jesus says, “Okay. That’s great. But be careful that when you do them that the motivation of your heart, that maybe is even deceiving you, is not that other people would acknowledge it and applaud it and that you would actually get your sense of worth by what other people are saying about your acts of righteousness. This is so crafty. This can slip into our motivations, oftentimes under the radar without us fully recognizing it. And speaking as a recovering people pleaser and people posturer, I can say that this happens all of the time.

Before Lindsay and I moved to Indianapolis to come and serve at Traders Point, I was on staff at a church in Louisville, Kentucky. I was on the teaching team at that church. So I was preaching regularly on the weekends. When we moved there we moved from California to Kentucky. And I remember the moving truck pulled into our new house on Friday and we unpacked all day on Saturday. We were in boxes and if any of you have ever done that you know how much fun that can be.

So we were unpacking all day on Saturday. My first Sunday to preach at that church was that following day. I hadn’t been up in front yet, I hadn’t preached at this church, and I really, really wanted to put my best foot forward. In fact, I wanted to just crush it to the point that I was actually more concerned about impressing people with the eloquence of my sermon than God actually speaking through His word.

All day long I was like, “I can’t wait.” I pulled out my best material. I had my best illustrations. This was going to be amazing. So about 10:30 or 11:00 at night we got finished unpacking and we were about to go to bed and I said, “Honey, where are the alarm clocks?” And she was like,
“I have no idea.” So we started unpacking some more boxes. Found the alarm clocks. Plugged them in. Went to bed.

Woke up the next morning, I’d set my alarm for 6:30. Got up. Got ready. The first service was at 9:00 and it was about 8:00. And I said, “Okay, I’ve got a little bit of time.” It was about a 12 or 15 minute drive to the church. So I said, “I’m going to go out, sit in the car with my cup of coffee and I’m going to pray, I going to read through my notes, and just kind of polish this thing up. I can’t wait to get there and just blow everybody away with this great sermon.” Alright?

So I’m sitting in my car and I’m reading through and at about 8:20 I look in my rear view mirror and I see the executive pastor of that church in a full sprint running up my driveway. His name is John Percival and he’s a great guy. And I was like … It was so odd. I was looking in my rear view mirror going, “Why is he in my driveway sprinting toward my car?”

He comes running up. Totally out of breath. So I open up the car door and I’m like, “Hey, John. What’s going on?” And he goes, “Aaron, it’s Daylight Savings Time. It is not 8:20. It’s 9:20. The service started 20 minutes ago. The worship team is stalling waiting for you to get there.” I’ve got to tell you, that has never happened to me in my life and was like, “You’ve got to be kidding me.” I was like, “What?” So immediately he’s like, “Go. Go. I’ll get Lindsay and the kids. You just go.”

So I’m driving trying to get to the church. I’m still trying to figure out my way. It was about a 12 to 15 minute drive and I’m doing the math. I’m going to roll in there about 8:30. Thirty minutes after the service started. I’m supposed to be preaching like right now. So I’m trying to get there. I think I got there in like 7 minutes without breaking any laws. It was miraculous. Supernatural. Amazing.

So I’m pulling in the parking lot. I didn’t even know where to park. I didn’t even know what door to go into. I’m trying to figure it out. I finally go in the right door in the back. I walk into the green room behind the stage. The worship team was standing in a circle holding hands, I kid you not, praying for my arrival. I walked in and they turned around and they like cheered and then somebody handed me my mic pack. They didn’t even clip it on me. They just handed it to me and they said, “Go! Go!”

And so I ran out on stage. The worship leader was literally standing behind the stand with my sermon notes getting ready to preach my sermon, which would have just been a train wreck. He’s a great guy, he’s a great worship leader, he ain’t no preacher, alright? So I walked up behind him. He turns around. The whole congregation is looking at me like really confused as I walk out.

I walk up behind him. He turns around and gives me a great big bear hug. Everybody is kind of awkwardly laughing like what’s going on here? And I’m trying to get my mic clipped on. I’m trying to say hello. I’m trying to introduce myself and here’s what was going on in my mind,
“Oh, man. I didn’t get a chance to impress you with my sermon. All you really know about me is that I’m late.”

In fact, even to this day the only thing that people remember about that sermon, the only thing that I remember about that sermon is that I was late. That’s been like 11 years ago, maybe 12 years ago and every Daylight Savings time I get Facebook messages, and text messages, and emails, and hand-written letters from people in that church reminding me to turn my clock forward. That’s my legacy.

I’m just giving you a little bit of a glimpse into my world. And maybe for you, maybe you don’t speak up in front of people or anything like that ... Can I just ask you if there has ever been a time in your life when your hidden motivation—you don’t let anybody in on it—was, “Man, I just really want to ... I’m actually really seeking your affirmation.” And you forget about the task in front of you. Or maybe you forget about the needs of the people in front of you. Man, I’ve certainly been there way too many times to count.

Jesus is not saying here that you shouldn’t care about what people think. I mean sometimes we may want to take it to that other extreme like, “I don’t care what people think.” That’s not what He’s saying. He’s saying, “Look. Examine your heart. Examine your motivations and see why you are saying what you are saying. Why you’re posturing the way you’re posturing?

What is your motivation behind serving? What is your motivation behind volunteering? What is your motivation for giving somebody that compliment? Are you playing chess? Are you looking three or four steps in front of you?” Jesus is saying, “Don’t let your primary drive be the applause or the approval of others.”

Now if you were here last week you might remember that Jesus told us in chapter 5 that as Jesus followers we are to be the light of the world. And He says this in chapter 5, verse 16. Do you remember this? He said, “... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works ...” And then in chapter 6 we see Jesus saying, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.”

I looked at that last week and I’m like, “Alright, which is it? Should I shine my light before others so that they can see or should I beware of practicing my righteousness in an effort to be seen?” It’s a tension that we live in and the answer can be found at the end of verse 16 of chapter 5. Jesus says, “Give all of the glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

In other words, He says it’s all a matter of your motivation. And as Jesus followers anything that we do for others, anyway that we serve we want to do it for the glory of God and we want to do it for the good of others. It always comes down to the motivations of the heart. Going back to Proverbs it means that we’ve got to regularly guard it. We’ve got to regularly examine why we do what we do. Is it to gain approval, and affection, and applause or is it to help others see the Jesus that they so desperately need to see but oftentimes don’t see.
Can I just say this very sensitively but I want to say it directly and I want to say it very pastorally, some of you need to learn to take a compliment. You know who you are, right? When somebody says, “Man, good job.” Or, “Wow, you’re so gifted in that.” You deflect, you divert your eyes, you say, “Oh, no. No, no, no it’s all God.” You ever do something like that? You just can’t take a compliment.

Others of you need to stop fishing for compliments. And you know who you are too. It’s like, “Well, I’m going to sign up for that.” Or, “Hey, I’m going to go on a mission trip thing because maybe somebody will recognize how selfless I am.” And you may not even realize that you are doing it. How about this? You serve for something, you volunteer for something, you give to something and nobody notices. And it sort of lets you down.

See it’s the same issue either way. If you can’t take a compliment or if you’re fishing for compliments it’s still a condition of the heart and it’s an indicator that something needs to be reevaluated, something is amiss. And Jesus is going to give us a few examples of how this plays out.

Look with me at verse 2. He says, “… when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

So the context here in which Jesus is teaching is that generosity to the poor was an important part of Jewish social life in the first century. There was this organized system that people had to give to those who were needy in their community. And much of it was organized around the synagogues. The entire system of benevolence or giving to the poor was dependent upon the cultivated, voluntary, generosity of other people.

This could be a good thing because the Rabbis weren’t in anybody’s business. This could be a bad thing in the sense that your motivation for giving could get off. And Jesus says, “Listen. When you give make sure that you’re not sounding a trumpet, make sure that you’re not calling attention to it, make sure that you’re not being like the hypocrites.

Now hypocrite is a Greek word that means play actor. They called the actors in theatre plays hypocrites because they would wear a mask and then they would take it off for another scene and put on another one. He says, “Don’t pretend to be somebody in this situation that you’re not in this situation over here.

So when Jesus says that they’ve already received the reward, what He’s saying is that when they give they can’t see beyond the applause and the approval of others therefore the applause and the approval of others is the extent of their reward and they’re missing out on the transformational and the fundamental heart change that exists when you have a cultivated, premeditated generosity that gives toward the needs of others.
This is probably the primary reason why several years ago we stopped passing offering plates in worship service. It’s just awkward for believers and unbelievers because when an offering plate passes you kind of feel like the spotlight is on you like, “Okay, are you watching what I put in right now?” Or, “I’m not putting anything in right now and I feel like I need to justify this to you.” Or, if you’re not a believer, if you’ve not bought into any of this, that can be especially awkward and we want to remove barriers that keep people from Jesus.

We’re not ashamed of biblical generosity. We’ll teach what the Bible teaches about it. But the primary thing is that we look at what Paul says to the Corinthians. Paul says, “Above all else, God loves a cheerful giver.” So don’t give reluctantly. Don’t give under compulsion. And that’s all I do when the offering plate passes. I’m sort of giving reluctantly. I’m sort of giving under compulsion. I’m not necessarily doing it out of the cheerfulness of my heart.

And we’ve said, “Listen. Generosity isn’t a show. It’s not a show. It’s a work of the heart and I want you to develop a cultivated, premeditated type of generosity where you don’t feel that there is any other ulterior motive but let God push into this area of your life.

Jesus is going to mention another one of the inner disciplines. Look at verse 5. He says, “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites.” There’s that word again, “For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

This should be so freeing. Jesus says that when you pray, once again, it’s not a show. And you shouldn’t be worried about what other people think. And you don’t need to use big, theological words that you don’t understand. Just be yourself. Just go into your closet shut the door and just talk to your Heavenly Father. You’re having a bad day? Tell Him. You’re upset about something? Tell Him. He can handle it and He wants to hear from you.

In verse 16 He’s going to mention another one. He says, “And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,” in other words take a shower, clean yourself up, alright? “… that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

So we probably know what fasting is. Maybe you’re fasting or you’re doing a cleanse or whatever for physical purposes but Jesus is talking about fasting for spiritual purposes. And that may be something that you may need to give some thought to if you’ve never done a fast, or maybe it’s been a while, there are a whole bunch of resources on how to enter into a fast and how to exist a fast. Maybe you want to do a one day fast or a three day fast.
Here’s the great thing about fasting for spiritual purposes. Our bodies are spoiled brats. Would you not agree? We’ve got desires. We’ve got hungers. We’ve got cravings. Our body is screaming at us all the time: feed me, pay attention to me. What fasting will do is it will turn down the volume of some of the desires of your flesh so that you can listen to God much more clearly. Jesus fasted. Jesus fasted for 40 days before He began His earthly ministry. It’s a great thing to do.

But Jesus is saying, “Listen. Don’t be like the hypocrites. Don’t be like the religious leaders of the day who would fast and really their motive was, “I hope others notice. Therefore, I’m not going to clean myself up today. I’m going to look really bad so that way people will ask me why I look so bad and then I can nonchalantly work it in, ‘Oh, I’m just fasting.’ And then they would be impressed by it.”

It’s sort of like what I did last week when I shamelessly stood on this stage and told you that I was doing Whole 30. It’s just like that, alright? In fact last week when I got home from church Lindsay looked at me and she goes, “Well, I guess you’ve got to finish it. You told the whole church that you’re doing it.”

And I’ve had hate mail come in from all of the men in our church, right? They’re like, “Bro, what are you doing man? My wife,” or, “my girlfriend, is saying, ‘See, Pastor Aaron is doing Whole 30. You can do it too.’” So I just want to formerly apologize to all of the men. I did not know that my illustration would be used against you, alright? So let’s just move on. Let’s just move on.

Jesus is going to go on in verse 19 and He’s going to say this, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” Here it is, verse 21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Now treasure can include money but it goes beyond it. Treasure is anything that you find ultimate value in. It’s your possessions. It’s your position. It’s your power. In fact, I would say if you really want to know what you treasure in life just go back and answer those three questions I posed earlier: What do you think of me? What am I living for? And what am I afraid of? And chances are that the answer to those questions is ultimately what you treasure.

Jesus kind of turns something that I always thought to be true sort of on its head. See, I always thought that my treasure would follow after my heart. But Jesus says, “No, you’re heart will actually follow your treasure.” In other words, wherever you want your heart to ultimately end up He says you’ve got to premeditate where you are going to send your treasure because your heart will always follow your treasure.

What does it mean to lay up treasure in heaven? Simply put, it is to recognize that this life is not all that there is. There is more to this life than food and drink and material possessions and adventures or vacations. All of those things are great. Jesus says, “Listen. You don’t need to
forsake all of those things. Just realize that there is more to this life than the material that is in front of you.

Jesus says that there is a significant need that is in this world. This world is broken. As we said last week, He has promised us that one day He is going to come and make all things new. He’s going to bring a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus says in Revelation that He’s keeping track of every single tear that you shed. Did you know that? Bottling it up. Putting it on a shelf. And He’s saying, “One day we’re going to sit down together and we’re going to go through those tears one by one and I’m going to reconcile every tear that you have shed.”

But until that day Jesus calls the church, Jesus followers, to be salt and light and to preserve His kingdom that is coming by recognizing the brokenness in this world and taking our treasure: our time, our talent, and our resources and putting a shoulder into the brokenness in this world and preserving His kingdom come in the world in which we now live.

As a church we want to do that. I know that a perception of big church is that big churches are just into themselves and they just want to continue to grow bigger. And we want to dismantle that perception one need and one person at a time. I never thought I’d be in a big church. I really don’t want to be in a big church if all that it means is that we’re going to continue to amass crowds on the weekends at all of our campuses. I want to be a part of making a big difference in the lives of real people in our city and around the world, don’t you? That applause was pretty weak. I hope you do.

See if a big church means that we can make a big difference, then I’m all for it. If big church just means that we’re just into ourselves—I didn’t sign up for that. See the collective time and talent and treasure represented in this church at all of our campuses is significant. And we want to use that to not only bring glory to God, we want to use that to meet the real needs of other people because there is a lot of brokenness and a lot of hurt that is out there in this world today.

Recently we sat down with some civic and community and city leaders from around Indianapolis primarily where we have campuses and we just sat down with them and said, “Hey, make us aware of some of the problems that you are facing. What are you facing as city leaders and how can we, as a church, help you? How can we put a shoulder into some of these things? What are some of the needs that aren’t being addressed through the city budget or whatever? And how can we step in and how can we serve as a church? And they’ve all been open and welcome to that conversation. We want to take our bigness, so to speak, and make a big difference in our city and in the lives of real people.

We might put it this way: If our church ceased to exist tomorrow, would the city notice? Would it even care? And I would hope that they would. If our church just closed up shop tomorrow—all of our campuses—would the city go, “Man, there is a significant need that Traders Point was meeting that isn’t being met anymore.”? Regardless of what people believe about God, would they say that Traders Point is making a real difference? That’s our heart and that’s our desire.
So proud of our Downtown campus. This past Wednesday evening we had 15 people from our Downtown campus who were a part of Wheeler Mission’s 101 training so that they could get connected and learn how to serve those in our city who are on the streets and who may not have a home right now. I’m so proud of our team as they are beginning to get educated and say, “Okay, how can we be equipped to serve those within our city?”

One of the common threads running through all of the conversations that we’re having with city leaders is that they are saying, “Man, here are the top three issues in our city right now: vulnerable children; at-risk youth; marginalized families.

You see, on average about 25 percent of youth who age out of foster care without a family will end up in prison. Half of them will end up on the streets within their lifetime, by the time that they are an adult and society will then invest about $300,000 in services over their lifetime.

One of the problems that is perpetuating the foster care system is drug use. It used to be, when I was growing up, there was a certain group of people who were using drugs. But now, everybody is. It doesn’t matter if they are in the suburbs or in the city. It doesn’t matter if they are on the football team or into music. It doesn’t matter. Drugs are cheap. They are easy to get. People are getting addicted to drugs then as they grow into young adulthood if they have kids they can’t take care of them and this populates it and over burdens the foster care system.

The foster care system right now is just straining. So, as a church, we want to level up and we want to be the hands and the feet of Jesus to our city and in our community. So how do we care about this? What can we do? I want you to know of a couple of things here.

One of the things that we are doing is something called Safe Families. Safe Families is designed as a first step before foster care. So what that means is that if you’re a Safe Family then you will take in a child for two to three weeks to allow the biological parents to get on their feet. So maybe they need to get a job. Maybe they need to find an apartment or a house. So they’ll take in that child, not permanently, just for a few weeks to help the biological parents to get their feet.

In 2015 the number of Traders Point Safe Families was three. In 2016 it was 24. So it’s increasing and I would expect this next year to continue to increase as we begin to pour more efforts and resources into this.

Total Traders Point Safe Family placements in 2015 was seven, in 2016 it was 50.

Total Traders Point Foster Care Families was two in 2015. Right now it’s 10 with three additional families who are in the licensing process.

And something that is brand new to us. We just started this. It’s something called Care Community Families. This is Traders Point families who say, “Okay, we want to take care of the
needs of foster care families by providing them meals, and running errands, and getting them diapers. It’s totally new. Right now we’ve got about 28 Traders Point Care Community Families. Our church has about 10 adoption families.

Maybe God will lay it on your heart to say, “I’m going to take some of my time, some of my talents, and my treasure and I want to be a part of that. I want to continue to lean into that and make a real difference in the lives of those families and those kids and be the hands and the feet of Jesus Christ to people who are not expecting the church to actually step into that void.”

I think about a couple at our Downtown campus, Mike and Heather. They just became foster parents a couple of months ago and immediately they were contacted to take in four kids. So they went from zero kids to four kids overnight. And that completely changed their world. But you know what? Mike and Heather are stepping in and they are changing those kids’ stories. They are loving those kids in such a way that it’s going to change their stories. And as a church we want to come around couples like that and pray for them and encourage them to continue to keep going.

That’s just the tip of the iceberg of some of the things that we want to be a part of, some of the needs that we’re assessing within our community. Let me just ask you this question though? What keeps us from doing something like that? When you hear about those statistics, when you hear about couples like Mike and Heather what keeps you from saying, “Hey, I want to be a part of that?” Oftentimes it can be fear and anxiety over our time, our talent, and our treasure.

So let me finish up the passage. Listen to what Jesus says. It’s so good. Verse 25, Jesus said, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life,” anybody anxious about your life right now? Any circumstances, any situations, any conversations you’ve got to have this week that you’re just anxious about? Man I am. I’m anxious about something every day.

He says, “… do not be anxious about your life what you will eat or what you will drink, nor 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 of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?” Man that’s a good question.

“And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like 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, O you of little faith?

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first,” it’s a matter of prioritizing, “the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Jesus says, “This will be given to you if you just get the priorities of your heart straight.”
As we close, can I just ask you this question? What does anxiety feel like? We know what it is but what does anxiety feel like? You might say, “Well it kind of feels like a big, dark cloud hanging over me. It sort of feels like I’m carrying around this big giant weight.”

For me as I was thinking about this last week I was like, “You know it kind of feels like the theme music from the Jaws movie just constantly playing in my mind.” You know da nana, da nana right? You’re just wondering, “What’s going to pull me under next?” That’s kind of what anxiety feels like and it’s just paralyzing.

See anxiety is a worry about the potential not the actual. And Jesus doesn’t say to us here when He’s addressing this, He doesn’t say, “Hey, why are you so anxious? Just stop it. Snap out of it. Turn your anxiousness or your anxiety into joy.” He doesn’t say that. He does something better. Jesus offers us a way to deal with it. He offers us a way out of it. He says, “You are listening to your heart too much instead of talking to your heart.”

And listening to your heart is what brings about anxiety. Talking to your heart is what builds your faith. And faith is not just wishful thinking. Faith is not just turning your mind off. Let me give you this definition of faith: Faith is a position of confidence toward the anxiety-producing circumstances of this world based on what God has said to you definitively in His Word.

This is why God’s word is so important. This is why the Bible says to hide God’s word in your where? Heart. Why do you think that He says that? Guard your heart for it determines the course of your life. Hide God’s word in your heart. And He says your emotions will take you all over the place your heart will deceive you and you’ve got to come back to bedrock. You’ve got to come back to that thing that is unmovable in your life. When you are listening to your heart it produces anxiety. When you’re talking to your heart, when you’re telling your heart the truth that is found in God’s word: that produces faith.

Somebody should maybe clap for that or somebody should at least acknowledge that. That’s core stuff there. Even for me as I was studying this last week I was like, “That’s what’s wrong with me. That’s what I need. I need to stop worrying and allowing my emotions to take me all over the place and find bedrock that is found in the truth of God’s word.”

Listen. God doesn’t want you to believe in Him. He wants you to believe Him and that’s different. Some of you believe in God but you’ve never believed Him. You’ve never trusted Him. So what is the antidote to those three questions that I gave you? Well the antidote is another set of questions.

So the question: What do you think of me? Well every time that comes up in your heart you need to ask yourself this: What does God say about me? And whenever you’re with somebody and ask, “Hey, man what do you think about me? You’ve got to immediately rehearse that with what does God say about me?
And if you don’t know what God says about you—He says plenty in His word: You are His creation, He loves you, you are cherished, you are His child, He’s got a plan for you.

This question right here: What am I living for. You’ve got to rehearse it with this question: What purpose does God have for me? God says I’ve got a plan and a purpose for your life. Plans for you to thrive not to harm you. I want you to live life to the fullest.

How about this question? What am I afraid of? And the antidote to that question is this: What fears do you need to release to Him right now? The number one command in all of Scripture is: fear not. He knows that this question will take us to the matt every single time.

See when it comes to having confidence with the anxiety producing effects of this life you’ve got to understand that when God looks at you, when you’re in Christ, He doesn’t see your performance and He doesn’t see your actions and He doesn’t see your ability. If you are in Christ, God sees Jesus. God looks at the cross. He sees what Jesus has done and God says you are loved and you are accepted and Jesus, My Son, is the bridge between Me and you.

Listen. You can have confidence in that. And you can be unmovable and unshakeable in a world that is constantly shaking. Man, if you don’t know Jesus Christ … I don’t want you to be religious, I don’t want you to be a church attendee, I want you to know Jesus and He’ll change everything. I hope you’ll do it right now.

Father we thank You for Your love and Your grace. And this is a safe place for us to be real; this is a safe place for us to ask our questions, this is a safe place for us to lay our anxieties before You and others. I pray that we could feel that. If some are here today and they are brand new, if some are here and they don’t know You, God I pray that they could feel Your presence here, that they could feel the power of Your Spirit, and that they would be willing to take a step of trust.

Maybe the barrier for them is that they don’t know if they can believe that there is a God who exists. And I pray that they could ask a different question, ask themselves this: Can they believe You because of Your Son, Jesus Christ, because of the relationship that You are offering through Him. I pray that they would just be willing to give this a shot. To continue to maybe come here week after week and just see what You might say to them in and through Your word.

God I pray that we would be courageous enough to look at the condition of our hearts and realize that our hearts can deceive us and we want to guard them, we want to examine them, and most importantly we want to surrender them to You. I pray that we could do that in these next few moments together. We ask this right now in Jesus’ name. And the church says together: Amen.