

Stories that Change Everything | Mustard Seed

Petie Kinder | Matthew 13:31-32

Well, what's up, Church? How are we doing across all campuses? Hope y'all are doing well. My name is Petie. I'm one of the pastors here.

We are at a really great point in the year because it is--for some I guess it's great--it's the end of summer, which means it's the beginning of another school year. Now, all the parents in the house are super excited about that, kids going back to school. I hear whoos and amens.

I always get excited about the start of a new school year, but I get excited about a new school year not because my kids are going back to school, and not even because of what they're going to experience in school; I get excited about the beginning of a new school year because it's a fresh reminder every year that I am done with that season of my life and I never have to go back. And I heard more amens on that.

So if you're a student right now, you have to go back. I'm very sorry, but there will come a day when you don't have to go back, and it's going to be great.

Now, we're also getting ready to enter into a super-exciting time in life for our church. In the month of August, we'll be doing a brand-new teaching series called *Growth Track*. It's one of those series that you do not want to miss.

You want to be here every single week in the month of August because our lead pastor, Aaron, is going to take us through this series called *Growth Track*, which is going to answer the question: How do I get connected here and how do I grow? So if you've ever wondered kind of what we're all about as a church, how we make decisions, how you get connected, and how you start growing, you need to be here for *Growth Track*, okay? So all four weeks in August be here.

And then also next week, Sunday night services at three of our campuses. I'm telling you, if you're at North, Downtown, or Northwest and you're even thinking about trying Sunday night services, I'm telling you just try it. At least try it for the month of August, okay? At the very least you'll get some food trucks out of it. You'll get some fun. You'll get to be able to say that you were there at the beginning of something awesome and try it out.

Also, as you can see, we are running out of room at many of these services, so if you call this place home and you look around and there's not a lot of elbow room, get your butt to Sunday night, okay? It's easy as that. Sacrifice your seat and let's make room for some people who have yet to come. It's going to be an exciting time.

Now, we are at the end of our teaching series called the *Stories That Change Everything*. This has been a really impactful series for us because we have been looking at the stories that Jesus used to teach us who God is, who we are, and kind of how he works in the world, and so by a show of hands at all campuses, how many of you have actually been impacted in some meaningful way by one of the stories that Jesus taught through that we've gone over this summer? Yeah, that's awesome! Great!

And you see, we've learned this lesson that stories can change our hearts. Content may or may not change our minds, but stories always have an impact on our hearts and so it produces a lot of life change in us.

Today's going to be no different. We're going to end the series on one of Jesus' shortest stories that he ever told. It is two verses, 42 words long. It's a very, very, very, very short story, but it packs a very powerful punch because it's going to talk about this one word right here, and it's the word *expectations*.

So grab a Bible, get to Matthew chapter 13. Matthew 13 is where we're going to be, verses 31 and 32. We're going to talk about expectations today.

Now you know that expectations are a very dangerous thing. They can either set you up for great success or great disappointment. This was no more truer than when my wife and I went to Las Vegas.

By a show of hands at all campuses, how many of you have been to Las Vegas? Okay. I didn't hear any amens on that one, so that's good. What happened in Vegas stayed in Vegas. I get it.

When we went to Vegas, I expected something. My expectations were I'm going to come into this super-clean environment and it's just going to be so clean and all these entertaining shows are going to be happening, and I'm going to make all these new friends as I make all these wise decisions and win all this money that I didn't previously have. It's going to be awesome. It's going to be just like the movies.

That was what I expected. My experience was very different. I did not expect to experience the vast amount of people who are wheeling around oxygen tanks and smoking. It's a weird combination. I've never quite understood that one.

I did not expect to experience the guys on the side of the road who are like smacking the cards and handing you cards that have naked people on them. What is that! No city in the world does this happen except for Las Vegas.

I did not expect to experience the sensory overload of walking into a casino, the sights, the sounds, the money falling everywhere, the dancing, the music, and the smell. If you could smell Vegas, you would probably never go to Vegas.

My expectations did not match up with my experience. So now I have since adjusted my expectations. I actually like Vegas now. It's a great place to go, but you have to have the right expectations coming in.

Very similarly, faith, and you're probably thinking, "How're you going to bridge that gap from Las Vegas to faith?" Well we're about to do it. Very similarly, when it comes to faith--this is true--our experience doesn't always meet our expectations.

When it comes to life with God, what you expect it to be like and what it actually ends up being like often don't meet. They often don't match up, and so what Jesus is going to do through this very short, two-verse, 42-word parable today is that he in effect is going to push reset on some of our expectations.

This is so important to us because if we don't have proper expectations, we run the risk of missing out on God, maybe missing him completely, and certainly missing out on what he wants to do in our lives.

So let's jump in, Matthew 13:31-32. We'll read it real quick because it's a short parable. Here's what it says. "Here is another illustration Jesus used: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.'"

When Jesus first told this to his audience--now again, it doesn't say that he gives any explanation of it; it just says he said it and walked away, and we're all like that is so confusing, to just say that and walk away. Jesus' audience would have not been confused. The light-bulb moments would have gone off in their head and they would've started connecting the dots already.

Now the reason that it's not doing the same for you right now--and I can tell it's not--the reason it's not inducing light-bulb moments for you is because you don't know about the mustard seed. But fear not. I'm here to educate you on the almighty mustard seed.

Most scholars believe that the mustard seed Jesus is referencing here is specifically the Mediterranean mustard, which is called the black mustard. The proper botanical term for this would be the *Brassica nigra*. Y'all didn't know I was about to go botanical on you. Botany. You come to church and you get botany lessons!

The *Brassica nigra*. Now this was a very common plant for all people in the Middle East. This plant would've covered their country sides and their hillsides. They were very, very familiar with it, so when Jesus says that the kingdom of God's like a mustard seed, they would've been like, "Okay, yeah. I know what that is," and the light-bulb moments would've gone off in their head.

So like, for instance, the very first thing they would've thought of when you think of what's Jesus trying to teach me here is simply this: That life with God **often starts smaller than you'd ever expect.**

Life with God **often starts smaller than you would ever expect** it to.

So when Jesus said the mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds, my man wasn't kidding. This thing is tiny. Go ahead and put the picture of the mustard seed. Our beautiful hand model here. What a beautiful finger that is.

But look how tiny that seed is! It's so small, it's so tiny that if you looked away for a second and the wind blew a certain direction, it would roll right out of your hand and you wouldn't even feel it. And then you'd go looking for it and the seed would hit the ground and you'd never be able to find it again. It's so tiny!

Jesus said that life with God, it's like this. It starts out smaller than you would ever expect. Because God is a God of small beginnings, and he's proved this to us all throughout Scripture. I mean, just go back to Jesus for a second.

Jesus, the savior of the world, God in the flesh. He enters this world, not through any big grand entrance, no. He was born where? He was born in a barn. He was born in a barn to a nobody family in a nobody town. The King of the world. The savior of the world. Not born in a palace. No big social media campaign to announce his birth, like hashtag savior is born. Nothing like that. Nobody knows.

He's born and God sends angels to announce the birth of the savior of the world, and where does he send the angels? To the palace? No. To the most important people in the world? No. He sends the angels to... a field with some shepherds and says, "Hey you bums, wake up. God's here. You need to go find him."

God's a God of small beginnings. You go back to the Old Testament. Go back to the greatest king that Israel ever had, the greatest earthly king, King David. He was the runt of his family. When the prophet Samuel was told by God to go to the town and to find Jesse, this guy who had all these sons, and said: Hey, one of his sons is going to be the next king. I want you to go there to his house.

He walks in and he says: Hey, Jesse. One of your sons is about to be the king, so bring them all in here. Jesse gathers them all and lines them up one by one in order of who he thinks is going to be most likely to be king, and Samuel goes one by one and says: Not him. Not him. Not him. Not him. Not him. Not him. And then he looks at him and he goes: Do you have anymore kids because this isn't it. He was like: Well, yeah I do. I mean, yeah I've got another kid, but he's the runt. He's out back doing chores. God's not going to use him. He was like: Bring him in here. And he says: That's the man. That's my chosen king, is the runt of the family.

You see, God's a God of small beginnings. Come with me even to present day. Come on. Y'all know this is right. Our very own lead pastor, Aaron Brockett. That man is from Joplin, Missouri. Y'all try kidding me like I'm from Kentucky. He's from Joplin, Missouri! God's a God of small beginnings.

If you're watching from Joplin, Missouri, today, I am very sorry to insult your town, but it's Joplin, okay? It's not that big of a deal. God's a God of small beginnings, you know?

He works in ways you'd never expect and he starts so much smaller than you would ever anticipate him starting. And that's so different than what we would expect. Like our expectations would be that God would go big. After all, it's God. You'd think he'd go grand entrance, WWE, pyro, music, the whole deal. God is here!

You know, maybe you're here, and if you wouldn't consider yourself a follower of Jesus, maybe you're checking things out or you're skeptical of this. You're not even quite sure what you believe yet. Maybe you've had the thought in your head like, "I would follow God if I had a sign. Like if he made it really obvious, I would believe in him. I'd need a sign or a miraculous wonder or something."

You see, but you need to have your expectations reset because that's not how God works. What I have found is that God oftentimes does not send us a sign; God often sends us a neighbor. God often doesn't send you a miraculous wonder to prove his existence to you; he normally just sends you a coworker. And you think, "Them? This person who keeps talking to me about God? This person who keeps talking to me about Jesus? This person who keeps inviting me to church? Like them?"

Yeah, because they're actually on divine appointment in your life to love you the way that Jesus loves you, to show you what a real Christian looks like, not what you've thought of in the past, and to get you to church, to get you to hear a life-changing gospel message to get you to God. God has them on divine appointment in your life.

You see, you need to look again. You need to take a closer look at what God is doing in your life because he's trying to get your attention, but he's using very small things that you may not even be looking for, and I know that some of you, like if you're a logical thinker in the room, you're probably thinking, "Okay, well wait a minute, wait, wait, wait, wait. If God wants to get a hold of me and God loves me so much and God wants a relationship with me and God wants me to believe in him, why doesn't he make it a little more obvious? Why is he starting so small? Why doesn't he make it more obvious?"

Well I think God would probably respond by saying: Well, I actually have made it pretty obvious. Romans Chapter 1 actually tells us that you can just look at the creation of the world around you and all of us are left without excuse.

See, the problem is not that God has not made himself obvious. The problem is not that God is using too small of a thing to get to you. The problem is that we're not even looking. Most of us go through our lives and our head is so down and we're so focused on the day to day, we're so focused on the paycheck, we're so focused on our immediate troubles and our immediate concerns that we don't even spend time looking for him.

In this whole parable, just this little detail in the parable about the size of the mustard seed actually proves to us this truth about who God is. And it's this interesting truth that God is someone who actually wants to be sought after. God actually wants you to seek him out. God wants you to proactively search for him, and then once you'll start that process, once you'll start seeking him out, he is pleased to reveal himself to you.

Don't get confused. This is not a cosmic game of *Where's Waldo*. You start looking for God and you take a small step, he is well pleased to reveal himself to you.

Jeremiah chapter 29 puts it like this. It says, "You will seek me and find me..." I love that. It's not you'll seek and maybe find me, or you'll seek and then you'll probably find me. No, no, it's a guarantee. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

See, when you come before God and you say, "God, I don't know everything and my life is not cleaned up and my life is not perfect, but in my heart of hearts I want to know you, and God, I want to know that you're real." I'm telling you, that's where you just have to take a small step. You just have to take a small step.

This is where so many people who are far from God--or maybe you wouldn't consider yourself a Christian--you get tripped up a little bit because you think, "If I were to start believing in God and start following him, I would have to memorize the whole Bible first. I'd have to clean up all this junk in my life. I'd have to do this big massive change and then I could start following God. Then I would find God."

That's not how he works. If you'll just come to him with sincerity of heart and say, "God, I don't know much and I know my life's a mess, but all I do know is that if you're real, I want to know you and I want to find you."

You come to him in sincerity of heart, you start seeking him, you will find him. This is why we want to give you so many small steps you can take like daily Bible reading. You can sign up for it on our website. Just a little verse in your inbox to get you to take a small step.

This is why we want you to do things like get in a group or to serve. It's like an hour commitment a week or hour and a half a week. It's not anything huge, okay? It's a small commitment. It's a small step, but that's what God uses.

You'll take a small step to start looking for him and he will produce dynamic change in your life, and that's where the real power in this parable comes. Because yes, the size of the mustard

seed would've told us that oftentimes God starts in small places, but you better be careful because you pray some of those dangerous prayers like, "God, I want to know you. Will you reveal yourself to me? God, will you show me where you are, and if you're real will you prove it?" If you pray some of those prayers, you start taking steps like starting to read the Bible every day or getting into a group, you start taking these small steps, those small steps have **dynamic** potential to change your life, and that's where the real light-bulb moments would've gone off for people. Because yes, this tiny seed starts off small, but it grows and it grows and it grows.

See, the real light-bulb moment for them would have been this: That when life with God starts smaller than you'd ever expect, **it actually can grow into something bigger than you'd ever imagine.**

Go back to our botany lesson for a second, the Brassica nigra (I love that word; it's such a cool word). It can grow up to 15 feet tall. You talk about a plant that starts small. Fifteen feet tall! And in fact, it would grow so close together that sometimes it would create like a thicket that's nearly impenetrable. This small tiny, tiny seed that was just on the tip of your finger and you could barely see it, it grows into something bigger and stronger than you'd ever imagine. And that's what life with God is like.

Some of you who have been following Jesus for a few years--you got some years behind you--at every campus, you've probably had this experience before when you come up to something difficult. You come up to a temptation in your life, you come up to a struggle in your life, and then all of a sudden you like have this weird out-of-body experience where you look at your hands and you're like, "I'm stronger than I used to be. What is happening to me?"

You face that temptation, you're thinking, "If I had faced this temptation five years ago, I would've been hosed. If my marriage faced this 10 years ago, we'd have been in therapy, but oh my goodness, we're doing okay!"

I had this moment several months ago when I was driving to work and I was thinking about all that was happening in my life. I was thinking about the age of my kids and how I'm just trying to be the best dad I can be and they just want to play nonstop and it's so energizing and it's also so exhausting, but I'm trying to do everything I can to be the best dad I can be.

And then I think about my wife and I love her so much. I want to be the best husband I can be, and I'm trying to grow in my love for her and serving her. And then I think about the church and all that God's doing here, all the ways that he's growing, all the ways that he's moving and we're trying to keep up with what he's doing.

There's just so much going on. And I had this weird moment when I looked down at myself and I'm like, "There is so much going on, but I'm okay. What is happening!"

God's growing us. He's maturing us. He's giving us capacity to handle things that we weren't able to handle in the past.

Now, I want to be very careful because I want you to know that experience, if you've ever had it, that is the exception and not the norm. The exception is when you look at yourself and you realize, "My goodness, God is growing me. I can't believe it. I'm doing all right." That's the exception.

The norm is the struggle, and the struggle is real. It is very real. See, the vast majority of us are struggling in our marriages. The vast majority of us are struggling to parent. The vast majority of our single folks at every campus are struggling to live faithful, God-honoring lives in the midst of a culture that tells them to live one way. The vast majority of us are struggling to fight for sexual purity. The vast majority of us are struggling to be generous. The vast majority of us are struggling to love people in our lives the way that God wants us to love them.

Most of us are in a mode of struggle all the time, and this is an instance of when again what we expected to happen and then what actually happens, like our expectations don't match our experience and it creates this bit of confusion. Because Jesus says it starts small, but then it grows and it grows into something bigger than you'd ever imagine and stronger than you'd ever imagine. And you're probably sitting there thinking, "Okay, but I don't feel big. I don't feel strong. I feel weak. I feel like I'm struggling more than ever. I don't feel like that."

Some of you who have been baptized here in the past few years, you probably remember that moment when you got baptized and the band was playing; the drums were going. You come up out of that water and you're like soaking wet, but your hands are raised in the air and you're like, "I'm going to conquer the world!" There's no feeling like that. It's incredible.

And then you hear us preach verses like "You can do all things through Christ who gives you strength."

You're like, "All right, I can do this."

"In Christ you are more than a conqueror."

"All right, I can do this!"

And then you get down until your weak and you're like, "I can't do this. This is way harder than I thought it would be." And we think that because we're struggling we must be doing something wrong. And this is where the brilliance of Jesus, again, two verses and 42 words, the brilliance of Jesus comes into play because he knew exactly what he was doing when he used a plant as his illustration.

Just go back to botany for a second, okay? Think about how a plant grows. Think about how a plant grows. A plant cannot grow without struggling. The very growth of a plant proves this spiritual principle that the path to **strength** is always the path of **resistance**.

The very way that God created plants to grow proves this spiritual truth. The path to **strength** is always the path of **resistance**.

The seed must be buried. It must go down into the ground. It wasn't in the ground. It must go through the ground. It must die. It must go into the ground, it must be buried, and then, with the proper nutrients and the proper soil, it starts to grow. And what happens? Its roots go out and its roots start to go where? Down into the ground even farther, pushing against the dirt, pushing against the grain, pushing against what is already there. It is the path of resistance.

Then think about even once it's up out of the ground. It faces the scorching sun. It has to withstand the wind blowing it back and forth. The growth of a plant like baked into how the world works is the spiritual truth that the path of strength is always the path of resistance.

You see, Jesus wants to tell somebody today that if you're struggling, it doesn't mean you're doing it wrong. If you're struggling, it actually means you're growing. If you're not struggling, you're not growing.

So if you're out there like, "I feel weak. I feel like I can't do it anymore." God's at work in your life.

Go back to how God created our bodies. Think about our muscles for a second. How do you get swoll? How do you get those huge biceps you're trying for? What do you do? You work them out. You put them through resistance. You tear those muscles down and you get to the point where you don't feel like you can lift another thing. I mean, some of y'all in the gym, you're like, "I'm so tired I'm like lifting these little five-pound dumbbells hoping nobody's looking." Like, "Oh my gosh, I can't do this." Hoping and praying that nobody's looking at you. Because you get to the point when you feel like a complete failure and you feel like you can't do it anymore.

And then what happens? God rebuilds and he forges you into something that was stronger and bigger than before. James chapter 1 would put it like this when he says, "Consider it pure joy" when you face a trial of any kind, any resistance, any temptation, any struggle. You should count it pure joy because God is doing something in you. He's developing endurance and perseverance in you. And when endurance and perseverance are fully completed and fully mature, you don't lack a thing. See, God's doing something through your struggle.

I've said from stage before and I've shared some of my story with some of you before about how off and on throughout my adult life I've always battled with different seasons and bouts of depression and it hits me for two or three weeks at a time and then it'll kind of go away. And it's brutal.

If you're at any of our campuses and you've ever been through depression, you know it is nearly impossible to explain to people the strange, weird experience of looking at your life and seeing that there's so much to be thankful for. I mean, I look at my life and my kids are healthy and I

love them. My wife. Our marriage is incredible. This church. I get to be a part of so much of what God's doing. It's amazing.

There are no words that can really help people understand what it's like to see all the good things that are happening and then to wake up and just still feel not right, to still feel just heavy and sad. There are no words to describe it.

Just recently, a few weeks ago, I went through another wave of it. And it was brutal. I was praying. I had my friends praying for me. I was praying, asking God to carry me through it, but you know what? There was something different about when I started to go through it again a few weeks ago. God was doing something different in my heart, and I felt like he was just lifting my head up and reminding me, like: Petie, look back at the different times that this has happened to you and look at what I've done in you, look at how I've carried you through it, look at how I've strengthened you through it.

Here we sing that song *I will look back and see that you are faithful, and I look ahead, believing you are able*. It's like just remember that, remember that. Look back and see what I've done in your life.

It was just like this most recent wave I went through was just like I had; yes, I was feeling heavy and yes I didn't feel right, but I had a different hope in the midst of it because I just knew that this struggle is no reason to doubt God. I had every reason in the world to be confident in God because my struggle is proof that I'm growing, that God's going to grow me through it.

I'm confident on the other side of this wave is going to be a stronger Petie; a more battle-tested Petie; a more swoll, muscular Petie, like a spiritual six-pack Petie waiting on the other side. I ain't never gonna have a real six-pack. I'll try and get a spiritual six-pack with God growing me through it.

I'm here to tell somebody today if you're struggling, it's not going to be this hard forever. It's not going to be this heavy forever. It's not going to be this bad forever. And God is going to carry you through it. He's doing something in you. You need to have the proper perspective of what God wants to do in you. And when you have that perspective, you know strength is on the way. Strength is coming. He's letting you go through this for a greater purpose.

Now, we could stop there and go home, but that would actually not be doing the parable justice. Right? Because, yes, the life with God starts small, smaller than you'd ever expect. It can grow into something bigger than you'd ever imagine. But that actually wouldn't complete the parable because Jesus has another little detail that he drops in there that we can't go without talking about.

Go back to verse 32 with me for a second because this is a very curious line that he uses. He said life with God starts small, like a mustard seed, and it grows into one of the largest garden

plants, and then he says this, that "...it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches."

Now that's a very curious thing to say because it's actually like not entirely normal, and this is where his audience kind of would have been like some different light-bulb moments are going off in their head because they know that most mustard plants actually don't grow into this.

In fact, scholars have debated Jesus' use of the word tree here because there actually is no such thing as a mustard tree. There's a mustard plant, and sometimes these mustard plants grow so tall and so strong that they become tree like. In fact, many of them grow so tall and so strong that they actually fool birds into making nests in its branches because they think it's a tree, but that's not a normal common occurrence for the mustard plant.

It's almost as if Jesus was trying to get us to see that there's something else going; there's some other ingredient. It's so curious, this last little bit, that birds come and make nests in its branches. Back up with me for just a second before you go there. Birds come and make nests in its branches. That's just a curious thing.

Up to this point in the story, it's all been about the seed, right? The seed is small. It gets planted. It grows. It's all about the seed. Then all of a sudden we bring in something else, and it's like no, no, no, no. This has nothing to do with the tree, we're talking about birds now. We're talking about something outside of the tree that is being benefited from the tree. That's the light-bulb moment that people would have been really processing through.

Now we can bring up that next slide. Life with God often starts smaller than you'd ever expect, but can grow into something bigger than you'd ever imagine, but only if...here it is...only **if it's not about you!** Only **if it's not about you.**

It's kind of the secret sauce. It's like the secret ingredient to following Jesus, that if you want to reach full maturity and really become the man or the woman that God created you to be, you have to cross this point where you realize that it's not about you. See, Jesus is pointing to strength with a purpose.

Reminds me of one of my favorite standup comedy bits where this guy talks about how there are these guys in the gym who spend like six/eight hours a day just working out, and they've got no neck and so swoll and huge. They can't bend their arms, and he's like, "Dude, you've already won. You can go home. You don't stay at the gym all day. You beat us all. You win the competition."

He was like, "How sad would it be to find out that these guys are so swoll and so huge, that they're not doing it for a purpose. Like how sad would it be to find out that they're not training for the Olympics or they're not training for a strong man competition. How sad would it be to find out these swoll guys are just like working at the T-Mobile call center, picking up the phone all day." It makes no sense!

You gotta have a reason behind that strength, and that's what Jesus is pointing to. You gotta have strength with a purpose. There has to be a reason behind you growing so strong. You have to come to this place where you realize it is not about you, and this is such a difficult place. This is a process of growth that every follower of Jesus goes through.

See, you start off and it's small and God gets a hold of your life and you're thinking, "I can't believe I'm here." I mean, some of you who are at church right now at all of our campuses, you're just thinking, "There are friends of mine who would never believe who I am and where I'm at." You can't believe God's got you here. And he saved you, and he's rescued you, and it's so incredible!

And then you move to this next phase where you start growing, and you're so hungry for the Word, you're reading the Bible, you're praying, you're in a group, you're consumed, and you're listening to sermons throughout the week. You're in this growth phase and you're just loving life and you feel like you've got so much to grow and so much to change and you're just loving it.

But then what happens to every single one of us is that we hit a lid. We hit a point where it just doesn't seem like we're growing and it just doesn't seem like the same passion and the same fervor that we had before is there, and it just feels like we're kind of stunted in our growth.

I've experienced it, and what I've seen myself do and what I've seen other people do is we typically blame everyone but ourselves, right? We say, "Well, it's probably the group I'm in. You know, these people aren't challenging me to grow. I need to get into a different group." Or you think about, "It's probably where I'm serving. It's my serving team. It's not really like fitting my gifts perfectly, and so I need to find a different serving team." Or we can blame the church like, "Well, the church isn't doing what it should be doing. It should be doing something different, and that's why I'm not growing."

And there may be some truth in all of those. Maybe. But that's not what Jesus is suggesting here. Jesus is suggesting that there's a switch that you have to flip. There's a point that you have to change your perspective to realize that it's not about you, and when you can make that switch, when you can go from "yes, this has been all about me. Jesus saved me," but you have to come to this place where you understand that he saved you from something, yes he saved you from your sins, he saved you from a life without him, but he saved you **for** something.

He set you apart for a purpose, and until you get to this place where you can say, "God, it is not about me, but it's about what you can do through me." Until you can get to that point, you will not reach the full potential of who God created you to be.

it is not about you. It's about what God can do through you, and when you get to that point, oh if you can flip that switch, everything changes. Everything changes! Oh, you want to talk about change. You'll go to work different. It doesn't matter how miserable your job is, you'll go to

work different. Because it doesn't matter what the work of your hands is actually doing, you will have people there who need to know about Jesus and you'll realize that you are on mission right there. It doesn't matter what your job is.

It'll change the way you drive home from work. It'll change the speed at which you drive through your neighborhood, all right? If you're not on mission and your life is all about you, windows up, as fast as you can speed through that neighborhood, get in your garage, shut the door.

But if it's not about you, windows down, music turned up, you're cruising through that neighborhood like, "Hey, who are you? Let's talk. Hey, let's meet. Hey, I've never met you before. Who are you?" Like you're looking for people because God's got you in your neighborhood on mission.

It'll change the way you come to church. When you come to church and it's not about you, you'll worship different. When all week long you've been sitting there and God's been using you and you've been realizing it's not about you and you've been seeing him work in your life, work in your home, work in your neighborhood, work in your workplace, your marriage, you've been seeing him move, you'll come in and worship him. There's nothing that could stop you from worshipping when you see God using you.

You'll listen to the sermon different. I don't know if you've ever sat in church with someone sitting right next to you who you invited and they don't believe what you believe, but if you've ever had that experience, you know it's a way different and it's a way better experience. You'll listen different.

You'll go to your group different. You'll go to your group looking to contribute rather than consume. I'm just telling you. If you can get to this place where you say, "God, I'm sorry that I have made my life about me, but from now on, God, it's not about me; it's about what you can do through me." That will change everything.

I just feel like for the season that we're getting ready to enter into as a church, we need to go there. We need to make a declaration that says it's not going to be about me because oh, by the way, this is how you change a city.

You want to talk about how you change a city, it's a bunch of us standing up together and declaring with our mouths and then proving it with our lives *it's not about me; it's about what God can do through me*. This is how the city of Indianapolis changes. This is how the city of Indianapolis says, "If Traders Point ever shut its doors, we would be worse off." That's how you change a city.

So I want to give us the chance to make that declaration today. I want to just do something different right now at all of our campuses. I don't care what your past six months have looked

like. I don't care what your past week has looked like. If you've been living this out or not living this out.

I know some of you are coming from a place where maybe you feel convicted that you've been a little selfish and you've made your life about you. Maybe you're coming from a place where you're just on fire for the Lord and you're living on mission and it's not about you. I don't care whichever side of that you're on. I want to give you the chance to just declare fresh as we enter into this next season in the life of our church that this life is not about you, but it's about what God can do through you, and so right now, and this is not a perception thing; this is not a peer-pressure thing, okay? If God's not working in your heart in this, do not do this, okay? This is about sincerely seeking God.

If you feel the Spirit of God at work in your life and you know that you're supposed to declare right now that your life is no longer going to be about you, but it's going to be about what God can do through you, at all of our campuses, I want you to stand up right now if that's you.

All right. Now here's what we're going to do. Because it's one thing to stand up and say that, but y'all know that that kind of a sacrificial, selfless heart does not happen without the power of God at work in your life. We can't change our hearts, only God can. You can't willpower your way through it. You have to depend on the Spirit of the Living God to change your hearts, and we have to depend on that as a church, the Spirit of God to make us a selfless crew who says it's not about me; it's about what you can do through me.

So I'm going to pray for us, and then we're going to give you a couple minutes to respond to God on your own. I don't know what that looks like for you. Some of you need to stay standing and just pray to God as you stand. Some of you need to sit down. Some of you need to get on your knees. Some of you need to huddle up with the people who you came with and pray out loud.

We're just going to give you a couple minutes to respond to God in sincerity and ask him to make us into the type of people, the type of church that can change a city.

So Let's pray together.

Jesus, we love you, and we have responded to you, but it's because of what you've already done. Jesus, you set the standard for us. You paved the way for us in this. Jesus, you came and you embodied this parable. You started small. The God of the universe; God, you humbled yourself to be born in a barn to a bunch of nobodies. You became like one of us. You started small. Then, God, you proved your strength. You could heal people with a touch of your hand, with the words of your mouth. You can change people's lives. Your teachings and your life are still being talked about to this day.

You are such a strong and fearless and courageous leader, but then, God, you used that strength not for yourself, but for others. You used it for us when you stretched out your arms

and you died on that tree, and now, God, we come up under that tree and we find our rest, we find our protection, we find our hope, we find our comfort, we find our purpose under what you did for us on the cross 2,000 years ago. We celebrate it. We love you, Jesus. We can't believe you've loved us like that.

And now, Jesus, we're asking you to do something supernatural in our hearts. Change us. Use us. Make us a church that says it's not about me, but it's about what you can do through me, God. We love you. We praise you. We ask you to meet us in these moments and change us from the inside out, and it's in Jesus' name the church prays together at all of our campuses. Amen.