

4x8 | We Couldn't, He Did, We Can

Aaron Brockett | Romans 8:1-4

We are still celebrating all that God did last week on Easter weekend. We had 205 baptisms across all of our campuses, that's amazing. We can celebrate that. We had over 20,000 people physically join us and three or four thousand online. So just amazing to see what all God did.

I want to thank our staff and all of our volunteer team at all of our campuses from parking lot to Connections to Kid's Ministry to Worship Production—thank you so much for pulling all of that off. Let's just express our appreciation to everybody who served, couldn't do it without you.

I just want to welcome all of our campuses right now and all of our guests and first-time visitors. We're really, really glad that you're here.

Today we are beginning a new, four-part series of messages called 4X8 and what we're doing is we're going to spend four weeks looking at one of my favorite chapters in one of my favorite books in the Bible, Romans, chapter 8.

Many theologians have described the book of Romans as the Mount Everest of the Bible and chapter 8 as the Mount Everest of Romans. In fact, one theologian said that it's the clearest explanation of the gospel message. Another said, "If you can understand the book of Romans, then you can understand the entire Bible."

If you're not familiar with it, it's written by this guy named Paul and he writes it to a group of believers living in the city of Rome. But here's what I really want you to know about the book of Romans. This is Paul at his absolute best. Paul has had his dark roast coffee, he's awake, he's had his pre workout, he's ready to go. And he uses human language at its absolute best to describe the message of God that can absolutely change anyone's life.

In fact, one of my favorite theologians is a guy by the name of J. I. Packer. I love what he says about the book of Romans. He says, "If the message of Romans can get into your heart there is no telling what may happen."

I can personally testify to that. I grew up a church kid. I was in church like all of the time: Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night—I went to Sunday school, I went to Sunday evening Sunday school (it's called church training, by the way), I was in Bible sword drills, I went to church camp, and I knew all of this stuff.

There is a benefit to being a church kid, but there are some down sides too. Here's the biggest one. I knew so much. I knew just enough to actually keep me inoculated from all of it. Sort of like a spiritual flu shot. Like, when you get a flu shot what's happening is you get a little bit of it

to kind of make you immune from all of it. And many of us who grew up in church or grew up in religion—that's what ended up happening. You got just enough Bible knowledge to sort of keep you from Jesus, as weird and ironic as that sounds.

So I was a good kid. And I knew the Bible. And I knew all of the Sunday school answers, but it didn't mean that I knew Jesus. In fact, I don't think that I really did. Then one day when I was 17 years old, I started reading the book of Romans on my own. And it wasn't because my Sunday school teacher asked me to, it wasn't for an assignment, I just started reading it for myself. And when I got to chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 it was as if my whole world shook, because it was as if God were saying these things directly to me.

Now, as we begin to launch in to this study together—it's four weeks... I'm going to divide chapter 8 into four parts and bring four fundamental truths out of this. I just want to acknowledge right up front what maybe some of you have already thought, in that diving into Romans, chapter 8 without having studied and read the first seven chapters could be a little bit dangerous in this sense, if Romans 8 is the Mount Everest of the Bible, diving into Romans 8 is like getting into a helicopter and going to the literal peak of Mount Everest and being dropped off. We're not acclimated, we could run out of oxygen, we could freeze to death—and that could happen to some of us.

So here's what I want to ask you to do during this series. You're going to get more out of it if you do. Just start reading Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8 on your own. It will take you maybe 15 to 20 minutes a day. Just begin to read it. Here's how I want to ask you to read it. Don't read it as a text book. Read it as a personal letter from God to you, because that's what it is.

Now if you have a Bible or a device with a Bible on it, go ahead and turn to Romans 8. We're going to read the first four verses together. And as you're turning there, I just want to kind of place this question in front of all of us at all of our campuses just to kind of get us thinking about this. It's simply this question:

What does condemnation feel like?

Now the word condemnation isn't necessarily a word that pops up in every day vernacular. Come to think of it, neither does the word vernacular. We don't often use the word condemned or condemnation in our every day language. So what does that really mean? Well, let me kind of define it for us. The word condemnation simple means this: The expression of very strong disapproval.

Now we all know what that's like. We all know what that feels like. We all know what it's like to maybe seek the approval of someone and never get it. It could be a father, it could be a mother, it could be a sibling, it could be a friend or a boss—it doesn't matter—it's somebody we're always performing for and they may not even realize it. But we do and we never get the approval we so much long for. And that feels like condemnation, that feels like rejection, that feels like we're a failure.

Condemnation feels like shame. In fact, I would even say that ... Here's how condemnation works in our lives, it's the cycle of circumstances or decisions which we find ourselves in but then it leaves us with this empty feeling of shame and guilt and maybe we feel hopeless or worthless. We feel sort of hemmed in on all sides wondering if we'll ever get this thing right, wondering if we'll ever be free from the things that we struggle with.

Here's what condemnation looks like, "I'm well aware of some things in my life that I need to change, I don't have a clue how to change them. I don't know the way forward. I don't know exactly what I should do.

Condemnation oftentimes sounds like your own voice. It's the thing that you say to yourself when no one else is around and you don't think that anybody else is listening.

I was listening to an interview not long ago that a friend of mine sent to me about Conan O'Brien. And by all practical purposes, you look at his life and you're like, "Man, this guy has arrived. He's got his own talk show and he's been popular for years and years and years."

And when he was being interviewed, he got really vulnerable and he said that late at night... He'll oftentimes wake up in the middle of the night and have to use the restroom. He'll go into the restroom half asleep, he's in there doing his business and all of a sudden, he'll have a thought about earlier in the day—maybe yesterday or last week in which he told a joke that bombed. Or maybe he did an interview where it didn't seem to be going very well.

And here's what will happen. While he's in there in the bathroom, middle of the night, in the dark he'll say out loud, "You stupid idiot." The next morning his wife goes, "Who were you talking to?"

"Myself."

And I listened to that and I thought, "Man, I can totally relate to that." Any of you relate to that? You have this moment when you walk away from a conversation going, "Man, you stupid idiot. I shouldn't have said that."? Or, "I shouldn't have done that."

All of the time from this building on my drive home on Sunday afternoons there will be times when I say, "Man, I shouldn't have said that. Man, I shouldn't have tried that joke. I should have listened to my wife. She told me not to say it, but I said it anyway." It's just like this whole... You just sort of beat yourself up. It's sort of like negative self-talk. You find yourself in that cycle of shame and embarrassment and guilt.

Condemnation feels like... I feel stuck in this particular pattern of behavior that I don't quite know how to break out of.

When I was in Bible college—Bible college, if you don't know what it is, it's just college that trains men and women to serve in full-time ministry: pastors and worship leaders and missionaries. And I lived in the dorm for most of my years there. And you would think that living in the dorms of a Bible college that we would all be super, squeaky clean and we would have just spent all of our days playing Bible Pictionary and listening to K-love.

But, that's not how really any of it went down. In fact, I won't even tell you what happened in the dorms, particularly my room. Anyway, I remember one Saturday night I was sitting in my room alone studying or doing something—most of the dorm floor was cleared out. I got a knock on the door. And I looked up. It was my friend, Dave. Dave was from Alaska and he had come to Missouri to go to Bible college.

He didn't have a car on campus. And Dave said, "Hey, Brockett. Would you take me to the video store to drop off some videos that I rented?" Now, just that statement right there is dating me a little bit. Those of you of a certain age... This is prior to the days of live-streaming and downloading.

So if you wanted to watch a movie you had to get in a car and drive to a store, walk the aisles, pick out the movies and check them out. They gave you three days to watch them otherwise there were late fees. Prior to DVDs there was this thing called VHS that you actually had to be kind and rewind, alright? Very, very dark days in our past.

So I'm like, "Sure, man. I could use a break. Let's go get some fresh air. Maybe we'll run to Taco Bell on the way back." So we go to the video store, I pull up outside, and here's what he did. He handed me the videos. He said, "Would you go run them up to the little slot and drop them off?"

I was like, "Drop them off yourself, man. I drove you here." And he insisted. He just goes, "No, seriously Brockett. Take them." So I grabbed them and I get out of the car and I'm walking around to drop them off in the slot and I looked down and I wish I hadn't. Let's just say that they were movies that a Bible college student shouldn't be watching.

Immediately I was like, "Whoa, whoa." And I ran over, dropped them off in the slot, went back to the car, and sat down. Dave is looking out the window. He wouldn't even look at me. Here's what he said, "Did you see what I rented?" I said, "Yeah." And he goes, "What do you think?" And I was like, "What do you want me to think?" I'll never forget what he said next. He goes, "I'm so tired of fighting this battle. I just needed someone else to know."

You ever been there? Now maybe that's not your issue but there's something, right now. You're fighting this battle and it could be depression, it could be materialism, it could be anxiety, it could be anger—what is it for you that you're just like, "I'm so tired of fighting this battle." It's just like this cyclical thing. It's like, "I keep getting faced with this decision and then I fall into it, I mess up again, and I feel empty and I feel ashamed, and I feel guilty and I don't know how to change it, but I know that something needs to change."

And it's just like this cycle that we find ourselves in. What's happening? Well, the book of Genesis actually tells us what's happening. You've probably heard this story before, whether you believe it or not. Maybe some of you kind of scooted it aside or whatever. But here's what happened. The book of Genesis describes how God created the universe and when he did so he breathed life into a man and a woman. It's what sets us apart from everything else in the universe.

God breathed his Spirit into us. The Greek word for that is *pneuma*. But then when we rebelled against him, when we chose to sin—all sin is giving into pride, it's choosing to follow my own logic rather than trusting in God. What happened when Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God is that it knocked the spiritual wind right out of them and us.

So now, today, we're all breathing oxygen—at least I hope you are, check your neighbor and make sure he's breathing. We're breathing oxygen, inhaling and exhaling into our lungs, but we are gasping for air. A different kind of air. A spiritual air. It's that wind of God that got knocked out of us when we fell into sin. It's a result of a broken world.

Now, this wind of God has a name. It's actually very personal. His name is the Holy Spirit. And he's mentioned 21 times in Romans, chapter 8. And Paul's intent here is not just to give us a theology or an understanding of the Holy Spirit—unfortunately, that oftentimes is what we reduce it to when we talk about him—but it's to show us how the Spirit of God breathes life back into the people who are gasping for air.

So let me backup and get a running start into Romans 8 by reading the last couple of verses in chapter 7. And what I want you to notice is that Paul, himself is gasping for air when he writes these words, "Oh, what a miserable person I am!" negative self-talk. "Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?" Very similar to what my friend Dave was saying to me in my car that night.

And then he answers this, "Thank God!" The answer isn't in my behavior. The answer isn't in my knowledge. The answer isn't all upon me or cleaning myself up. The answer is in a person, "...in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law," man, I want to please him, "but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin."

Now, at all of our campuses let's just read verse 1 of chapter 8 out loud together, because I really want this to sink in. Here we go, "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus." It is as simple as that.

Listen to me. That is the gospel message. In fact, I would even go as far as to say that if Romans is the Mount Everest of the Bible and chapter 8 is the Mount Everest of Romans, then verse 1 is the Mount Everest of chapter 8. Are you following me? It's like exceptional. There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus, hidden in Christ.

Now let me read the rest of the passage and then I'm going to make some observations. Verse 2, "And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit," the wind of God, "has freed you from the power of sin," that cycle of condemnation, "that leads to death. The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature.

"So God did," past tense, "what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end," I love how definitive that is. He declared an end "to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for," for who? For us, I'm going to explain this here is a minute. Hold on. "...who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit."

Here is the essence of what Paul is saying here. He is saying that there are these two incredibly powerful things that are going on in your life right now, whether you realize it or not. Whether you acknowledge it or not. Whether you would say that you believe in God and follow Jesus or not.

The first is: The power of sin.

It's there whether you use those terms or not. You know whether you're unsure about whether there is a God that, at times, there are thoughts that you have and you go, "Where in the world did that come from?" And decisions that you make that you go, "Man, that is so incredibly selfish." There's just like this power or this lure of sin that is in all of our lives. And it's there from a very, very early age. None of us have to be taught to do it. We come hardwired into it because we live in a broken world.

I've got four kids at home. I've had to teach them to do all kinds of things. I've had to teach them how to walk. I've had to teach them how to talk. I've had to teach them how to eat. I've never once given a lesson on how to sin and they're really good at it because I'm really good at it.

So we learn from an early age. Not only do we know how to sin, but we learn that it is actually, at least temporarily, somewhat gratifying. It's fun. It's enjoyable at least for a moment. But it's kind of like a numbing sort of a pain like a narcotic. It's not a lasting sort of fulfillment. So we learn from a very early age, "Man, it feels really good to blame my sister." "It feels really good to punch my brother. I think I'll do it again." And then we grow up doing it.

Have you ever made a decision where you knew ahead of time this is the wrong decision to make but I'll do it anyway? It's the power of sin that is in our lives. It's spiritual cotton candy. It's a nice little taste at first but it doesn't satisfy.

There is a second power that is at work in all of our lives. And I would simply describe it this way: the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

And the promptings are always much more subtle than the power of sin and the reason why is because the Holy Spirit is the one who is speaking into our lives and the Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He will never impose himself upon a closed heart—but he's always speaking.

Now, some of you—maybe you have a pretty good understanding of the Holy Spirit. Maybe some of you don't. Depending upon the church that you grew up in (if you grew up in church) maybe you are really familiar with the Holy Spirit and really comfortable around talking about that—others of you, maybe not. I grew up in a church tradition where we didn't talk a whole lot about the Holy Spirit. We acknowledged his presence, but we weren't quite sure what to do with him.

When Lindsay and I started dating... I grew up in the suburbs of a mid-sized city and I really didn't go out to the country all that much. But Lindsay's family are kind of country people. They have farms and they like to hunt and they fish and they wear lots of camo and ride around on four wheelers.

So when I started to hang out with them and go to family dinners, I'd show up in my Sperrys and my Vineyard Vines and I'd sit down at the table for some barbecue. And they're talking about turkey hunting and stuff. And I'm just like—I don't know what I'm doing. They're looking at me... They were acknowledging that I was there, they just didn't know what to do with me.

And many of us, that's sort of how we treat the Holy Spirit. Let me just give you a little bit of a crash lesson in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity, because God comes to us as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God is always pointing toward Jesus and then Jesus always sort of points back to the Spirit.

Can I say it this way? The Holy Spirit is alley-ooping to Jesus. The Holy Spirit doesn't want to be made much of. The Holy Spirit is always pointing to the source of our salvation. Here's what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John. He's talking to his disciples before he was getting ready to be crucified and go to heaven. He says: Hey, listen. I'm going to be away from you for a while. I promise you I'm going to come back. But while I'm away I'm going to give you my Spirit as a deposit.

And then he says this: It's better to have the Spirit of God in you than to have me with you. What that means is one day when you and I get to heaven and we see the disciples, we're going to probably walk up to them and we're going to go, "Man, what was it like to hang out with Jesus? Man, what was it like when he walked on water? What was it like when he fed the 5,000? What was it like?"

And you know what they are going to say? They are going to go, "What was it like to have the Holy Spirit in you? Because Jesus said it's better to have the Spirit in you than to have him with you."

So the Holy Spirit of God is the wind of God, he's the breath of God, he's the One who prompts you and is speaking to you, even right now. If you've responded to Jesus, it's not because you were smart enough to do so, it's because the Spirit of God led you to that place.

So now we've got the power of sin and the prompting of the Spirit and here's the deal. Once you become aware of the epic battle that's going on, then you've got to figure out how to fight it. And many of us choose to fight it in all of the wrong ways. Many of us choose to fight this battle by white knuckling moralism. And we say, "Well, I'm just going to try really hard. I'm just going to make all of the right decisions and I'm just going to try to resist the temptation."

And listen, every time you just end up resisting temptation in your own power, all you do is make it stronger. If you try to resist lust by just trying really hard not to lust, you make it stronger. You try really, really hard not to be so greedy—all you do is just make it stronger because you're fighting the battle in the way of the flesh and not with the wind of God.

I think that we're sort of like in junior high when we begin to recognize this battle. At least that was true for me. And I've never shared this publicly with anyone. We'll see how it goes. It went okay last hour.

When I was in junior high, I began to realize this battle that was going on. I was having thoughts and would feel ashamed of them. I would do something, and I would feel guilty. I was like, "How do I change? How do I do it?"

I'll never forget. It was one Saturday afternoon and I had my headphones on and I was listening to Boys to Men, alright? Because it's so hard to say goodbye to yesterday—and so I was listening. I was kind of jamming out and I opened the fridge, I'm hungry and looking for a snack and I honestly cannot even remember what the thought was, but a thought flashed through my mind that I immediately felt ashamed of.

So here's what I did. I'm getting super vulnerable here. I looked down at the ground and I said, "Get away from me Sa tan." And I said Satan in those two pronounced syllables. Just like that, the church way—just get away.

And I kid you not, my dad walked right around the corner. He had heard everything. And immediately I felt so embarrassed. And he looked at me and he goes, "What are you listening to? Are you listening to that heavy metal stuff again?" I was like, "No, it's Boys to Men, Dad. It's alright. It's good."

For so long I tried to fight this spiritual battle in my own strength. Even today there are times when I try to fight this battle. And here, Paul tells us that God declared an end to sins control. Well how? Well he says by the Spirit of God: let me breathe the Spirit of God back into you.

So here's how I want us to see this. Actually temptation... We're all going to continue to be tempted until the day we die. I'll never forget talking to this 85 year old man at this conference

one time. And he was just like, "Fellas, I'm struggling with lust." And I thought, "Really?" Because once you get past, you know, 50 like that goes away. No, it doesn't, it doesn't. And I'm like, "Man." We're going to continue to struggle with temptation until the day that we die. So what do we do with it? Even as Christ followers?

Here's what I want you to see: Temptation can be an opportunity to grow closer to God.

How? Step into the light instead of running and hiding. Spiritual growth is found in handling temptation in the right way, in fighting it in the way of the Spirit and not in your own flesh.

Psalm 51:17 says that a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. So that means that God will always welcome you as long as you're being honest. God will always come to you as long as you are being authentic. You're not trying to hide anything.

What's the first thing Adam and Eve did? They ran and they hid. And I sometimes wonder if things might have been different if they wouldn't have hidden. They would have just stepped into the light, because God has said: Listen. I'm actually fulfilling all my just requirements and all of my grace is found in the person of Jesus. There is no condemnation for those of you who are in Christ Jesus.

Now, here's the automatic thought that some of you are having. Well, that just seems too easy. That just seems to easy.

One of my favorite conversations that I was told about last weekend out of the 205 people who responded and got baptized was this gentleman who went back stage after the message and he was talking to the campus pastor and he said, "You mean to tell me that all I've got to do is just have the faith of a mustard seed and take a small, little step of faith and put my trust in what Jesus did for me and I can be forgiven and saved and loved?" And our campus pastor just backed up and he goes, "Yep."

Here's what the guy said, "Oh, I want that." Did you notice the spiritual thirst in that statement? Like gasping for air. Are you telling me that's all it requires?

Now here's what some of us... Some of us might step back and say it just seems to easy. Who in the world told you that? There's nothing easy about it. It was incredibly hard. Jesus was the One who actually endured it for you. That's why the cross is so bloody and why the crucifixion is so brutal.

I don't know if you saw The Passion of the Christ when it came out 15 years ago. I knew all what went into Roman crucifixion, but there was a point as I was watching that movie where I was like, "Aw, man just enough. I've got the point. I just can't watch this anymore." It's why it got an "R" rating. What made the cross so painful and brutal wasn't just the beatings and the blood, it was my sin. It was Jesus shouldering all of that upon himself so that you and I wouldn't have to.

You take that aside, it's not too easy because for you and me just to take a tiny little step of faith requires us to scale a mountain of pride. And that's what is blocking some of you from receiving something that is so, so good and laid out for you right now.

Now, some of you may say, "Okay, so the gospel message is that we are saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus on a cross, alright. Got it. Okay. So why are there so many rules? Ever wondered that? It seems like there are so many rules in Christianity. It seems like there are all of these laws—all of the Old Testament stuff. There are over 600 Old Testament laws in the Bible. So why are there so many rules?"

Well, Paul actually answers that back in chapter 7, in verse 7. Here's the clearest description for the purpose of the law. Ready for it? The law shows me my sin. That's it. That's the only purpose of the law. The law shows me that I'm a sinner.

In order for you to understand how amazing grace really is, you've got to come face to face with how destructive your sin really is. And the trouble isn't with the law, the law is perfect. The law shows us who God really is and what he desires for us. The trouble with the law is me. It's my ability to follow through with all of that. I can't.

The Bible even says that if you followed all of the laws and messed up on one, then you're guilty of all of it. We just can't possibly do it. And God knew that. That's why he didn't relax the law, he fulfilled it in the person of Jesus.

Let me describe it this way for some of you who are still struggling to get your head around this.

My wife's grandparents back in the late 1980s purchased a little condo out in Colorado about an hour west of Denver. Nothing fancy, just a little condo where we could visit. They don't get up there much anymore due to their age. The altitude really bothers them. But they kept the condo, praise Jesus.

They have given all of the kids and grandkids keys and they just said, "You can use the condo and we want you to enjoy it." So once or twice a year we'll try to make it out there.

Here's what you will find when you walk into the condo. It's clean, in order, it's ready for the next guest. Here's why. You walk into the kitchen; you walk up to the refrigerator and there is a list of house rules.

And the house rules say things like this: Thou shalt empty the trash before you leave. Thou shalt not have any pets on the premises. Thou shalt wash thy bedding before thy departeth. It's all written in King James—very odd. There is some fun stuff on there too. Like, here's the code to the club house where the hot tubs are. That's my favorite rule. And we just kind of read through all of that.

Now, here's the thing. Depending upon how I read the house rules kind of determines the heart and intent behind it. So if I were to read the house rules and go, "Man, they are putting so many stipulations on our relationship." Like, "Lindsay, I really don't like the fact that your grandparents are kind of hovering over us telling us that we have to do all of these things in order to stay in the family. Like their love and acceptance of us is based upon my ability to take out the trash."

I'm reading the rules wrong. No, I'm already in the family. I'm already accepted. I'm already loved. I've got a key to prove it. No, the house rules are there not so that you can keep reupping your worthiness of the condo. The house rules are there so that way the condo exists for everyone else.

And you actually look at the law of God, especially the top ten—the Ten Commandments—and you see that those actually exist for the betterment of other people. Here's one: Thou shall not murder. We all in favor of that one? Yeah. That's a good one. Let's keep that one, alright? Let's not steal. Those are all there so that that way others can thrive.

That's what the law of God is intended to do. God knew that there was no way for us to fulfill it. And God wanted a relationship with us so badly, so he said: Listen. I'm going to actually fulfill the requirements of the law by sending Jesus. So God is both just and gracious at the exact same time. And his way of justification is not the law, it's grace. And his way of sanctification, which is a fancy word for spiritual growth, is not rules but the Spirit, the wind of God.

And when the Spirit of God comes into your life, here's what the prophet Jeremiah says about it. God says, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their heart." So what that means is that when God puts his Spirit into your heart, he writes his law there. And just by you being associated with the Spirit, God says that all of the law is fulfilled. It's amazing.

We couldn't do it. God did it. So now we can. And we can say that with confidence.

So let me give you two practical applications for this and then I'll be done. Here's the first one. And when you really get your head around what Romans 8 is saying, then that means that as the people of God:

We should celebrate as people who've really been saved from something!

We understand what we've been saved from. So if you're kind of new to church, or if you came from a church tradition in which everybody was really, really quiet and you're like, "Man, why are these people so clappy? And why are they so expressive?" One of the reasons...

I've told you before that I want you to be audible in a message, not only for the practical purpose, but if you're audible I'll preach better and shorter. But beyond that, is that new people who come in actually see that this isn't just a monologue from the stage, but there's actually an energy that's kind of illuminating from the seats.

They're like looking around and going, "Man, this is living and active. These people really believe this. They're not just listening to some guy drone on like some homily or something,

they actually believe this.” And it shows that we are inviting the Spirit of God by our response, not just by what’s being said from the stage.

The same thing is true in worship. Worship is not just singing. Worship is our whole lifestyle, but it can be expressed through singing when we gather together. And worship is an expression of joy. It’s an expression of affection. And it’s an expression of passion. And I know that not everybody is musical—I am not musical at all. I can’t sing my way out of a paper bag. I just hope that this mic is never on when I’m singing because that would be really, really bad.

And I know that everybody is wired up differently. Some of us our introverts. Some of us are extroverts. Some of us are super expressive. Some of us are not. It doesn’t really matter. How do you express joy? How do you express passion? How do you express affection? You do that. And I know that you can do it because I’ve seen you do it at Banker’s Life Fieldhouse. I know that you can do it because I’ve seen you at Lucas Oil stadium. You didn’t know I was watching you. I was watching you like a creeper—I was just watching you worship and you were going nuts because somebody is moving a ball down a field. Or you were going nuts because somebody can sing really good or play an instrument really good.

And I said, “Man, just take that same energy and passion and channel it into worship.” And I look around and at times I just go, “Man, do these people really believe that they’ve been saved from something?” Man, if we did, I think we would be a little bit more alive.

Last week on Easter I was kind of standing in the back. I don’t know what service it was. It was service number 17,000. I was dying. And I kind of looked around and here at the Northwest campus, Landon was kind of getting with it and he just invited everybody to enter in, “Hey, man. Put your hands together. Come on, man. Sing it out.”

Literally, I was standing right behind a guy who right at that moment put his hands in his pocket. I was like, “I’m just going to believe that that’s a coincidence. And I don’t know where you stand with God, but if you believe Romans 8, really? That’s going to be your response? It’s just sort of being kind of ho-hum about it.”

And if you don’t particularly like our style then I just encourage you to find a style where you can be joyful and affectionate and passionate because there is a God who deserves your worship.

Here’s the second thing, alright? This:

Shapes how and why we serve others.

And I can’t stress this point enough. I could probably do a whole sermon series on it. It gets so many people in trouble, either in the sense that when we begin to serve in church we begin to feel kind of burned out or used up or maybe some of the motivation for serving is because we’re trying to earn somebody’s approval in some way or we think that... Maybe we don’t really believe in the power of the gospel, so we think that God’s watching us up there and we are getting an extra special star on our service chart for serving every week.

Look at me. Jesus didn’t die on a cross expecting you to pay him back. You do not have to do one thing to earn his love. Exhibit A: the thief on the cross. That conversation always blows my mind. This thief looks at Jesus and he’s just like: Hey, Jesus. I know I’m not worthy. He’s stuck in the cycle of condemnation. He’s guilty of sin. And he looked at Jesus and he just says: I know where I’m going and it ain’t where you’re going so would you at least remember me when

you're there. And Jesus turns to him and looks him right in the eyes and says: You'll be with me today.

I'm like, "Are you serious?"

Think about all of the religious people who would have a problem with that today, "Okay, wait a second. There was no confession of faith. There was no baptism. There was no evidence of a changed life. How do we know if he was really taking Jesus seriously there as he was saying this? He was probably just in a lot of pain and somewhat delirious he didn't serve in Kid's Ministry one Sunday.

And I know all of the classic Bible answers: Hey, this is prior to the New Covenant Jesus hadn't died yet... It's still Jesus. He's still God. I'm not trying to dismiss any of that stuff. But he's still Jesus and it shows you his heart.

And many of us don't really fully believe that we're worthy of God's love. And we're still trying to earn it.

You want to know—this is going to sound so weird to say the Sunday after Easter. You want to know why I believe that Jesus is God? I think the best evidence that Jesus is God is not that he resurrected from the grave. The best evidence that Jesus is God is the way he treated the people who crucified him after he was resurrected out of the grave.

Think about that for a minute. Like, if I'm God... If Jesus was just a man and he somehow pulled off a magic trick and he came back from the dead, just think about all the fun he could have with the people who crucified him.

First place I'm going to go—I'm going to go to Pilate, you know the guy who sad he'd wash his hands. Jesus would go: Hey, Pilate. You want to go get a cup of coffee? You want to talk about truth? Where are you at with me now?

I would have gone to the pub where all of the Roman soldiers were hanging out and I would have walked in and I would have said... You know the Roman soldiers cast dice for Jesus' clothes at the foot of the cross. I would have walked in and said, "Hey, guys, who got my coat? Can I see my coat on you? Here I am again."

I think I would have let Peter sweat it out a little bit. Like, "Where were you guys in the midst of all of that?"

And yet Jesus is gracious to all of those people who nailed him to a tree. And he's gracious to you. And he's gracious to me. I believe that for many Christians in America today, we have a pretty good understanding of what we are saved from. Some of you were scared into it like, "I don't want to go to hell when I die so, yes, I'll receive Jesus so that I can go to heaven when I die." You've got a pretty good understanding of that.

We do not know what we've been saved to. And I refuse to believe anything that only benefits me when I die. And some of you, that's just how you have sort of reduced it, "I've got my eternal life insurance policy in my back pocket," but nothing about the way that you're living your life has changed.

See Jesus has saved you from something, but he's saved you to something. He didn't just die to give you an escape route from this world. He died so he could bring a little bit of heaven to earth through you so that you might represent Jesus to as many people as possible.

Here's what Romans, chapter 8 does. Romans, chapter 8 hopefully refreshes your understanding of who God is and it brings life—maybe to a dry place in your soul that you've been struggling to water for a long time.

I want to show you a picture of one of the driest deserts on the face of the earth. This is the Atacama Desert located in Chile. It's considered to be the driest place on earth. In fact some weather stations will indicate that there are parts of this desert that don't receive a single drop of rain for nearly a decade.

But in 2015 there was a series of abnormal weather mishaps that redirected a large thunderstorm that was out over the ocean directly above the Atacama Desert and in a single day the equivalent of seven years of rain fell on that desert. The result of that was that this desert goes from barren to full bloom in a single day. That right there is the driest desert on earth in full bloom.

And this is what happens when you and I choose to respond to Jesus in us. We are gasping for the wind of God, gasping for the air of God. And when you begin to open yourself up to what it is that Jesus is offering, he will speak to some of the deadest, driest place in your soul. And he invites you off the cycle of condemnation. You step up to him and he looks at you with moistness in his eyes and he says: Man, welcome home. Man, I love you so much.

That's the key to transformation that will break us free from this control of sin and condemnation that so many of us are wrestling with even today. So in this space and time we're just going to spend a few moments reflecting and taking communion together, which represents the body and blood of Jesus. If you're a follower of Jesus, I hope you grabbed one of the cups on the way in. We're just going to spend a few moments reflecting and then we are going to worship as people who realize what we've been saved from and what we've been saved to.

Father, we come to you today and I pray that your Spirit would fall fresh on this room and awaken our hearts so that we might see and know you better. We love you and we ask this in Jesus' name: Amen.