

Welcome to Kev's on-line eGroup

The e-Glue that helps with the glitter

Part 1: Detailed sermon notes

Part 2: eGroup study questions

Here Comes Church – “In the know”

- Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc
- Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don't have to walk this walk alone – See www.elevationchurch.cc. The “e” stands for empowerment - because getting the instructions from God without having the empowerment to live them out will frustrate you. These groups are our way of putting some very wonderful people in front of you feed you spiritually.
- Stay out of “isolation silos” - you are an easy target for the enemy – and you don't have the benefit of friends to support you. Embrace the power of numbers.
- Interested in leading an eGroup? See: www.elevationchurch.cc
- Don't over-think it – Invite someone to church – “Who do you know that is close to you that is far from God?”
- Pastor Furtick's motivational video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gqppqKVMn_o
- What are your Gr8ful eight?

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Mark 4:26-29 — The parable of the growing seed

4 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." 9 Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." 10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

Mark 4:26-29 — The parable of the growing seed

The Parable of the Growing Seed

26 He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

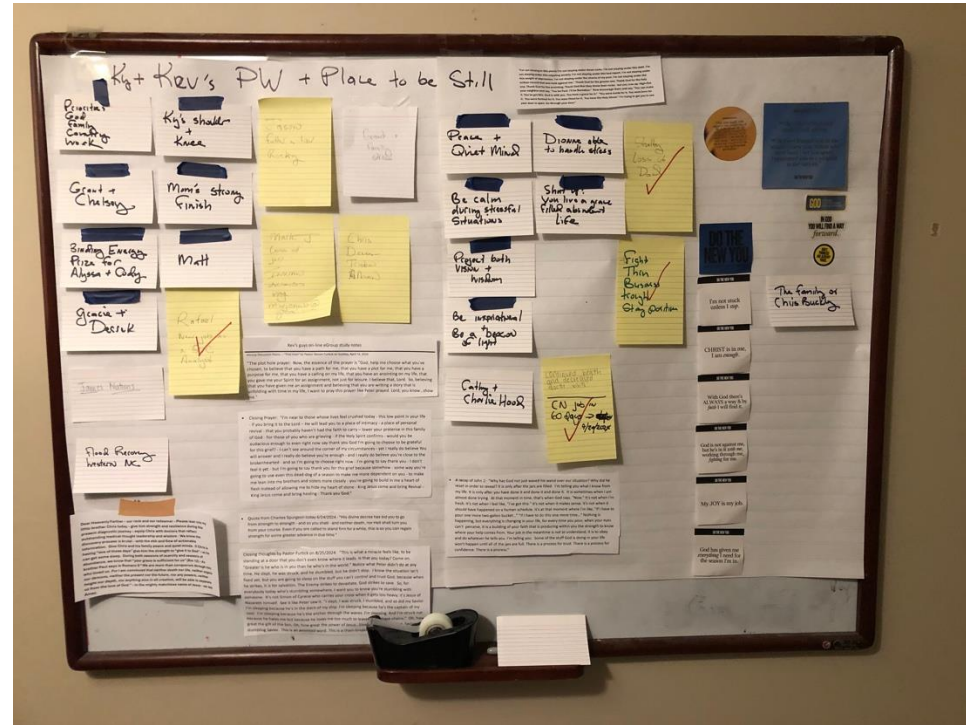
The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Pastor Tyson Coughlin from Charlotte-based Vizion Church - "Prayerful Instructions" – "Prayer is a labor of love - prayer is a crying out a desperation - a passionate plea to the maker of heaven and Earth – stop praying halfhearted - half convincing prayers - put your whole heart into it. If your heart feels numb - and you feel disconnected from other people's pain - and need then have a vulnerable conversation with God - pray this: Lord create in me a new heart restore a right spirit within me - help me Lord to love my neighbor as I love myself God - help me to love like you love - and that is a prayer God will answer - and it might not happen immediately - but in time - God will begin to align your hearts - and you'll begin to be sensitive and passionate and care about the needs of other people."



Part 1: Detailed sermon notes

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Sermon Highlights

- Nothing God starts, starts any way but small
- God's not so high that He doesn't see how hard it is for you
- Just because you're not aware of God doesn't mean He's not there
- When you focus on the hard thing, you forget your help
- Your sowing is not the most significant thing in the sovereignty of God
- I'm coming up different
- The seed can't stay in your hand and become a harvest — let go.
- You keep praising while God keeps producing
- Before it's buried, it's already bread.

Scripture

Mark 4:26-29 — The parable of the growing seed

Sermon discussion points:

- "Before it's buried, it's already bread." Share a time you saw God use something small in your life to bring about something fruitful.
- "When you focus on the hard thing, you forget your help." What hard thing has been consuming your attention that you need to allow God's help in?
- "Nothing God starts, starts any way but small." What small step is God calling you to take in your life right now?
- "The seed can't stay in your hand and become a harvest — let go." What have you been holding on to that you need to release to God this week?
- "I'm coming up different." What area of your life needs this declaration?

Prayer: In Pastor Steven's prayer at the end, he said, "You keep praising while God keeps producing." What can you praise God for right now - in the hard place? Pray to see the help more than the hard thing this week- and that we would experience God's peace as we take small steps to open our hands and trust Him.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- Elevation Nights 2025: Elevation Nights is coming your way soon - Fort Worth we're coming your way February 25th - Tulsa Oklahoma we're coming your way - Pennsylvania get ready - Toronto woo - Detroit we've never been to your city - it's going to be awesome - Hartford Connecticut – Newark NJ - Washington DC – The dates are February 25th through March 6th.
- Anybody online watching this remember when you had to buy the cassette tape of the sermon? Yeah, man. If you wanted a sermon online, you had to order it. There was no online. You had to call up and order it and wait six weeks. But I have good news. You don't have to wait six weeks.
- Welcome to our eFam all over the world.
- Come on, Ballantyne. Help me welcome our eFam all over the world. Perchance you missed it. We're celebrating the end of the year. We're not dreading the holidays. We're just getting ready to give God praise and thanks. Here at our church, we end our year with a year-end offering, and I want all of you to be a part of it.
- You say, "Well, I don't live in Charlotte." You don't have to. You say, "Well, I don't have much to give." You don't have to have much to give. I want everybody to be a part of it. Our culmination Sunday is on December 8, so between now and then I want you to pray and ask God how he would have you to be a part. If the way he would have you to be a part is just to keep coming to church, I want you to know we will always be here for you whether you give anything to this ministry or not. You ought to clap about that. They don't tell you that at the gym. "You can just come in and lift our weights whether you ever give anything or not." When was the last time you went to a restaurant and they said, "Whether you ever give anything or not, we'll always have fresh bread for you"?
- But the Lord is like that. I want to say something else. There are thousands of people who are generous in this church, and they give, they serve, they sow, they believe, and they're consistent. I thank God for each and every one of you. I'm so grateful.
- Trust me. When I step up to this pulpit, I'm never stepping up here by myself. I mean, there's an army of people in this church who love Jesus, who love the kingdom, and who are committed to his purpose. So, we want to invite all of you. This is a time to begin giving if you've never done that or to give above and beyond. I'm excited to see what God will do.
- Okay. Now that I got all the preliminary out of the way, I want to share with you what the Lord has given me to say to you today. I have tossed and turned over this message, not because it's controversial but just because I wanted to be very sure I had from God what he wanted to give to you today. Last night when I went to bed I thought I had it. I woke up at 3:00. It wasn't it. I had the right passage of Scripture, but the Lord wanted me to give it to you in a certain way, and I didn't know how that was yet, but I've heard from him now. I don't know if you were here a few weeks ago when I preached on God Can Use This Too. Then I preached a follow-up message about how God Will Work It In. I was talking about how God is a master of taking those things in our lives that we maybe didn't see coming or wouldn't have chosen to experience, and we don't know what to do with it, but God does. God is a master of improv, because he's not making it up as he goes, so it doesn't take him by surprise. It's a surprise to you, but it's strategic to him. So, we had God Can Use This Too and God Will Work It In.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- **Opening prayer: Father, I thank you for your Word. Every time we bow before your Word, we get better. Now, if we just consider it like an opinion, not much changes. But if we bow before it like you're a great king, we receive so much more than we could ever give. Thank you for bringing us here today. Thank you for each person, whatever state they're in, whatever they're going through. I thank you that you've got the hard part. We believe it by faith. In Jesus' name, amen.**
- We're going to study in Mark, chapter 4, a little story. Really, it's a story sandwiched between two other stories, and it's a made-up story, but it's not fiction. You say, "What's a made-up story that's not fiction?" Well, when Jesus teaches it, it's truer than a true story. He used these things called parables when he taught. The parable wasn't so much so he could keep it simple. I've heard people say that. "Well, Jesus told stories to keep it simple."
- **They say Jesus would teach a lot of times just to say, "I know you can't get it on a deep level, so let me make it surface-level." It's actually the opposite. He taught using parables or stories so people who were on the outside trying to misuse his teachings or thinking they could just apply an external law and be more religious, more pleasing to God, wouldn't get it. He wanted you to have to dig for it so you couldn't just take one of his teachings and use it how you wanted to, but you actually had to take the teaching, and then he has to explain it to you or you don't get it. So, what I take from that is that I can't just take the teachings of Jesus and be transformed. I have to have a relationship with Jesus. In the relationship with Jesus... Not in a physical body. We don't have him here with us physically today, but through the Holy Spirit whom he sent he can take a teaching and transform us through it. So, you have to wonder, when people say things like, "Boy, it would have been nice to be a disciple where Jesus could have taught you face-to-face and you could have been with him physically in his presence," would it really have been as nice as we think it would be? When I read about the disciples following Jesus, honestly, to me, it feels like it would have been really hard because of what I just told you. He's always saying things that make no sense on the surface, and then you have to be the one in the class who asks, "Um, teacher? Um, I don't mean to slow the class down, but what did you mean by what you just said?"**
- One of those situations was in Mark, chapter 4. I just want to read these four verses. There are three parables or stories about seeds. This one is right in the middle, so it's like a parable sandwich Jesus is giving the disciples. He's helping them to understand what the kingdom of God is like. This is the second of three examples, so it's the meat in the middle of the sandwich, so it's a really good one. Look at Mark 4 verses 26-29. "He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.'"
- The schedule God has for your life and for his kingdom is compared here to a seed. Go back to the first verse. We have a new thing. We want to try to teach you the Bible. Where it says, "He also said" in verse 26, circle the word also, and then where it says, "This is what the kingdom of God is like," circle the word like. Good. That was cool. Give it up for Justin in the back. That was good.
- He's trying to explain something to them, the kingdom of God. Now, this was an original term with Jesus. This wasn't like a thing to them. It wasn't a thing. Like, when I said earlier in the announcements... I didn't plan it, but I was talking about cassette tapes. Some of you were like, "Is that a thing? Is it still a thing?" Actually, cassette tapes are making a comeback in the vintage market, so maybe some of my stuff will be worth money.

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Detailed sermon notes:

- But if you've never seen one or you didn't listen to one or maybe you even have seen one but don't know how it works, you're like, "Is that even a thing?" The kingdom of God was not even a thing. They knew the kingdom of Israel, but they didn't know the kingdom of God. They knew the law of Moses, but they didn't know the kingdom of God. So, Jesus is trying to take something they haven't seen and explain it to them, a concept for which they have no context. It's difficult to understand a concept for which you have no context.
- **I guess I would say it's difficult to know what something is like when you haven't lived it. See, Jesus did not start existing when he came to earth. The Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now, the Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among us at an appointed time in human history, but Jesus existed before he appeared in an earthly body. So, now you have Jesus, who has eternally existed from the beginning, speaking to people who are moving through time, trying to explain to them what it's like to wait for the promise of God, to see the fulfillment of the promise of God, to know that some parts of the promise of God will never fully be realized on this earth. Some of the things that are wrong with us on this earth will only be righted in heaven. "But here on this earth, how do I get them to see what it's like when they've never seen what I saw?" Jesus was with God in the beginning before there was sin, so he knows what sinlessness is. Jesus was with God in heaven where nothing is broken, so he knows what healing is. Jesus was with God in heaven eternally when he was speaking and the world was existing, so the things which are made were not made out of things which do appear.**
- So, when the Word of God shows up in human flesh, he has to bridge the two worlds together, the one you can see and the one you can't see, and he is reduced to something most of us learned in the second grade. Jesus Christ has to speak in similes because "I can't show you what it's really like because you never saw it.
- He does three stories, and they're all about seeds. One he tells is that seeds fall in different places. Some get choked, some get gobbled, some get scorched, and some grow. "Which one do you want to be?" he seems to be saying. He's saying, "I'm teaching, and my teaching is good, but it has to fall on good soil." Then, after the one I read you... I told you it's a sandwich. The other piece of bread on the sandwich is about a small seed called a mustard seed that is the smallest seed you can see, but it becomes the biggest tree where the birds perch. That kind of reminds me of our church. It didn't start big. It didn't start big at all. Nothing God does, does. Nothing God starts starts any other way than small, whether that's your life in the womb or a dream in your heart or freedom from addiction. It will always start small.
- It always starts small, but it doesn't have to stay small. That's up to you. So, we see in this parable a partnership. We have a man who is sowing seed. The NIV says scattering. I like that word scatter better, because it gets the point across that you have to do a lot of it for any of it to work. Some of y'all just give up the first time something doesn't work. The first girl who rejects you, you don't ask another one for a date, and now you want to join the monastery because the first one didn't work. But scattered... I mean, that's how a lot of us feel. Right? "I'm trying a bunch of stuff, and I don't know which one is going to work. I have this going on." Some of y'all have so many side hustles and back hustles and forward hustles and top hustles. It gets kind of crazy.

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Detailed sermon notes:

- You have to feel for Jesus and the disciples, because in their unique situation, Jesus is trying to teach them about something they've never seen, and they are trying to receive something for which they have no frame of reference. I don't know which one is harder. Jesus breaks it down to a level they can understand. He does what any great teacher will do. To introduce you to something foreign, he speaks of something familiar. "The kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed." But they don't come from where he comes from; they come from where they come from. They have their background; he has his. You think he's going to come down to their level? Well, in one sense he does. He comes in flesh. But he wants you to know, "I came down to your level so I could raise you up to mine."
- You're not staying down here in this. You're not staying down here in what was handed to you. You're not staying down here in your grandmother's addiction. You're not staying down here in your daddy's way of thinking. You're not staying down here in the last three years that you wasted. You're not staying down here. He came down so I could come up.
- You're not commanding anybody but yourself. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Come up and praise him. It's hard to explain what it's like to Judge if you've never lived with it. Okay. Example. Graham and I were having a friendly debate the other day. It wasn't a heated argument. He wasn't being disrespectful, but I was right. After about three or four times back and forth . . . I don't even remember what we were arguing about, but it was something factual. It wasn't an opinion. So we went where you always can go to get
•the truth: online. After about two or three times back and forth, I said, "Well, look it up." And he looked it up. I don't remember who was right. I just remember the conversation we had after. I said, "Look it up." He looked it up, and we were done. It was hard for me to explain to him what it was like to have a time when you couldn't do that. In many ways, it was so much better, because when they couldn't look it up, you could make it up. It was whoever was the most confident about it who would win. You couldn't ask Siri. You couldn't ask ChatGPT. Here's really what I told him about it. "I can't even explain it to you, because you have never experienced a time when you just had to agree to disagree. Somebody might go home and look it up in the Encyclopedia Britannica." This is a throwback Sunday. This is turning into a real old-fashioned church service today. We're getting old fashioned today. We've got that old-time religion today. It's good for Paul and Silas. It's good enough for me. Listen to this. I said, "I can't tell you really what it was like, because you didn't live it." Don't judge what people are like if you haven't lived it. I'm just talking about some things I know about.
- For all of you who talk about pastors really bad, come be one. Come be one for 28 day. Come be one for 28 minutes and talk to me about it. I would say the same about you. I don't preach down to you. I never preach down to you. I never pretend like your life isn't harder than mine or that you're not holy like me. I don't do that because I don't believe that because my King doesn't. He's relatable. He sees me in my struggle. He sees me in the sickness of the cycles of my sin. He doesn't stand up there and talk down to me. He comes down there and brings me up with him, and I am seated in heavenly places with Jesus.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- It's hard to know what mental illness is like if you haven't lived it. It's hard to know what abandonment issues are like if you don't have them. "Why do they keep pushing people away?" They learned to. It was a survival instinct that was corrupted and prolonged. That's why I thank God for Jesus teaching me about the seed to let me know it doesn't have to stay this way. I know it's hard, and I don't know what your "hard" is. I don't think we should start comparing different degrees of hardness. I don't think that gets us anywhere. So, whether it's hospital visits you're making, whether it's doctor's appointments you're keeping, whether it's racism you're battling, whether it's classism you're battling, whether it's your own stupid stories you tell yourself that you're battling...We all come to this place to know that God is good but life is hard. Jesus is so high, but he came down and did something so hard. What a Savior. He's not so high that he doesn't see how hard it is for you. Do you ever wonder (this is something I think sometimes), "Is it as hard for everybody else as it is for me?" Like, is everybody else dealing with the same level of distraction, where I pick up my phone to send a text and end up ordering a dress? And I'm a man. What happened? It's hard to stay focused right now.
- **He's high and holy, but he's humble and meek and lowly, and he sent me by to remind somebody today that he knows how hard it is for you. He knows how hard it is when nobody else sees because you smile. I love him because he sees beneath the surface. This is why he gave us the parable of the seed. "This is what the kingdom of God is like." It's what happens underneath.**
- Now, in this parable, it's kind of hard for us to get the full appreciation for it. First, Jesus knows what it's like because not only do we not know what cassette tapes or dial-up modems are or when gas was 98 cents a gallon... I was telling Graham about that the other day. He said, "What was it like?" I was like, "It was amazing. Gas was less than a dollar."
- There was no caller ID, so it was kind of like Russian roulette to pick up the phone.
- **But he never lived it, so I was trying to tell him what it was like. When we pray to Jesus, he knows what it's like because he prayed. When we are insulted by people, he knows what it's like because he was insulted. When we need healing, he knows what it's like because he hurt. When we need sustenance, he knows what it's like because he hungered. When we're exhausted and weary, he knows what it's like because he got tired. God could not do that without a body. He came in a body to get to you. He reigns in power to get you to him. This is the paradox of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and this is why I love to preach about him and why I love to talk about him.**
- But it's hard for us to get with this because he is preaching about agriculture and we all have microwaves.
- Can I preach a little bit about how to deal with a God who talks about farming principles when we just go into a bakery to get bread? So imagine this. We're generations removed. Jesus teaches his disciples, "This is what the kingdom of God is like," something they saw every day. "Oh, yeah. I've seen seeds scattered. I've seen wheat reaped. I've seen wheat milled, turned into flour, and then I've seen the flour mixed with the water and turned into bread. I've seen that before." But many of us haven't. Let me ask a question. How many of you make your own bread? So, all of you are in the advanced class, and the rest of us have to do remedial work to even get to this level. We only understand fast, so how can we understand faith?

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Detailed sermon notes:

- **We want it fast. I want to have faith, and I want it fast. I want to have a job, and I want it fast. I want to have a breakthrough, and I want it fast. I want to have six-pack abs, and I want it fast. But we are not coming to a God who gives it fast. It takes faith. So, I thought we would celebrate the man Jesus talked about. He's not a real man. That's why he didn't give him a name. He says, "Like a man who sows seed." So, we don't know this man, but we applaud him and celebrate him because he's sowing. I admire people who are sowers. I admire people who show up and sow and show up and sow and show up and sow.**
- I celebrate sowers. Let's celebrate every sower, every giver, everybody who makes it possible, everybody who speaks words of encouragement, everybody who sows. Then, of course, there's the fact that he reaps too.
- Let's do it like a sandwich. In verse 26 it says, "A man scatters seed on the ground."
- **Then in verse 29 it says, "As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." In both of these verses we see that this is someone who is willing to work. He's willing to work for it. You have to work for anything that is worthwhile in your life.**
- You know, how remedial could I be? I read this text for so many years, thinking the star of this story was the sower. You know, this is a parable. It's kind of a metaphor. Maybe what Jesus means... I mean, I'm digging into it. I'm studying it. I'm like, "Maybe Jesus is always sowing into our lives." Since he's talking about the end of the age here, he's maybe talking about the harvest, that he's going to bring in the harvest and those who are saved will be brought in. I thought we should talk this morning about the sower. Upon further examination... You know, I told you I went to bed, and I thought it was one thing. I had so much good stuff to say to you about the value of sowing, and I still will teach that and should teach that.
- **It's important to have discipline. It's important to keep yourself accountable. It's important for you to make an effort. It's important for you to show up in those places. I'm not discounting any of that, but in this story the sower is not the star. That challenges us, because I think we think God ought to bless us because of how good we were. We think people ought to appreciate us because of how much we gave. We think people ought to promote us because of how talented we are. All of that has a place. Don't get me wrong. But it is not the center of this story. So what is?**
- You say, "Jesus." Okay. Yeah, I mean, he's the star of every story, but did you notice there was not a mention of God in the story Jesus told? There was a process by which a seed became grain, but there was no mention of God. I actually want to use that to teach you something. Just because you're not aware of him doesn't mean he's not there. Just because you can't see or prove or sense or feel or deduce how God is working in this situation in your life doesn't mean he's not there. This is a parable.
- See, if Jesus is using the sower to represent God, well, that doesn't make sense. I'll prove it to you. Watch this. It says in verse 27 about the sower, "Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how." "He does not know how." You will never find that sentence associated with God.
- So, this cannot be that the sower represents God. It cannot be. As much as God has given us, this is not a parable about "Hey, God has given you a lot of seeds; make sure you develop them," because it says, "He does not know how." Obviously, if he does not know how, we're not talking about God here. So, I came to ask a question today: Where is God in this?

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Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- "I've been sowing, I've been weeping, but I'm not reaping yet. Where is God in this? You tell me he's here, but it's still hard. You tell me he's here, but I'm still not over the things you say he died to save me from. Where is God in this?" Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed..." This can't be God. "...on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up..." The second evidence that it can't be God: he sleeps. My Bible says God never sleeps nor slumbers. So, this can't be God we're talking about in this passage, because God is watching over you even as you sleep. God works the night shift. God will sit by your bed and sit there with you in the most hard emotional place. So it can't be God who is referred to here as the sower.
- **Then I realized the star of the text is not the sickle that reaps the harvest, nor the sower who sows the seed. Watch this in verse 28. This is so anointed a chain is going to fall off of somebody's life when I say it. Verse 28 "All by itself the soil produces grain." - We think, "I've got to do this. I've got to make it happen." Now we're nervous, and now we have no lining in our stomach, and now we have no friends because they don't want to hear us complain anymore, and now we have nobody else to call, because they don't have our answers anyway, because we think we have to do this by ourselves. There are situations in your life right now where you're thinking about how hard it is going to be...how hard it is going to be in this next season, in this next stage; how hard it is going to be for me to make it through this period that's coming up; how hard it is going to be for me to go into this meeting next week; how hard it is going to be for me to deal with my kids (if I can't deal with them now, how am I going to deal with them in three years?); how hard it is going to be for me to go through another year like this with these unanswered prayers.**
- **After you get done telling him how hard it's going to be, you realize you forgot that he promised to do the hard part. Everybody in the text has a job. The sower has a job to sow. You should sow. The reaper has a job to reap, and you should reap. Both of those things are important, but did you notice in verse 28 that the most important thing that happened in the passage happened whether the man was asleep or awake? It happened regardless, because all by itself the soil produces grain.**
- I could preach for 13 weeks on "All by itself the soil produces grain." Yes, it needs a seed to pull from, but it is not dependent on the seed in any other way. I am trying to say that while your part has a part it's not the main part. Stop bringing that main character energy to your prayer life, acting like God is going to lead you to speed run all of these levels without him. He's not going to do that. When you get to the hard part, he's going to do the hard part.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- Even if your part feels hard right now and harder than you can bear, I want you to think about all the hard stuff God is already doing right now that you're not even thinking about. This helps me to realize that while I'm preaching, which is hard, my heart is beating. It's said that it beats about 100,000 times a day. (I looked it up, Graham. You used to not be able to do that, so you could just make up a number.) - It's sending all that blood all through my body. I just looked this up. I don't know if it's true. It was on the Internet. It said there is enough in my body right now that of the 22,000 breaths I will take today that will basically process the oxygen and expel the carbon dioxide... There are 300 million tiny little sacks where all that happens inside of me. So, when you say, "It's God's breath in my lungs," your body has 300 million tiny little sacks where the good stuff is getting taken in and the bad stuff is getting taken out, and God is doing all that. I've never heard a worship song about it. I've heard about the lungs, filling our lungs with praise, but I've never heard about the tiny little sacks where all the carbon dioxide gets expelled - and the oxygen gets processed and gets sent back out to the bloodstream. I never read about any of that, because God is so good we take him for granted. Then we run up on something hard, and we're like, "Oh, that's going to be hard." Like the rest of it isn't? The possibilities that you would be born in this time are so tiny. The fact that you would even be here today with the opportunities you have, with the life you have, with the strength you have... God has already done that. So what's the next hard thing you have in front of you?
- **If God has already done a miracle in 300 million tiny little sacks that I didn't see in my body yesterday, that I didn't even thank him for yesterday, that I didn't even know was happening yesterday, that I'm not even sure I'm explaining right today... If God did that for me then, bring on this one too, because God made me a promise. He's got the hard part. We get so anxious when the Devil roars. We get so anxious playing out our lives.**
- Yet we, like the disciples, forget the fact that we have the Bread with us. I wish y'all had three hours today. I would tell you about how in Mark, chapter 8, the disciples were heading to a ministry assignment, and they were stressed out because (look at Mark 8:14) they forgot to bring bread.
- Jesus had already multiplied to feed 5,000 men, women, and children, but they were still stressed, because no matter how many hard situations God brought them through, they still forgot what they had in him. They got focused on the next hard thing. You are focused on the hard thing, and when you focus too much on the hard thing, you forget your help.
- The irony of this... Verse 14: "The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. 'Be careful,' Jesus warned them. 'Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.' They discussed this with one another and said, 'It is because we have no bread.'" Yeah, that's going to limit him. Pop quiz. Who is the Bread of Life? Who's in the boat? So what do you have to worry about if you forgot bread?
- I'm trying to say that your sowing is not the most significant thing when it comes to the sovereignty of God. I know you didn't get some things right. I didn't either. I know there are some things you don't understand. I don't either. I know it's hard to be you. Me too. But the most important thing in the boat is not what they forgot; it's who they had. How cool Jesus is. "Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: 'Why are you talking about having no bread [when you have me]? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?' 'Twelve,' they replied. 'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand...'" Now Jesus is doing a math lesson. "...how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?' They answered, 'Seven.' He said to them, 'Do you still...?'" This is what he wants to say to you today. "Do you still not trust me? Do you still not know?"

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- We don't, because that thing about the soil that he shared is scary. It's scary for a seed to be in the soil. It is scary to be in the middle of your life. It is scary to go through a messy divorce. It is scary when they tell you, "We're not renewing your position." It is scary when you don't have your next step planned. It's scary in the soil, but notice that the place in the passage where the most happened was the place that was the least visible.
- If the seed stays in the sower's hand, it will always be a seed, but if it goes down in the ground... It goes down seed, but it comes up grain. Now high-five your neighbor and say, "I'm coming up different." That's how you'll know God has met with me. I won't look like I went in when I come out. I won't be like I was when I come forth. "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed..." The seed is on a trajectory to become bread, which is sustenance, but in order for the seed to be bread, first it must be buried.
- **I want to talk to you for one moment about buried bread. You say, "I didn't read any bread in Mark, chapter 4." Yes, you did. Jesus said to them he is the bread. He's talking to them about seed, but he is bread. He's giving them a picture of what is possible, and he's painting it on a level that they can comprehend. And they get it. The seed can't stay in your hand and become a harvest. I'm trying to tell you, "Let go." Let go of your need to control people and just start adjusting your access. Let go of your need to have data make sense and start checking in with God more than you check in with graphs. I'm saying, "Let go." If you don't let it go, it will always be this, but if it gets in the soil...**
- **Let's go back to our key verse. This is going to be my new life verse...until next week. Mark 4:28: "All by itself the soil..." The soil represents God. The soil represents "In him I live and move and have my being." The soil lets me know that when the seed went out of sight, it didn't go away. It went somewhere to change. Everything in your life has to go through the soil to become what it's meant to be. If it never gets planted, it never becomes grain. If it never becomes grain, it will never be bread. If it never is bread, it will never be what it was meant to be. So, before it can be bread, it has to be buried.**
- You never heard about buried bread, because you just get it from the bakery. You just look at someone's life and say, "They're so patient. They're so wonderful. They're so amazing." Well, before they became bread, let me tell you what they were. They were buried. They went through something that pulled out something, that changed something, that broke through something. I'm telling you, God has you in this place in your life because he's pulling out something to break through something, to bring forth bread. It's going to be bread. It's not going to be fast, but it's going to be bread. It's going to be bread for your children. It's going to be bread for your community. It's buried right now, but it's going to be bread. It's uncomfortable right now, but it's going to be bread. It doesn't look good right now.
- Do you ever feel like, "I can't even see anything happening in my life. This is not making a difference"? For everyone who feels disappointed, I want you to know that it is not a death; it is a stage of development. Now, I'm not a farmer, but when he said, "All by itself the soil produces," I thought about, "Wow! As much as the sower did, he could go to sleep and the soil kept working." That's like God in my life. While I'm not even conscious of it, he's working. While I can't even explain it, he's working.
- As a matter of fact, go back to verse 27. Jesus said, "...though he does not know how." Now go ahead and get it out of your system. It'll feel good. Say, "I don't know how." Certain processes I don't have to understand, because God is sovereign.
- Recall the story of how Elevation Worship songs get mixed before release and a discussion with J. Mix (Elevation Worship) sound expert)

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- That is what this parable is saying to me. The soil is where God produces you. The soil is where God takes the claps out, because sometimes you don't need to move to people's applause as your rhythm. The soil is the studio where God has to de-breathe some things. God has to get you to start panting after his presence in the soil. It's the place where God does the hard part.
- So, I come with a prophetic declaration today. Unless you refuse to be planted, you are not the star of this story. God will do the hard part, whatever it is. That custody thing you have going with your 3-year-old, and you don't know how are they going to know me as their dad if I don't have custody of them?" God will do the hard part. He will make sure, if you stay planted, that you have the opportunities you need to raise that child, and if there's somebody else he needs to send who has the gift they need, God will do the hard part.
- But it is scary in the soil, because this is the part you can't control. This is the part you can't micromanage. This is the part where you are so tempted to put your death grip on the seed and try to tell it what to be. Before it can become bread, it has to be buried. Every seed you sow has to be surrendered, which means it can only be what's inside of it. Stop trying to produce somebody else's purpose.
- I want to liberate you. You don't have to fulfill anybody else's calling. Notice the passage did not start with a seed of grain and turn into a vineyard of grapes. It's not supposed to.
- You don't have to produce anything God didn't put in you. Get off TikTok. Get off Instagram.
- You don't have to look 23 when you're 47. You don't have to produce anything that's not... Maybe I'm preaching to myself right now. These gray hairs have gotten me self-conscious these days.
- Whatever is in you will be produced until it reaches its full potential. I already told you before it is bread, it has to be buried. God is not doing nothing in your life. This season is not insignificant in your life. Nothing about this is random. Nothing about this takes him off guard.
- Nothing about this has him nervous. Nothing about this pushes him away. Before it becomes bread, it must be buried, but watch this: before it's buried, it's already bread. Everything that is coming up out of the soil was already in the seed. I came to declare you've already got it!
- Let's review. A sower sowed a seed. It fell on the ground. It went in the ground. It went down as a seed. It came up as a stalk. Something was happening while it was in the dark place. I wonder, is that what you needed to hear, that something is happening in your dark place?
- What is the dark place? It's the place where God pulls out the potential that is in you so that when he brings it forth it'll be exactly what he meant for it to be. I come against the spirit of comparison that is robbing you of your joy.
- **That seed was not responsible to produce anything God didn't encode it to produce. God has already done the hard part. Jesus has already done the hard part. It's so hard for you to receive the forgiveness, but he already did the hard part. He died to give it to you. It's so hard for us to walk in his new life. Do you know what I think the passage is trying to say? That God the Father is the soil and Jesus the Savior was our seed. He is the seed who went into the earth for three days, and when he came forth, he became the Bread of Life. He was already bread, but for us to receive him... If you have spiritual ears to hear what I'm saying right now, I am telling you that you have to go through some things to become what God has called you to be, but I'm here to also tell you that what you need to be is already in you. It had to be buried to be bread, and it was bread when it was buried. You already are chosen by God. You already are loved by him.**

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- You say, "But I'm broken." So was the seed. You say, "But I'm dirty." So was the seed. You say, "But I'm hurting." So was Jesus. "But I was betrayed." So was Jesus. So was the seed. You keep sowing and you'll keep seeing that God has got the hard part. I thought about my relationship with God. I reckon of the two of us it's easier for me to be in relationship with him than him to be in relationship with me. How many feel that way, that God has the hard part when it comes to your relationship? Yet he still wants you. He signed up for all of that. He checked your whole profile, and he put a purpose inside of you. I want to pray for people today who are struggling with this, because what the text gave me, for your life and for my life, was a principle and a promise. The principle is that everything in your life has to be buried to become bread. Your gift is under development. Your intellect is under development. Your experience is under development. All of that stuff you think is dead is under development, but never forget this: It was already bread when it went into the ground. It was just waiting for the time to come forth.
- I think about Jesus. He came to earth. He taught his disciples. He taught them parables. He taught them many times through his actions, but he ultimately came to die. So when it came time for the Passover meal, he sat down and began to eat with them. Look at what Matthew 26:26 says about it to give us a picture that God will do the hard part. "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'" Shortly after that he died. When he broke the bread, it was symbolic of how his body would be broken. Now do you see why I think Jesus was the seed? The seed breaks when it's in the ground. Jesus' body was broken on the cross. But notice what he said to them. "You take and eat. My body is broken for you." He has done the hard part. So, whatever comes after this, he's got it. "How shall he who died to give us life not also graciously with him give us all things?" When the seed is out of your hands, it's in his.
- Closing Prayer: Praying For Those Who Are Buried: Right now bow your head and close your eyes. The Spirit of the Lord is moving powerfully. Maybe in your living room, maybe in our kitchen, maybe in your sickbed, maybe in your car, maybe in your workout, maybe in your mid-night hour, maybe right here in this church on the fourth row, God has you in the soil. It's not hard for him; it's hard for you. It's easy for him. He's God. But it's hard for you to know how long, to know what to do. It's okay to be like the man in the passage, to say, "I don't know how." The how part is not your job; it's God's part. I declare in the name of Jesus that you are a seed too, that God is working through your life, that God is giving you nutrients you know not of in this season, that God is giving you everything you need for the calling he has assigned to your life. You, like a mustard seed, might start out small, but there will be really big branches - if you faint not. "Let us not become weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." I declare over your life today that this is rich soil. This is good ground. You are hidden under the shadow of the Almighty. This is good ground. You are planted in the garden of the Lord. You are an oak of righteousness, and this is good ground. Now let me pray for your children you're worried about. God has them in good ground. They're going to bring forth things too. They're going to be bread too. They're going to go through a process too. You just keep on praising right through that process. You keep praising while God is doing stuff in the studio. You keep praising while God keeps producing.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Church Sermon - "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Detailed sermon notes:

- Salvation Prayer: There's somebody here today who needs to give their life to Jesus Christ. You've never really done this thing. You've never really given your life to Jesus. You've never really surrendered it. You keep trying to do it on your own. You keep trying to work your way to God. You keep going up and down. We all do. That's why Jesus came. It's time to let grace take over. So right now, if you want to give your life to Jesus, I'm going to lead you in a prayer. You can repeat after me. The prayer is not magical, but the God we pray it to is supernatural. He has all power, and he came down to raise you up. If you want to put your life in his hands today, repeat after me. Heavenly Father, I am a sinner in need of a Savior, and I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Today I make Jesus the Lord of my life. I believe he died that I would be forgiven and rose again to give me life. I receive this new life. This is my new beginning. I am a child of God. On the count of three, shoot your hand up if you prayed that. One, two, three. We celebrate your resurrection day. We celebrate your new creation today.

Part 2: eGroup study questions

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

"You have to feel for Jesus and the disciples, because in their unique situation, Jesus is trying to teach them about something they've never seen, and they are trying to receive something for which they have no frame of reference. I don't know which one is harder. Jesus breaks it down to a level they can understand. He does what any great teacher will do. **To introduce you to something foreign, he speaks of something familiar. "The kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed." But they don't come from where he comes from; they come from where they come from. They have their background; he has his. You think he's going to come down to their level? Well, in one sense he does. He comes in flesh. But he wants you to know, "I came down to your level so I could raise you up to mine."**

Based on the above wisdom, how does this help you embrace the power Jesus's parables?

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

"We want it fast. I want to have faith, and I want it fast. I want to have a job, and I want it fast. I want to have a breakthrough, and I want it fast. I want to have six-pack abs, and I want it fast. But we are not coming to a God who gives it fast. It takes faith. So, I thought we would celebrate the man Jesus talked about. He's not a real man. That's why he didn't give him a name. He says, "Like a man who sows seed." So, we don't know this man, but we applaud him and celebrate him because he's sowing. I admire people who are sowers. I admire people who show up and sow and show up and sow and show up and sow."

"Then in verse 29 it says, "As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." In both of these verses we see that this is someone who is willing to work. He's willing to work for it. You have to work for anything that is worthwhile in your life."

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

"Then I realized the star of the text is not the sickle that reaps the harvest, nor the sower who sows the seed. Watch this in verse 28. Verse 28 "All by itself the soil produces grain." - We think, "I've got to do this. I've got to make it happen." Now we're nervous, and now we have no lining in our stomach, and now we have no friends because they don't want to hear us complain anymore, and now we have nobody else to call, because they don't have our answers anyway, because we think we have to do this by ourselves."

"After you get done telling him how hard it's going to be, you realize you forgot that he promised to do the hard part. Everybody in the text has a job. The sower has a job to sow. You should sow. The reaper has a job to reap, and you should reap. Both of those things are important, but did you notice in verse 28 that the most important thing that happened in the passage happened whether the man was asleep or awake? It happened regardless, because all by itself the soil produces grain.

Are you sowing and reaping in good soil?

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

"If God has already done a miracle in 300 million tiny little sacks that I didn't see in my body yesterday, that I didn't even thank him for yesterday, that I didn't even know was happening yesterday, that I'm not even sure I'm explaining right today... If God did that for me then, bring on this one too, because God made me a promise. He's got the hard part. We get so anxious when the Devil roars. We get so anxious playing out our lives."

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

What does Pastor Furtick mean when he uses the term "buried bread?"

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What does Pastor Furtick mean when he uses the term "buried bread?"

"In Mark, chapter 4." Jesus said to them he is the bread. He's talking to them about seed, but he is bread. He's giving them a picture of what is possible, and he's painting it on a level that they can comprehend. The seed can't stay in your hand and become a harvest. I'm trying to tell you, "Let go." Let go of your need to control people and just start adjusting your access. Let's go back to our key verse. Mark 4:28: "All by itself the soil..." The soil represents God. The soil represents "In him I live and move and have my being." The soil lets me know that when the seed went out of sight, it didn't go away. It went somewhere to change. Everything in your life has to go through the soil to become what it's meant to be. If it never gets planted, it never becomes grain. If it never becomes grain, it will never be bread. If it never is bread, it will never be what it was meant to be. So, before it can be bread, it has to be buried."

The soil is where God produces you.

What is your primary job here?

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Closing comments #1: "That seed was not responsible to produce anything God didn't encode it to produce. God has already done the hard part. Jesus has already done the hard part. It's so hard for you to receive the forgiveness, but he already did the hard part. He died to give it to you. It's so hard for us to walk in his new life. Do you know what I think the passage is trying to say? That God the Father is the soil and Jesus the Savior was our seed. He is the seed who went into the earth for three days, and when he came forth, he became the Bread of Life. He was already bread, but for us to receive him... If you have spiritual ears to hear what I'm saying right now, I am telling you that you have to go through some things to become what God has called you to be, but I'm here to also tell you that what you need to be is already in you. It had to be buried to be bread, and it was bread when it was buried. You already are chosen by God. You already are loved by him."

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Closing Comments #2: "You say, "But I'm broken." So was the seed. You say, "But I'm dirty." So was the seed. You say, "But I'm hurting." So was Jesus. "But I was betrayed." So was Jesus. So was the seed. You keep sowing and you'll keep seeing that God has got the hard part. I thought about my relationship with God. I reckon of the two of us it's easier for me to be in relationship with him than him to be in relationship with me. I want to pray for people today who are struggling with this, because what the text gave me, for your life and for my life, was a principle and a promise. The principle is that everything in your life has to be buried to become bread. Your gift is under development. Your intellect is under development. Your experience is under development. All of that stuff you think is dead is under development, but never forget this: It was already bread when it went into the ground. It was just waiting for the time to come forth."

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon Discussion: "God's Got The Hard Part!" - Pastor Steven Furtick on Nov. 10, 2024

Closing Prayer: "Praying For Those Who Are Buried: Right now bow your head and close your eyes. The Spirit of the Lord is moving powerfully. Maybe in your living room, maybe in our kitchen, maybe in your sickbed, maybe in your car, maybe in your workout, maybe in your mid-night hour, maybe right here in this church on the fourth row, God has you in the soil. It's not hard for him; it's hard for you. It's easy for him. He's God. But it's hard for you to know how long, to know what to do. It's okay to be like the man in the passage, to say, "I don't know how." The how part is not your job; it's God's part. I declare in the name of Jesus that you are a seed too, that God is working through your life, that God is giving you nutrients you know not of in this season, that God is giving you everything you need for the calling he has assigned to your life. You, like a mustard seed, might start out small, but there will be really big branches - if you faint not. "Let us not become weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." I declare over your life today that this is rich soil. This is good ground. You are hidden under the shadow of the Almighty. This is good ground. You are planted in the garden of the Lord. You are an oak of righteousness, and this is good ground. Now let me pray for your children you're worried about. God has them in good ground. They're going to bring forth things too. They're going to be bread too. They're going to go through a process too. You just keep on praising right through that process. You keep praising while God is doing stuff in the studio. You keep praising while God keeps producing."

Back up material

Outstanding theology Here – I really lean in when Pastor Furtick talks about Gideon in Judges 6:

“When God Goes In” by Pastor Steven Furtick – March 27, 2023

“Make Peace With Your Strength” by Pastor Steven Furtick – April 2, 2023

“Breaking The Bondage Of Wrong Belief” by Pastor Steven Furtick on 8/11/2024

Power quote from Pastor Furtick on 8/11/2024: *“They have come into a land whose customs have become their captivity. They have come into a land that God gave them, and the customs of that land have become their captivity. The Lord says, “Gideon, I want to use you to lead a revolt and a revolution. I’m going to enable you, strengthen you, supply you, and give the enemy into your hand, and you will strike them all down.” Gideon said, “Me? I’m the least in my family. My clan is the least in the nation. Why me?” God said, “Why you? Because me.” God turns 2s into 10s instantly. Only God can do that. The beauty of this is God doesn't say, “Gideon, I’m going to put you through a preparation process. This is going to take three years to get it done.” He has actually been preparing Gideon while Gideon has been hidden. Do you know God has been preparing you while you have been hidden too? Do you know God has been giving you tools, resources, lessons, words, and confirmations while you have been in the cave of what you perceive to be your abandonment and wasted season?”*

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Sermon notes – “The Gift Of Grief” by Lisa Harper – on July 7, 2024

Awesome prayer by Lisa Harper on 7/7/2024 – in the sanctuary, most of the congregation is standing – those in grief are sitting – remarkable moment:

- Closing Prayer: “I'm near to those whose lives feel crushed today - this low point in your life - if you bring it to the Lord – He will lead you to a place of intimacy - a place of personal revival - that you probably haven't had the faith to carry – lower your pretense in this family of God - For those of you who are grieving - if the Holy Spirit confirms - would you be audacious enough to even right now say thank you God I'm going to choose to be grateful for this grief? - I can't see around the corner of my circumstances - yet I really do believe You will answer and I really do believe you're enough - and I really do believe you're close to the brokenhearted - and so I'm going to choose right now - I'm going to say thank you - I don't feel it yet - but I'm going to say thank you for this grief because somehow - some way you're going to use even this dead-dog of a season to make me more dependent on you - to make me lean into my brothers and sisters more closely - you're going to build in me a heart of flesh instead of allowing me to hide my heart of stone - King Jesus come and bring Revival - King Jesus come and bring healing - Thank you God.”

Have a good navigational beacon in 2022:

“Life and Leadership at the Highest” A quote from an unknown author and requoted by Pastor Tim Keller in his sermon “This is Jesus” part 4 “Two Grieving Sisters Encounter Jesus” at Oxford University in 2016: “The accounts of Him in the New Testament speak for themselves – He combines qualities that no one has ever seen – despite his incredible claims, we never see him pompous, offended, or standing on his own dignity. Despite being absolutely approachable to the weakest and most broken people, he is completely fearless before the powerful and the corrupt. Despite being weary and lonely, we find him remarkably human - filled with joy, fear, love, and anger. Yet, we never see him Moody. We never see him being inconsistent. We never see Him strong when He should be tender and we never see Him tender when He should be strong. Most interesting of all – Of all his encounters with people - we are continuously surprised – shocking us - but never disappointing us – it is difficult for us to imagine words that Jesus ought to have said or deeds that he ought to have done. Nothing he has done ever falls short - in fact He is always surprising us - because He is incomparably better than what we could imagine for ourselves. Why? These are the surprises of perfection – He has tenderness without weakness – He has strength without harshness – humility without the slightest lack of confidence – unhesitating authority without the slightest sense of self-absorption – Holy and unbending convictions without the slightest lack of approachability – power without insensitivity – passion without prejudice – there is never a false step – there’s never a jarring no – this is life at the highest.”