

THE PURSUER

Reckless

Luke 15:11-32 // Craig Smith
September 2, 2018

Craig // Well, hey, welcome to Mission Hills on all of our campuses including those of you who are joining us on church online. So glad you are with us for our third week in the Reckless series, where we have been taking a deep dive into probably the most famous parable Jesus ever taught, the parable of the prodigal son, but as we have seen the last couple of weeks, that's really too narrow a title because it's not just about the prodigal. It's also about his brother the performer, and through both of those characters, Jesus teaches us some really important truths. From the prodigal, we realize that our sin -- our sin separates us from God, but it's not our sense of guilt and shame, it's not our attempts to make it right that are the key to God's love. It's God's grace that's key to His acceptance and His love. From the performer, we learn that our performance can cause just as much distance between us and our Father and it's not our performance records that are the key to God's acceptance. It's His grace. There is so much freedom that comes from understanding both of those truths, but we are not done yet because there's another character in this story.

We have talked about the prodigal. We have talked about the performer, but there's another character we might call the pursuer, the father in this story. The father obviously represents God, and throughout this story we have already learned some important lessons about God from the way we have seen the father interact with these two children. As we have gone through this over the last few weeks, a couple of times we have found ourselves asking questions about things we saw the father do or not do, and each time we have said, we are going to put the questions aside. We are going to put a pin in them. We are going to come back to them. That's what we are going to do today. So if you want to go ahead and grab your Bible, I would love for you to make your way to Luke 15:11.

We are going to be picking up in verse 11. While you are turning there, let me just say, in the last couple of weeks, we have walked verse by verse through this story, and so we have covered it in pretty good depth. Today we are not going to do verse by verse. We are going to kind of helicopter in to a couple of places in this story where we have asked these questions about things we have seen the father do or not do. The first one occurs right at the beginning, verse 11. Jesus continued, there was a man who had two sons, and the younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them.

We said a couple of weeks ago, that's shocking stuff. It's shocking in part because the younger son basically said to his dad, I'm really tired of waiting for you to die, so how about you give me my share of your stuff right now? That's obviously shocking. We also said a couple of weeks ago that just as shocking, maybe even more shocking was that the father said yes. The father agreed, right? That's shocking because, you know, it's hard not to see that as reckless behavior. You want to stay to the father, did you not understand, he wasn't going to take his share of the estate and invest it. He wasn't going to grow the wealth. He wasn't going to be doing good, wise things with it. Didn't you see that he was driven by the self-indulgence streak? Didn't you know that this was going to lead to heartache and humiliation? Why would you agree to it?

I said a couple of weeks ago too that, that question is suspiciously similar to another question people ask about God, which is if God knew we were going to sin, why did He create us in the first place? Have any of you ever heard that question? How many of you have ever asked that question? It's a natural question. If God knew that by creating us, if He knew that by giving us free will, if He knew that by putting the tree in the garden, if He knew that we were going to sin, and if He knew the hurt and the heartache and the suffering and the pain that are just part of everyday life in a broken and fallen world, broken and fallen because of our sin, if He knew that was the result, why on Earth did He do it?

I think it's a really important question. Actually, I have come to believe over the years that it might be one of the big questions of our age. For many people, it's the big obstacle that keeps them from coming to faith in Jesus Christ, so we need an answer to that question, and I believe this parable gives us a very powerful insight into the answer of why God created us even though He knew what was going to happen, why He did it that way. To answer the why question, we first have to ask the "what" question. By that I mean, we have to ask the question, what is God's ultimate goal? What is God aiming for? What is His end game? What is His plan? What is He trying to accomplish?

Because if we don't understand what it is God is trying to do, we are never going to understand why He does particular things along the way. We see that actually with the older brother here. The older brother doesn't understand what his dad's ultimate goal is here. He doesn't understand what is driving his father, so down in verse 29, the older brother said to his father, he answered his father and he said, look -- look, Dad all of these years I have been slaving for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders. That's the older son's scorecard. He says, look, Dad, look at my track record. Look at my performance history. I have been slaving away for you. I have been performing for you all of the things that I'm supposed to do as your slave, as your servant, right? He says, my track record is perfect. I have never missed a beat. My track record, I have

performed perfectly for you, Dad. That's the scorecard he's using, but it's not the scorecard his dad is using.

Verse 31, the father answered. He said, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours." There is powerful insight in there as to what is driving the father, and ultimately what drives God. What the father does, he does three things. He frontloads his response with relationship. He starts off with "my son." That's the first thing out of his mouth, my son. And then actually, I'm not even sure why most translations say "my son," and most of them do which is confusing because the Greek word there isn't literally the word for son. It's literally the word for child. It's a much more affectionate term. It's closer to the English like -- kiddo. What he basically says is, hey, kiddo. He's leading with relationship. He says, hey, kiddo, you are always with me. Not, you are always performing. You work so hard for me, no, you are always with me. That's relationship. He says, everything I have is yours. I'm not interested in you performing so I have more stuff for me, he says, I'm actually interested in you being part of the family business. We are doing this together. We are working alongside each other. Everything I have is yours. I want to share it with you.

That's relationship, and it's very clear from what the father says here that he's driven by relationship, right? He's driven by relationship, and it's only when we begin to understand that God is driven by relationship that we begin to have the ability to see what the long-term goal is, what His ultimate goal is. Here is the way I want to say it to you today. God's ultimate goal is children who choose to work with Him, not slaves who have to work for Him. Let me say that again because it's so important. This is God's endgame. This is the ultimate goal. This is God's greatest desire. It's children who choose to work with Him in the family business, not slaves who have to work for Him. That's what God's aiming towards. The real question we have to ask is, how does that happen?

You see, here's the problem -- it's not an easy thing to do. It's not an easy place to get to, but it is -- it is the heartbeat that is driving our God. Like He wants you to be His child who chooses to work with Him, not a slave, not a robot who has to work for Him. I realize some of you are going, that's interesting and I'm intrigued by that, but that feels like a lot to pull out of this story, and you would be right. That would be a big idea to pull out of this story if this was the only place that we saw that, but it's not. What I'm speaking to you here -- it's a load bearing truth that so much of God's Word is actually built on. We see this truth and read it time and time again. It's the drum that's gets pounded over and over and over again in scripture. We can go all the way back to the first page. Well, that's the table of contents. Don't do that. Second page -- when God announced His intention to create human beings, Genesis 1:26, this is what He said. He said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness so that they may rule over the fish and the sea, over the birds and the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all of the creatures that move along the ground."

So, God made us as His image. We have talked about this a little bit before. If you haven't heard, let me explain it real quickly. The image that God says let us make mankind as our image, it means as a representative. He said let me make a creature to represent Me in creation, and He delegated to us His authority. What did He say the human beings are going to do? They are going to rule over creation. Now where does that ability to rule come from? Where does the authority come from? Well, it comes from God, because who is the ultimate ruler? Come on, it's church. You know the answer. Who is the ultimate ruler? God. You see what He says here, He delegated that authority of His to His image, to His representatives.

He said we are going to do this together. You are going to work alongside Me in steward and creation and bringing it to its appointed purpose. It's an incredible calling as His representatives, but here is the thing. Representation requires relationship. You can't represent somebody you don't know. You can't send somebody off to negotiate a deal for you if they don't know you, if they don't know what you are looking for, if they don't know what's important to you, they can't represent you without relationship.

So from the very beginning, God has created us, and it requires relationship, and then we see this all throughout the Old Testament, but we can fast forward very quickly to the New Testament, the Gospel of John 15, Jesus speaking to his disciples says such an incredibly exciting thing. He says, "I no longer call you servants", and the Greek word can be translated to "slave," as well. "I no longer call you slaves because a slave does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you -- what? friends." Jesus said, I don't want to call you servants. I don't want to call you slaves. I am not going to call you that anymore because that's not what I'm looking for friends. You see what he's saying? He wants us to be in the family business. He wants to understand what our Father is about. He wants us to choose to join in him in that work. He doesn't want robots. He doesn't want people following a program. He wants people who choose to work with him, so again, God's ultimate goal -- let's make sure we get this in our heads, God's ultimate goal is children who choose to work with Him, not slaves who have to work for Him.

That's the goal. Here's the problem -- God's ultimate goal is impossible without relationship. It can't be done. Okay? So we need a relationship. What's the big deal? Here's the problem. Relationship requires trust, right? Anybody that you don't trust, you don't have a great relationship with. They go hand in hand. If you don't trust somebody, you are not going to have a good relationship with them. God's goal requires relationship. Relationship requires trust, and here's the real root of the problem. Trust comes from being convinced that God is good. If we don't believe God is good, we are not really going to trust Him. If we don't really trust Him, we are not going to have a relationship with Him. If we don't have a relationship with Him, God's ultimate goal goes unmet. Are you with me? Trust comes from knowing, from being convinced.

Not from suspecting. Not from hoping. Not from believing that maybe possibly, but knowing, being convinced that God is good. It's fundamental to God's plan. We have to know that God is good, so the real question is, how does God convince us that He is good? He could just tell us, right?

Because that works, right? When somebody tells you, hey, trust me. I'm a good guy. We are like, oh, that's all I needed, right? No, that doesn't do it, so how about this? He could give us good when we are good. That's a good plan, right? He could do good things for us when we do good things, right? He could reward our good behavior with good rewards. Except for that doesn't teach us that God is good. It teaches us that -- we're good. It teaches us that we are good performers when we check the right boxes, when we do the right things, when we perform super well, then of course God does. So it doesn't convince us that God is good.

At the best, it convinces that God is reasonable, that He's fair, right? So giving us good when we do good, that doesn't convince us that God is good, so what is the alternative? The answer is, to convince us that He is good, God could give us good when we are not good. Because listen to me, if someone gives us good when we are not good, then that means they are good. Do you see that? If someone does good for us when we are not good, that doesn't say we are good because we are not, right? If someone does good for us when we are not good what that really tells us is that they are the good ones. They are truly good.

Let me ask you a question, at the end of this parable one of these two sons is convinced that his father is really good. Which one is it? Is it the prodigal or the performer? It's not the performer. At the end of the parable the prodigal son, the performing son -- the performer, we actually don't know where he is with his dad. His dad has gone out to beg him to come home, but the story ends on a cliffhanger note. We don't know if the brother goes in or not. There is the sense that it's all kind of up in the air because the older brother is not convinced his dad is good. He's not even convinced that his dad is fair. He's like, I have been checking off the boxes. I kept pushing the buttons. Where's my pellet, dad? Come on. Where's my reward? I have done all of the right things. I'm not sure you are fair. I'm not even sure you are reasonable let alone good. It is not the performer, but it is the prodigal, isn't it? The prodigal has no question at all that his dad is good. Why?

Because his dad gave him good when he was not good, when he hadn't earned it, when he didn't deserve it, which means it's not me that's good. It's my dad. And this is why a couple of weeks ago I hinted at this when I said we are going to put a pin in this and come back to this. Here's the thing, it's that only those that have experienced grace can be truly convinced that God is good. Because grace, if you are not familiar with the word, grace means that somebody gives you good that you don't deserve. Somebody gives you good when you are not good, which means that they are the good one, right? Only those that have experienced grace can truly know, not hope, not think maybe, but know that God is good. This is the reason why the father let the son go. This is the reason why God created us and gave us free will knowing that we would do what we have done, because at the end of the day when we wake up and realize that we are not good and yet He has been gracious to us, we understand that He is good. Truly, truly good. The Bible says this is grace, right? That while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He took our sin and our shame and the pain and the suffering caused by our sin and he paid for it. We are like -- it's like -- we are like the children who see the glowing red things on top of the stove, and we think, I really want to grab those and dad says, no, you don't. That would be bad. Do not do that.

We are like, yeah, what do you know? I really want to do that, and we reach out and we grab it, and he lets us, and suddenly we know -- Dad was right. When Dad says something is bad, it's really bad, and I don't want anything to do that. Let me ask you a question, if that really happened to you, if you reached out and touched the stove, do you think you would ever touch the stove again? Okay, that's clear, but here's the little bit more complicated but more important question, no, we would never touch the stove again. Would you be able to touch the stove again? Would you have the ability? Would you have the free will to touch it? Yeah. We just wouldn't have the desire. You see, the world we are living in now, I believe, is teaching us two things. One, is that what God says is bad is actually bad, and we never want to do that again because we know what the result was, but there is another thing that happens in a world where sin has been allowed to run its course, and that is we become convinced that God is good. Yeah, we touch the stove, and as we stare in horror at the blister that pops up, and the skin that's seared, and the cracks and the blood starts to flow and the pain radiates up the arm, our Father grabs our hand, and He says, let me take care of that for you, and we watch as the red moves from our hand to His, as the blisters form on His fingers, as the cracks leave our flesh and move up His arm, and we go, you would do that for me when I disobeyed you? You would do that for me when I thought I could do this on my own? He goes, yeah, because I love you, and because I'm good.

You see what happens in the world that we are living in, we come to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that bad things are bad things. We come to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that our God is what? That he's good. Really and truly good because He was good when we were -- not. He was willing to suffer for us when we weren't even willing to give Him our attention let alone our love. The Bible speaks something that's honestly baffling. It's a little hard to wrap our heads around. The Bible is really clear that there is a day coming where God will make it all right. He's going to fix the world that we broke. He's paid the price already. He's working on it. There is a day coming when Jesus will return, and everything will be made new again, and we are going to live with God forever, and the Bible is really clear that as we live with God forever, we are never going to sin again. There's no more sin -- never. Like a hundred years, never going to sin. A thousand years, no sin. 10,000 years, no sin. A million years, no sin. A billion times a billion years, never are we going to sin again. You go, how is that even possible? How is it possible we could go for billions and billions of years and we'll never sin again.

I have heard Christians go, well, because in heaven, we won't have free will, and I'm like -- what? Because if God can get what he wants without giving us free will, then why on Earth did he try free will in the first place, right? Like that's cruel, right? No, we'll have free will in heaven, so how is it we have the ability to sin, and we'll never do it again? Because we'll know that because what God says is bad is really bad and we don't want anything to do with it, and that our God is really good, because He rescued us in spite of it. He was good to us when we were not good, which means that He is good. And I realize this is kind of deep stuff, but let me give you a hook to hang these thoughts on.

It's that God's grace convinces us of His goodness, which is the foundation of our endless relationship with him. We have to know that God is good to be children who choose to work with Him and not slaves who have to work for Him. God's grace convinces us of His goodness. That is the foundation for our endless relationship with Him. We could probably stop here. That's worth pondering, right? That's worth wrestling with, but it's not the only question we need to resolve. The reality is that there is another question that we kind of put off, and it's actually pretty closely connected to that one, so they work pretty well together, but the other question that comes up comes because this parable wasn't -- it wasn't the only story Jesus told in this situation. He told three parables, and they are all very similar.

The first parable is the story of a man who had a hundred sheep, and he lost one, so the man went out looking for the lost sheep, and then there was the woman who had ten coins, and she lost a coin so she went out looking for the lost coin, and now we have a man with two sons. One of the sons is lost, and so we expect the man to do what? We expect him to go out looking for the lost son, but when the story begins, that's not where the father is. He's not out looking for the lost son. He's sitting on the front porch waiting for him to come home. And there's grace in that. Don't get me wrong. The moment that he saw his son coming home, he ran to meet him. He poured grace upon him, but it's kind of strange that he was on the porch, isn't it? Why wasn't he out looking for the lost child?

It's a very natural question to ask -- at least for us. It's interesting. It's the kind of question that we might have, but it's not the kind of question people in the first century would have asked. They would never have asked, why was the dad not out looking for the son? The reason they wouldn't have asked it is because they would have known the answer culturally, and that was it was the older brother's job to find his lost younger brother and bring him home. That's the older brother's job. In that culture, that's what they would have done. Of course the father was on the porch, because the older brother wasn't supposed to be out in the fields working. He was supposed to be out looking for his younger brother to bring him home.

That's true culturally. It's also true theologically, because we see this clear pattern throughout scripture. All the way back in Genesis, God looked at the broken, fallen world. He said, they are still my kids. I still love them. I'm going to rescue them. He began by adopting a man named Abram. He was later renamed Abraham. He went to Abraham and He said I'm going to bring you into the family. I'm going to adopt you. I'm going to rescue you. You are going to become mine, and your descendants, and their descendants, the people of Israel as they would become, you are going to be my people. You are going to be my kids. You are going to be my children, but when he called Abram He said this, He said to Abraham, I will bless you, and then He went on to say, and through you all peoples on Earth will be blessed. He said I'm going to bless you and through you, I'm going to bless all of the other people. He said, I'm going to rescue, and then you are going to join me in rescuing your lost brothers and sisters. Right? You are going to be part of the family business.

I'm going to rescue you. You are going to join me in rescuing others, and throughout the Old Testament we see that over and over and over again. Whenever we see God most frustrated with His people, it's because they are failing to join Him on mission to rescue their lost brothers and sisters, when they are failing to be a light to the rest of the world. That's when He gets most frustrated by them. We fast forward to the New Testament. We get to the New Testament and in the Gospel of Mark Jesus said this to his earliest disciples, Mark 1:17, he said come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. I will send you out to fish for people. He said come with me, and we are going to go out rescuing. I'm going to rescue you, and you are going to join me in rescuing others. I'm going to bless you, and you are going to a blessing to others. At the end of the Gospel as Jesus ascends into heaven, before his return he says to his disciples, I have rescued you, now go out into all of the world and speak the good news of your Father's goodness. Speak the good news of the Gospel.

So we see this pattern over and over again that God expects His people to join Him on mission, to join Him in rescuing our lost brothers and sisters. That's the pattern. God will rescue us, and He expects us to join Him on mission rescuing our lost brothers and sisters, and when Jesus got most frustrated, it was with people that refused to join him on mission. And I know we wrestle with that, and I said this before, but it's so important that we get it. We have this picture of Jesus sometimes that he's just this -- like he's just the nicest guy ever. I teach on college campuses sometimes, and I love to ask people to describe Jesus, and they give me these one-word descriptions of Jesus, and when I get them all written down I'm like you just described the biggest hippy in the world. Like your picture of Jesus, he probably doesn't walk. He dances places, and he has a flower. He's just the nicest guy. I'm like, yeah, but look, there was a time in Jesus ministry. He went into the temple, the temple God had told them here's how you are going to build the temple. Here's the plan. Here's the design, and part of the temple plan was there is a place called the Court of the Gentiles, and in the Court of the Gentiles you are going to have a place for the people of the world, the lost brothers and sisters of the world. They are going to be able to come and hear about the goodness of God.

They are going to hear the truth of their Father's love for them. There is a place set aside for them. And Jesus went into the temple, and he found that there was a market that had been set up in the Court of the Gentiles. There was no place for their lost brother and sisters of the world to hear about the goodness of their Father, and Jesus flipped out. I know that doesn't sound terribly Jesus like, but what else do you do with the fact that he literally started flipping tables over. I'm sure it was a gentle like -- no, no, no. He's flipping tables over. John says he made a whip. He made a whip and he chased the sellers out of that Court of the Gentiles. People are like, I can't -- was it a soft whip? No, it wasn't a soft whip. He was infuriated because his people weren't joining him on mission. Those who had been rescued by God's grace were not giving God's grace. They weren't joining him on a rescue mission to their lost brothers and sisters in the world.

And Jesus is telling this parable in part because they are a group of religious leaders grumbling because the lost brothers and sisters, the sinners

and tax collectors, people who are far from God were being drawn near to Jesus. They were drawing near to him. And he was accepting them, and he was welcoming them. His love and his grace was transforming them, and he had religious leaders -- he had older brothers around him going, that's just not the way to do it. They were grumbling and complaining, and so Jesus taught this parable.

The reality is, they weren't rescuing their lost brother and sisters. They weren't interested in it. They were too disgusted by the lost to mount an effective rescue operation for them. They were looking at these people going, they are gross. Look, they are doing this. It's disgusting. Their lives are a mess. I can't -- they are disgusting. They were too disgusted by the lost to mount any kind of an effective rescue operation. That was the Pharisees and the religious leaders. That's so often the religious elite, so often the older brother, so often -- us. So often committed Christians are in that same place. We are so disgusted by the lost we can't mount an effective rescue operation, but -- it's not an option.

It's not an option. Why was the father sitting on the porch? Because the older brother hadn't done his job. We get so disgusted sometimes by sin that we can't mount an effective rescue operation. It's the Pharisees. It's the religious elite. It's the older brothers, but it's not Jesus. You hear me? It's not Jesus. Jesus is not disgusted by sin -- which is really good news for all of us. Can I get an amen on that? Even if older brothers that feel like we are performing pretty well, yeah, we are not performing that well. He's not disgusted by our sin. He's not disgusted by anyone's sin. Jesus, there are two things about Jesus that we need to understand that this parable helps to make clear. The first one is this, that Jesus is the older brother that we all need to desperately.

Jesus is the older brother that doesn't look at us and go, ugh. He's the older brother who goes looking for us. He's doing whatever is necessary to pour grace upon us, to redeem us into his family, to adopt us into this family of our good Father. Jesus is the older brother that we all need so desperately, but he's also, and this is an important part of it. It's the other side of the coin. Jesus is the perfect picture of the older brother that we are called to be. Do you hear me? Yes, he's the oldest brother that we need so desperately. He's also the picture of the older brother that we are called to be.

The parable of the prodigal son at its core, it's a beautiful invitation. It's a beautiful invitation to two things. First, that God invites us to know His goodness -- not because we have earned it. Not because we deserve it, but because He is good. God invite us to know His goodness, but He also invites us to make His goodness known. To know His goodness and to make His goodness known. That's the invitation to the prodigal son of the performing son of the pursuing father. So my question to you today is really just -- which side of the equation do you find yourself on? Because I believe every single one of us, on all of our campuses, watching online right now, every single one of us needs to take a step further on one side or the other of that equation. So the question is this, do I need to take a step toward knowing His goodness or toward making His goodness known?

Maybe you are the prodigal and you know you are not good, and this is incredibly good news for you. You don't have to be good because He's good. His grace is the ultimate proof of that. Maybe you are the performer and you are like, well, I'm kind of good. Look at my track record. I performed really well, right? God's like, not really. Like -- nice try, but -- not so good -- but it's okay. You don't have to be so good because I'm good. Maybe you need to embrace that. Maybe you need to embrace grace today, to know that God is good, or maybe you are on the other side of that equation. Maybe you have embraced grace, and you have sensed this conviction of the Holy Spirit right now that says, you need to take a step forward on the other side of the coin in making His grace known, and making His goodness known to others.

I mean, it's what drives everything we do at Mission Hills. The two things at the heart of everything we do at Mission Hills is this. We want everyone that spends any time here to be doing two things. Number one, to become more like Jesus. For His grace to transform you from the inside out so you are taking steps to become more like Jesus, and then as you become more like Jesus, to join Him on mission in the world. To know His goodness and to make His goodness known. To become like Jesus to join him on mission. That drives absolutely everything we do at Mission Hills. Why do we want people in worship services? Because through worship and teaching the Word, we encourage people to become more like Jesus and join him on mission in the world. Why do we talk so much about being part of a group? Whether it's a men's group, a women's group, a life group, a hope group -- why do we put so much emphasis on groups? Because in groups we love each other which sets the stage for us to challenge each other to become like Jesus and join him on mission in the world. Become like Jesus -- that's the engine that drives everything. Why do we want people serving? Why do we talk so much about serving? Because we have empty volunteer slots.

[Laughter]

No. No, no, no. We encourage serving because we know in serving we are becoming like Jesus and doing what? Joining him on mission. Can you say it with me? Become like Jesus and join him on mission. Become like Jesus -- it drives absolutely everything that we do at Mission Hills, so my question to you, if you need to embrace grace, what's stopping you? If you have embraced it, what does it look like for you to begin joining him on mission?

What's that step for you this week? Let's pray about it. God, all of your people at Mission Hills, all of your campuses, watching online, we thank You that You are good, that Your goodness to us does not depend on our performance. It doesn't depend on how good we are because we don't have to be good. You are good. It is Your goodness, which changes us from the inside out and makes us like Jesus, the older brother who rescued us and the older brother who shows us the way. We thank You for Your goodness. Lord, some of us are here today, and we are sensing something stirring right now. The Holy Spirit is moving in us in some way. We are just realizing that we who have received grace have to start giving it. We have to join our Lord on mission in the world. We know Your goodness, and we need to make Your goodness known now.

Lord, would you speak to each and every one of us right now. Does that mean that we -- we volunteer in some way? That we -- maybe we invite somebody to come to church, that we begin looking at our daily lives with a new lens that says, is this an opportunity to speak the goodness of God to somebody that God has put in my sphere of influence. Would you -- maybe it's giving us a new radar for the opportunities You provide. I think You provide them all the time. Lord, would You speak to each and every heart about what it looks like for me to join You on mission to my lost brothers and sisters in The Lord? Lord, give us the courage to step up to this mission that You call us to. Amen. If you would just continue in an attitude of prayer. If you have embraced grace, if you know the goodness of God because of the grace of Jesus Christ upon your life, would you start praying right now for the people around you who may not know that, who don't have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Praying for those online watching around the world.

I believe at all of the campuses, right now there are people that the light bulb has gone on. They are going, so I don't have to be good enough? That's good news because I'm not. I know I'm not. Or maybe I have been trying too hard, and I thought I was doing okay, but I'm falling short, and I don't have to be good enough? That is good news. Because the truth is, God is good. Because of His grace, He sent His only Son. He lived a perfect life. He took our sins, the pain and suffering and all of the things that we caused, and he took them upon himself, and he died on the cross, and he paid off the price of our sin. Three days later, he rose from the dead, and he offers us new life if we'll just put our trust in him. If today is the day, if you are ready to put your faith in Jesus Christ, to be adopted into God's family and to join Him on mission in the world, if you are ready to give your life to Jesus, would you just slip your hand up right now?

I see those hands. That's awesome. That's fantastic. If you are watching online, just click the button right below me. If you are watching on Facebook, type "I'm ready" in the comment section. Right now, wherever you are, just speak to your good Father and say to Him, say this, God, I have done wrong, and I'm sorry. Thank You that I don't have to be good enough because I know I never will be, but I know that You are good. Jesus, thank you for being so good to me. Thank you for coming and dying in my place to forgive my sin. I believe you rose from the dead so that you could offer me new life. Jesus, I want new life. I want to receive your forgiveness. I want to be adopted into your family. I give you my life right now. I put my trust in you, and I receive new life from you -- as a child of God. As a child of my good Father. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Can we celebrate those that just came into our family?

[Applause]