CRAIG: Good morning.
TOGETHER: Good morning.
CRAIG: This is obviously the crowd that doesn’t care about football, is that right? Man, second service, 9:30, was so packed.
I’m [inaudible 00:01:00] I would love to think that it’s the spirit of God moving but we also know when kickoff is. So you guys are the faithful. So we’re glad that you’re here. So big week this week, right? I said it was gonna be a big week and it absolutely was a big week. And, you know, the country isn’t gone yet. We haven’t torn ourselves completely asunder but there were some... anybody see the protest?

What I thought was interesting about the protest was the sort of undercurrent in some of the news outlets. It sort of suggested that, you know what, had the election gone the other direction, there wouldn’t have been like, you know, all these protests. Like, yeah, there would have been. It’d just been a very different group of people out there protesting, right? But I was...there were sort of...something kind of happen consistently as I was watching some of the protest stuff that grabbed me, and it was just an image.

It was the image of people doing this. You probably saw some of these, you know, the closed fist or the shaking the fist thing. I don’t know why but when I saw that, I thought of something that I interacted when I was a kid and I don’t know why this came to my mind but it did. I remember when I was a kid, I don’t know how old I was, 9 or 10 or so. Sunday afternoon, church was over, and I was reading the paper, which is to say I was reading the comics, which is still the only part of the paper I actually read. But there was like, there was a strip, and I still remember the strip vividly. It was a Peanut strip. Do you remember Charlie Brown, right?

And in this comic, Linus, [inaudible 00:02:18] with a blanket, was watching TV, and his sister, Lucy, came in and she just changed the channel. And Linus goes, “What gives you the right? What makes you think you have the right to just come in and do what you want?” She said, “I’ll give you five reasons.” She said, “Individually, they’re not much to look at. But when they come together, they’re a power to behold.”

And I remember thinking at that time, “Okay, that’s pretty funny,” especially because the last panel was Linus looking at his hand going, “Why can’t you guys get together like that?” I remember thinking at that time that’s pretty funny. But as I watching the protest this week, I started to think about it in a very different way and I realized it’s not so much...it is funny but it’s also profound because I wonder if God ever looks at His church and asks the same question, “Why can’t you guys get together?”

And actually, I feel like I know the answer because you know what it takes to go from this to this, bending. You gotta bend. We’re not good at bending. The whole world orients us towards not bending, right? You gotta look out for number one. You gotta fight for your rights and your perspectives and...the world is good at teaching us how to be stiff. The world is not so good at teaching us how to bend. But the problem is when we don’t bend, we don’t come together. When we don’t come together, some really important things that God wants to have happened don’t happen.

If you have your bible, I’d love to have you turn with me this morning to Ephesians Chapter 3 where Paul begins, I think, to unpack a little bit about what it means to find the power to bend and so, in that way, to come together in the way God intends so that God can do in us and through us what He wants to do. If you don’t have a bible, please grab one, the ones in front of you, and that’s our gift to you if you don’t own one.
Ephesians Chapter 3 begins this way, “For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles,” and we’ll stop there for a second. He says, “For this reason,” and that immediately makes us ask, for what reason? And the answer is what He just told us last time. And in last week, what we saw is that Paul says that God is bringing people together, Jew and Gentile together. He’s bringing them together so that He can show up through us in power. And the reason for that is simply that the Jews by themselves weren’t a big enough canvas for God to paint His story on. The Gentile nations weren’t a big enough canvas for God to paint His story on. So He brings us together to make us the biggest possible canvas. He brings us together so that He can show up through us in power. He wants to do something tremendous through us.

And so Paul announces, “For that reason, I wanna tell you something.” And here’s where it gets kind of interesting because what Paul wants to tell us he doesn’t actually get around to telling us until verse 14, which we’re not gonna deal with till next week. But he kind of like goes, “And because of that, I wanna tell you this, but before I do,” he kind of goes off in a tangent. And in fact, most translations have a little dash at the end of verse 1 to indicate that we understand that verses 2 through 13 are kind of a tangent.

Now, I don’t know about you, but I’ve known a few people who tended to go off on tangents. Anybody don’t know anybody like that? And here’s the problem is usually, when somebody goes off on a tangent, you’re left going, “Wait, what are we talking about again?” Because they feel accidental, right? Paul is not doing this accidentally. Paul is doing this very intentionally. And the reason he’s doing it intentionally is because what he wants to say here is so important that he says, “You know, I have to interrupt my own thought for this breaking announcement. This is an incredibly important thing.” And so what this really does is that it highlights the significance of what he’s saying here.

He says this, he says, “Surely, you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you.” The administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, “That is the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. Now, in reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in the other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus.”

In some ways, what Paul’s doing here is he’s going over ground that he’s already covered a little bit. But again, he has to make sure that we get a firm grasp and we have to be on the same page and so he talks a little bit about this mystery business. And it’s interesting. Here, he actually, he uses the word “grace” and “mystery” synonymously. He talks about the administration of God’s grace, verse 3, “That is the mystery made known to me.” So he’s using grace and mystery sort of synonymously, and that’s kind of an interesting thing to do.

But if we follow his thinking, it makes perfect sense. Grace is underserved kindness, and the undeserved kindness of God is expressed in the blood of Jesus. He sacrificed Himself to eliminate our sin, to bring us to Himself even when we were running from Him. That’s grace, that’s kindness. But he also says that kindness is also mystery. And that’s the thing that he’s been talking about, this mystery that God has brought together Jew and Gentile. Really, the mystery is this. The mystery is that in Christ, God is making one people, one church out of different people that once were separate.

So He’s bringing Jews and Gentiles together into one church, one people that’s raceless. He’s been talking about that, that’s why he says, “I’ve already written about this briefly.” But why is it called a mystery, though? Well, in Greek...I should say it this way. In English, when we hear the word “mystery,” it’s something mysterious, right? It’s something unknown. But in Greek, the word “mystery” didn’t mean something that’s unknown. It means something that used to be unknown but that’s now been made clear. They never used the word “mystery” for an unsolved mystery. They only use the word “mystery” for things that had been solved, things that had been known even though it hadn’t been that way before.
And so Paul says, “Really, here’s what’s happening. People didn’t use to know that God wanted to bring everybody together so He could show up through them in power, but now, we know that.” And Paul considers himself one of the instruments by which God makes this thing known. Paul considers it his role to proclaim this mystery, that’s why he says, “You’ve heard about the administration of grace that was given to me.” Administration means the outworking. It wasn’t just that he was saved but he’s been allowing Paul to use his gifts and his talents and his abilities to proclaim the reality that God is bringing people together. Paul is a proclaimer of this grace. He’s a proclaimer of this mystery.

And here’s the important thing to understand. Paul has received grace. I mean, the fact that Paul is a part of this church is an example of God’s kindness to him. But Paul does not consider receiving kindness to be the end of the story. Paul does not consider himself just a sponge to soak up grace. He also understands that when he’s received grace, he’s also supposed to pass it on. So this proclaiming grace is just, it’s a natural cycle. What Paul understands is basically this. God never just gives grace, He invests grace. Do you hear me?

God never just gives grace to us, He invests grace in us with the expectation that there’s going to be a return on his investment, that we’re going to pass it on. We’re not gonna be sponges who just soak and soak and soak, that we’re going to squeeze ourselves and we’re gonna...it’s a weird image, right? We’re gonna leak it out. But that’s what He’s calling us to. The expectation is if you’ve received grace, you’re also gonna be a servant of it. You’re gonna pass it on. And this is a consistent theme we’ve ran throughout the New Testament, as well the Old Testament, that Jesus told it maybe clearer than anybody else. Jesus told this interesting story.

He said there was a king who was owed a great deal of money by a guy. And that guy came in and the king said, “Pay up,” and the guy said, “I can’t.” And the king said, “Okay, here’s what I’m gonna do. I’m gonna forgive your debt. It’s gone, completely eliminated, wiped out.” And so the guy walked out, and I’m sure the guy walked out with a bouncing [inaudible 00:10:24], “I can’t believe how kind the king was. I can’t believe the grace that I’ve just received. I can’t believe that my debt has been wiped out. That’s amazing.”

And as he was reflecting on this, he saw a guy coming towards him who owed him a little tiny bit of money. And he went to that guy and he said, “You owe me money. Pay up.” And the guy said, “I can’t. Give me a little more time.” And Jesus says, “He began to choke the man.” That’s what Jesus says. That’s awesome, right? He’s a good storyteller. He began to choke the man and he said, “You’re going to jail until you pay every last penny.”

And then as the story continues, the king heard about what this guy did, this guy who’d been shown kindness, who’d been shown grace, what he did in not showing kindness. And let’s just say it this way, the king was not happy because the king expected that he had just given this man grace, he had invested in it, and because of that, it would continue to flow, not just into him but from him. See, what Paul is understanding is this. God never just gives us grace, He invests it in us. And God expects a return on His investment, not immediately. Makes us go, “Hey, hang on a second. Who am I to give God a return on His investment and grace?”

Well, Paul begins to go on and he says this. Verse 7, he says, listen, “I became a servant of the gospel by the gift of God’s grace given to me through the working of His power. Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given to me to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God who created all things.”

So Paul answers the question, “Who am I,” and “How could I?” When he answers the question, “Who am I,” he identifies himself, he takes this identity, he seizes it, he says, “I’m a servant of the gospel.” Not just a recipient of it, he’s a servant of the gospel. And I think our natural tendency is to go, “Well, yeah, but, of course, he’s a servant of the gospel. It’s Paul. He’s the great
apostle, right? Of course, he's gonna be allowed to be a servant of the gospel, but how does that relate to me?"

But do you understand what Paul says is, “I shouldn’t be. It’s only by the kindness of God that I’m a servant. He has not even made anything in me.” He says specifically, he says, “I was less than the least of all of the Lord’s people.” And he’s not just blow and smoke. This is not false humility. He’s saying, “This is not how I started off. This was not my identity. I wasn’t a servant of the Lord. I was hunting down the servants of the Lord.” That’s what he did. He hunted down Christians. He had them executed. And now, that guy who is hunting down Jesus’ followers and executing His followers, now, he is a servant of the same Jesus that he himself persecuted. And he recognizes that’s kindness, that’s grace, but he’s also taking hold of it, he’s embracing it, he’s recognizing that’s his identity. He’s a servant. And it’s not just true of Paul. It’s true of every one of us. We have to come to groups with that.

If you have been saved by grace, hear me, if you have been saved by grace, you are called to be a servant of grace, not just a sponge that soaks, but God wants to, again, the image is weird, but God wants to squeeze you out. And He’ll keep filling you up but He expects it to go out. If you’ve been saved by grace, you have been called to be a servant of grace. It’s not just for pastors. It’s not just for missionaries. It’s not just for people with bible college degrees or seminary degrees. It’s not just people who spend a lot of time in church and they learned the ropes. It’s not just people who know the word of God really well. It’s not for people who spend a lot of time in bible studies. It’s not for a lot of people who’ve achieved maturity in Christ. No, no, no.

If you have been saved by grace, you are called to be a servant of grace. The moment that you come to a saving relationship with God through faith in Jesus, at that moment, you become not only saved, you also become a servant of the same gospel that saved you. And it’s in the embrace of our role, of our identity as servants of the gospel that we begin to find the power. Do you see what Paul says? He says, “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of His power.”

Now, what Paul recognizes is not just the power of God that enabled him to become a servant of grace, it is the power of God that enables him to continue as a servant of grace. What, really, Paul is saying is this. When we embrace our identity as servants of the gospel, we are empowered by God. That question, “But how could I possibly give God a return on this investment of grace?” We do it through His power and we achieve His power. We find His power available to us when we embrace our identity as servants of the gospel.

You know, in our country, every now and then, I’ll hear somebody tell me that they’ve been persecuted because of their faith. And sometimes, there’s some real stories but sometimes, more often, I hear stories like this, and this is the actual stories I’ve heard. Had a guy tell me a couple of years ago, you know, “I wear a Christian t-shirt and somebody made fun of me, but, you know, it’s okay. We can expect persecution for our faith.” And I was like...I mean, “Yeah, I guess that’s persecution.”

And it is but...I have a friend in Pakistan who's a pastor of a Christian church, and most of his congregation lived in one community. And I say, “lived,” because last year, the Government of Pakistan demolished the neighborhood claiming they're getting ready for a highway. The highway hasn’t begun yet. Nobody is quite sure how the highway can possibly manage to go through this particular community. But here’s the interesting coincidence. Ninety-eight percent of the residents of this particular community were Christians. They’re all homeless. That’s persecution.

We have friends who if they want to invite somebody to church, they’re potentially risking their lives, at the very least, their liberties. They could be in jail, if not killed, for just inviting somebody to come to church with them. And I hear that, and I’ll be honest. I feel a little ashamed because I’m not nearly that bold. I don’t live with nearly that kind of power and yet, I don’t have nearly those kinds of obstacles in front of me.

I mean, Christmas is coming up and we’re talking as a staff about, you know, how we can make it easy for people to invite unchurched neighbors and friends to come to church. And I’ll be honest. We’re having this conversation, there’s part of me
thinking, “Yeah, I’m gonna have to invite my neighbor to come to church with me. What if he thinks I’m weird?” You’re like, “You are.” And this is true and he probably already knows that.

But do you understand like when I think about like just the simple step of inviting one of my neighbors to come to church, I find myself going, “Uh, I don’t...that’s uncomfortable and it’s weird.” And then I realize I’ve got brothers and sisters around the world that, not only invite people to come to church but they share the gospel on the streets knowing full well that they could die for that, and yet, they live with more power. They live with more boldness and more courage than I do when I have so little aligned against me.

What’s the difference? What gives them the power? And I think the answer is this. I can tell you from personal experience and conversations, they have embraced their identity as servants of the gospel, not just recipients of it but as servants of it. They have not just received grace, they are givers of grace. They’re not just receivers of good news, they are givers of good news. And in that embrace of their identity as servants of the gospel, they have found themselves empowered to do what otherwise would not be possible.

And so if you’re hearing, you’re thinking, “I just don’t know how I can be a servant of grace. I don’t know how I can give God a return on the investment of grace that He’s put into me.” What you need just do is you need to take hold of your identity. You have not just been saved by grace, you become a servant of grace. And we have to get a hold of that. We have to grab a hold of our identity. We have to get to hold of the power that comes with it because there’s a high calling put before us.

Paul describes it this way. He says, he’s doing this in order, verse 9, “To make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery.” To make plain to everyone, he says our job as the people of God is to make plain to everyone that God is bringing together so He can show up in power. Our job is to make plain to everyone that God is in our midst. Our job is to make plain to everyone what’s happening here cannot be explained by human means but that God is present in power among us. That’s our job is to make plain to everyone that that’s happening. And I gotta ask the question, do you think that it’s plain to everyone that God is in our midst and power? I’m not so sure it is.

Do you know that there are 33,000, 33,000 distinct denominations of Christians in this country. Just sit with that for a second. There are 33,000 denominations, not churches, denominations of churches, 33,000. What’s really interesting is that the vast majority of those have almost identical doctrine. They’ve almost identical beliefs. I mean, there are some that have some different beliefs, but the vast majority of those 33,000 believe almost the same thing as all of the other 33,000. So why do we have divisions? Because we’re not good at bending, we’re not good at bending. We’re stiff, and we’re stubborn, and we keep putting up walls, where Jesus is tearing it down. We put up walls as fast as Jesus tears them down.

It’s about to get really uncomfortable for a second so just take a deep breath, and it’s gonna be uncomfortable for everybody, some of you for different reasons. But last week, as we unpack the passage where it’s very clear that God’s bringing together, that in His flesh, Jesus has destroyed the barriers of hostility, and we talked about the fact that, you know, we don’t always live that way. I mean, not only the way of our 33,000 denomination that the rest of the world can see, so it’s not plain to them that God is here in power, but even inside our churches, we have those kinds of walls going up. We have those kinds of barriers get built.

And I shared that one of the barriers that we continue to allow up is the very barrier that Jesus destroyed, the barrier of race. Jesus destroyed the barrier between Jews and Gentiles. He got rid of it and yet, in our churches, we keep putting up barriers of race. And I’ve said that last week and I think that set the stage for some people to come and talk to me. And I had several conversations with people and I’m just gonna share a couple of them with you. But I had a couple of conversations that I’ll share with you right now where people said, “Yeah, that barrier of race, it’s alive right here.” And I don’t mean in Colorado, I mean here at my Mission Hills.
I had a woman tell me that she was told by somebody in this congregation, “You’re not welcome here. You don’t belong here. You’re not one of us,” because of the color of her skin. And I pray to God that she was horrified by that as I am. But she was told that and it was not very long ago. I talked to another guy. He’s a student of mine at the seminary, and we were meeting to talk about something else, and he said, you know, “Oh, it’s interesting. I’ve never been in this part of Mission Hills.” I said, “Oh, so you go to Mission Hills?” He said, “Well, we used to.” Talked to me about that and he said, “I mean, it’s a good church. It’s just that I’ve been here about four months and I realized that nobody had ever said hi to me except for the people wearing the vests. Nobody else had ever reached out to me. Nobody ever...I didn’t really feel welcome.” Also, he wasn’t white.

And I hope to God, and I don’t mean that flippanly, I mean, I found myself literally praying to God that that was just a coincidence. But I heard enough other stories this week to go, “Ah, it’s not...you know what, there’s racism. It’s alive and it’s well right here.” And I hope that you’re as horrified by that as I am. And the chances are that 99.9% of you are absolutely, maybe 100% is horrified as I am that that kind of thing could happen here. Jesus died to make a raceless people of God. That is the church. The church is one people of God made up from many. We are a raceless people but we’re not living that way, apparently.

And I know, you’re horrified and I’m delighted that you’re horrified, but here’s the thing. Even if you are not perpetuating the walls, you may not be doing the work that you need to be doing to break them down. You may need to bend. You may need to do something active to communicate, to make plain to everyone, those walls don’t exist here. You may need to go out of your comfort zone. You may need to do something above and beyond anything you’ve ever known.

Here’s the thing. It’s never gonna be plain to everyone that God is at work here destroying barriers. It’s never gonna be plain to everyone until anyone who calls this their church home takes ownership of making sure that everyone who walks in these doors feels welcome here, whether that’s based on race, the way they’re dressed, the way their bodies are tattooed or not. Whatever those barriers are, unless anyone who calls this church home and says, “It’s my responsibility. It’s not the greeters.” Listen, we have a fantastic greeter team. They do an amazing job. I’m so grateful for them. But they can’t do it. The job of making people feel welcome here is the job of everyone who calls this our church home. And until anyone who calls this our church home embraces that, embraces our identity of servants of grace, servants of the gospel, it’s not going to be plain to everyone.

And when Paul says everyone by the way, he means everyone with a capital E. Literally, he doesn’t even say everyone. Literally, what he says is to all. He says this, verse 10, “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” His intent was that now, through the church, the wisdom of God to be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. And if you’ve been following along in this series the last few weeks, you may remember that I said that that language, “The rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,” in the context of Ephesians, that’s the language to talk about Satan and demonic forces.

And so what Paul says here is basically this, that the church is God’s victory announcement to Satan and his demons. The church is not just making it plain to everyone, meaning, every other human being, the church is making it plain even to the spiritual powers that God has one, that God has broken the barriers, that God has brought together what the devil tried to take apart. The church is God’s victory announcement to Satan and his demons, and you wanna, “Okay, why does He call it wisdom?” Because here’s the thing, because God is wise. Wisdom means the ability to accomplish what you desire to do. God’s wisdom is demonstrated in this. I mean, think about this for a minute, the crucifixion. Try to imagine what the crucifixion looked like from Satan’s perspective. Don’t you think it looked like a victory?

We killed the Messiah. We stirred up trouble to the point that they actually crucified the Son of God. Nailed it. I think she didn’t mean that as a pun but it’s done. We won. We won. Except that three days later, the news didn’t look so good for Satan, did it? Three days later, He’s risen from the dead. Three days later, their victory fell apart. Three days later, not only had they not killed the Messiah permanently, but His death took away the sins of mankind. His death eliminated the consequences for our sin so there was no longer a barrier between us and God. So what they thought they had done by driving a new wedge, it actually
allowed human beings to come into the presence of God, the Father Himself.

And Jesus, we saw last week, in His flesh, He destroyed the barrier of hostility between each other, between the different races, between the different peoples. And so in the person of Jesus, He brings together a church, one raceless people. The crucifixion took people to God and they brought people together, the exact opposite of what Satan was looking to do, and that's the wisdom of God. What God wanted to do is bring together so that He could show up through us in power. He accomplished it through what looked like a defeat. That's how wise God is. Even those things that looked like they're opposing God's will become the very thing that He uses to accomplish it.

But here's the thing. You understand what Paul is saying that the church is God's announcement of victory, not just to the world but even to spiritual forces and the heavenly realms. That's kinda cool but it's a little intimidating, too, because what it means is this, that the unity of the church, the togetherness of the church is God's victory announcement to Satan. If that's true, then it means that there are cosmic implications for how we conduct ourselves as His church. Do you hear me? This call to unity, this call to be welcoming, this call to communicate plainly, there are no barriers here, that in Christ, we are all one. The call to live that way has cosmic implications. It's not an option. It's not one thing that we could do. It's not one possible way the church could be. It's the way the people of God have to define themselves at its core.

We are one. The problem is we don't live like that. It's hard because we don't bend. We got our stuff, we got our preferences, we got our comfort zones, we got all that stuff, and so we stay like this. We don't bend. And it's hard, and I understand that it's hard because the world doesn't teach us to live like this. The world teaches us to live like this. The impulse of the world is towards fragmentation. It's towards separation. It's not towards togetherness. And so we got the world aligned against us. Our personal habits don't lead us to bend so that we can come together. Our personal habits lead us to dig our heels in, to stiffen our backs. And we remain separate.

So how in the world do we come together? Well, Paul answers that in verse 12, I think. He says this. He says, “In Him,” that is in Jesus, “In Jesus and through faith in Jesus, we may approach God with freedom and confidence.” In Christ, we can approach God. And that language, it's ancient language that was used to talk about coming before a king. And you went before a king not to go, “Hey, how are you doing?” You went before a king to ask for something. And then that language suggested what Paul is saying as, “In Jesus, we can go before God and we can request something that we need.” And he says, “You can do it without fear. You can do it with freedom. And you can do it with confidence,” knowing that God doesn’t watch our request. He doesn’t watch our entry into the throne. He doesn’t look at us coming to ask for what we need and go, “All right, what do you want now?”

But, no, God has His arms wide. He goes, “Yes, are you ready to ask for it? Are you ready, finally? I’m ready to give it to you. What do you need?” And in the context, what we’re supposed to be asking for is the strength to bend, the strength to set aside ourselves, the strength to do whatever we need to do to bend and to come together as the people of God in such a way that it will be plain to all the world that God is in our midst in power. That’s what He says we can come and we can ask for. We know He wants to give it. I mean, if you think about Jesus himself, He’s the great bender. He’s full of glory and perfection and honor and all of those things where He’s right in His due.

He had a right to be recognized as the King of the universe. He had a right to have everybody recognized who He was and bow down before Him. But what did He do? He got born in a barn. He humbled Himself. He set aside His glory and He was willing to live among us where most people didn’t recognize who He is. Understand, we’re talking about the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. He had every right to be recognized for all of His glory and His majesty, and He bends and He set it all aside. He said, “I don’t need that.” And He described this ministry this way. He said, “The Son of Man,” he say His favorite title for Himself, he said, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,” to give His life as a ransom for many. He bent.

He set aside Himself. He set aside His rights. He set aside all of that in order to bring us to Him, in order to bring us to the Father. And so we know that this is God’s heartbeat. And so we know that when we come to God, He will give us what we need
to be able to bend so that we can come together. He’ll give us what we need to be able to move past our prejudices and our preferences and our comfort zones. In other words, really, what Paul says is this, “Faith in Jesus gives us the power to bend if we’ll just ask for it.”

So I ask you this. It’s a question I’ve been asking myself a lot for the last couple of weeks as I’ve been wrestling through this. First question is just this, where am I struggling most to bend? Where do I find myself stiffest? Where do I find myself most of my heels dug in? And I’m struggling to bend to be a servant of grace, a servant of the gospel. And maybe that’s in your family, maybe it’s in your marriage, maybe it’s your parents, maybe it’s at work, maybe it’s with your neighbors, maybe it’s here in the church. Are you an agent of grace, an agent of unity? Are you struggling to bend? Where are you most struggling to bend? Ask God and He will give you the power to bend, and in the power to bend, the power to come together.

And the second question is just this, where is God calling me to offer Him a return on His investment of grace? Remember, God doesn’t just give grace, He invests it. Grace is not just been given to you, it’s been invested in you. Where is God calling you to offer Him a return on His investment of kindness in you? Where is He calling on you to pour out grace, to pour out kindness?

Actually, would you pray with me? Let’s just ask God together to speak to us. God, would you cause your Holy Spirit to move in us in such a way that we become aware right now of places that we are not willing to bend but we should be. Show us where we’re struggling to bend and so come together. And thank You for Your investment of grace in us. Would You speak to us now about where we’re called to be agents of grace, servants of the gospel, servants of grace, to offer You a return on Your investment, to pour out kindness into others, to pour out good news into others, as You’ve invested that kindness, that goodness in us. Reveal us the ways that You’re calling us to do that right now. Right now, begin stirring up in our hearts. Lord, as we leave this place, continue to stir that question in us. Bring us together. Show up through us in power and give us the power to bend together. Amen.

This is our global experience weekend. And one of the ways that God might lead you today to be a servant of the gospel, servant of grace is to get involved in the international ministry of this church. We’re doing incredible things to the power of God as He’s raised us up to cross over barriers and take the gospel in all the corners of the world. And so as you wrestle with the question, how is God calling me to be a servant of grace, it may be that as you watch this video, God speaks to you about a particular thing He’s calling you to do. So I encourage you to direct your attention to the screen.

Man: Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Now, why do we do this? A, because Jesus told us to, and, B, there are billions of people who live in this world without the hope that we have in Jesus. Billions, and it’s not just hope in Jesus that they live without. For many, they live without hope, period. As Americans, we tend to think of slavery as a dark period in our history, something that at Lincoln settled. But you know what’s unsettled? Slavery today, today. Right now, in India, slavery is alive. People owned by other people, whose lives are hopeless, meaningless, godless. Well, most of us couldn’t care less. Our partners in India are literally freeing slaves. They’re taking women and children who have been abused, neglected, and abandoned. They’ve given them skills training, given them jobs, given them housing, given them hope, given them hope in Jesus.

You can be a part of freeing people from slavery. You can go. Go to India, go play with kids, go build housing, go love people, and go share the gospel. You can send. Be part of God’s transforming story in India by sending someone to go. You can pray. Pray about going, pray about sending, pray for those going, pray for people to be rich with the hope of Jesus. Go, send, pray. Checkout the lobby to find ways that you can go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.