Craig // I sincerely hope that you are coming in this New Year full of hope and expectation. I hope this first week has been a good start. I’m gonna be honest, this first week has been a little hard for me. Some of the reasons many of you will know, some of you, won’t but 2017 ended, in a way that has kind of spilled over into 2018, and then that may be true for you as well. On Christmas Eve, Eve December 23rd, as we were starting services here at the Littleton Campus, my beloved assistant Judy, who I do not know how I would do, what I’d do without her, her husband Kelton died during our first service actually. And so I spent that evening kind of racing back and forth between doing services, and then being at the hospital to be with her and her family, and then coming back to do services.

And so, obviously, that was really hard. Kelton’s memorial is tomorrow. If you knew Kelton, we invite you to come out, 2 p.m. tomorrow here at Mission Hills. And it’s for Judy, and celebrate Kelton’s life. And then, of course, almost all of you probably know that our own deputy, Zach Parrish, was killed in the line of duty on New Year’s Eve day, just this past Sunday. And that has been just a whirlwind of caring for the family, the vigil here Monday night, the memorial service on Friday. Saturday right before I came here to start services for the weekend, actually, I conducted the internment ceremony for his earthly remains. And so that has just been kind of a whirlwind.

I’m gonna be honest. I’m a little bit wrung out, and maybe you are, too and maybe some of it is for those reasons, and maybe it’s for reasons that are entirely different, but they’re just as significant. Maybe 2017 was hard in a way that it’s spilled over into 2018, and maybe issues in your marriage or your job or your health or your family or whatever that you’re coming into this year and you’re kind of going, “Oh, here we go. It’s another one.” And my hope is that no matter how hard things have been that you’re not coming into this year broken and you’re not coming into this year hopeless. I know I’m not.

I’ve been reminded this past week that real hope, it doesn’t come from closing our eyes to ignore the difficult things we face, the hard things we face. Real hope comes from opening our eyes to see God working in the midst of them, right? That’s where real hope comes, not from closing our eyes to pain, not closing our eyes, to hard things, but from opening them to see God at the work in the midst of the hard things in spite of the hard things.

And I’d certainly seen lots of examples of that even this past week, right. You know, we had a crazy amount of stuff going on with the media during the vigil here at Mission Hills on Monday, and yet in the midst of that, my wife, who’s very graciously kind of handling the press and helping them get where they needed to be, she had a conversation with one of the reporters afterwards who said, “You know, I see a lot of these kinds of things in my line of work,” but she said, “But there was something different about this one. There’s hope in the midst of this,” and wondering like, “Why is that? What’s going on?” And Coletta was able to share the gospel with her. And so that’s a sort of a sighting of the one of things that God’s doing in the midst of this.

And just yesterday, as I spent some time with Gracie, Zach’s wife before the service, she was sharing some texts that she had been getting. She has been getting just a ton of texts from people all over the country, a lot of them forwarded by people that she knows. And one of them was from somebody who said, “You know, I have learned more about Jesus in the last week watching this televised stuff than I have in my entire life in my church.” And I have two thoughts about that. The first one is, “Okay, you need to find a better church.” But my second one was praise God, right, because that’s one of things that God is doing. I mean, He’s stirring hearts. I mean, we figured that between the vigil and the televised part of the memorial service, we actually had over 500,000 people who heard a lot about Jesus. If you were there for any of those pieces, that you’ve heard a lot about Jesus. And, you know, I’m so proud of Pastor Mike Romberger, my predecessor here. He shared the gospel in an incredibly clear way. And God’s using that in powerful ways.

Another text that Gracie got was from somebody said, “You know, having heard all this and seeing Zach’s faith, and seeing your faith, and seeing the way that your church has come to surround you to support you, has made me realize for the first time in my entire life, I think I might need to find out what this church thing is all about. And then you start going to church.” So those are the kinds of things we see God doing in the midst of this.

And that’s what honestly, that’s what church should be, should be a place that we encounter God, not just teaching about God, but we actually encounter God through His people, and that’s what Mission Hills has been this past couple of weeks. And I’m so proud of this...
As I look back on 2017, there are so many causes for celebration for the ways that God has caused hope to spring up and to spread out. I mean just to talk about a couple of them. You know, just a couple weekends ago, we did Christmas Eve services, and we did 11 services between Littleton and Dove Valley Campus. And more than 9,100 people heard the good news of Jesus Christ through those services. Actually, that’s not quite accurate, because we actually live broadcasted the nine services from Littleton. So really we did 20 services, and there were another 3,700 people that watched from all over the world. So there were almost 13,000 people who heard about the hope that you and I have in Jesus Christ through just our Christmas services. How cool is that?

You know, in 2017, we did a lot of stuff, even right here, right around us for people in need through our Watchcare Ministry. We spent $310,000 helping 110 families right here in our local community who were in need of help with rent or utility bills or food or those kinds of things. This is a place for hope, it’s springing up, and it’s spreading out. Through the Life Center, Mission Hills actually was able to provide food for approximately 7,200 households last year, including 850 Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. We’ve been kind of collecting information from our global partners that we work with all over the world that we’re so deeply invested in, and we haven’t gotten all the data back.

Let me just share from just two of our partners, one of them in Rwanda and one of them in India. Just between those two, out of our 30 partners, 3,100 at-risk kids are being cared for on a daily basis. 29 nationals were trained up and sent out as church planters, and 25,000 people heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, just through 2 of our 30 partners in just this last year. That’s incredible. And, you know, right here in Littleton through the Imagine Initiative and through your generosity in that, we were able to build a new ministry facility for our partners in Poland. We were able to adopt the Mission Hills Dove Valley Campus. We were able to launch the Mission Hills En Español Campus in just a couple of months, right here, and able to make some joy, significant changes to our facility here.

I was reminded on Christmas Eve, you know, we had this goal that we would not have anybody in overflow, we failed, anybody here in overflow on Christmas Eve? And we’re sorry for that. We just tried so hard, but we had one service still, where had 1,000 people in overflow, in spite of doing all those services. And maybe next year with the expansion in this room, we’ll be able to keep that from happening. But God is just doing incredible things here and He’s allowing us to be an epicenter of hope with the good news of Jesus springs up and it spreads out from this place, which brings me to kind of a fun announcement.

I think you’re gonna find it fun, and that is that our communications team has spent most of 2017 working on an important project. We’ve asked them to begin thinking about what does it look like for us to be the church as we look to the future. We understand that the church is supposed to be outward-facing, that we’re supposed to be looking to the world because that’s why God has us here. We believe that God has called the church to be the way that he holds up the light of the Gospel for all the world to see, that’s what the church is, the church is the way that God holds up the light of the Gospel for the world to see.

And so we’re supposed to be missional. We’re supposed to be outward-facing. We’re supposed to be looking to the world that doesn’t know Jesus. We are supposed to be His hands, His feet, His voice to the loss, the hurting, the broken. And as we’ve been talking about what does it look like to do that and as the world keeps changing, we’ve decided it’s time to make some changes. I love the way the silence always falls every service so far. And some of you I know you’re like, “Oh my, gosh, you know, I’ve been going to Mission Hills for years and years. In the last few years, it seems like things are changing constantly.” And others you’re like, “I love it. Let’s just do it,” but everybody’s sort of like, “What, what are you talking about?” Well, let me tell you what we’re not gonna be changing just so we don’t have to worry about some important things.

We’re not gonna be changing our vision. Mission Hills exists for the purpose of Transforming Lives Period. That’s our vision. It’s why we exist. That’s why we’ll always exist, to partner with God in His work of bringing hope to those who need hope, to bring light to those who are in the dark, to bring salvation to those who are lost that God’s gonna use us that way. So we’re still gonna be about Transforming Lives Period. And we’re not gonna be changing radically the way we do that we realize that we do that through worship, through evangelism, and through discipleship, and we’re not gonna be changing the ways that we do that apart from realizing that we need to get better at discipleship, we need to get better at this, this pathway, for people to become more like Jesus and join Him on His mission. So we’re working hard on that.

But other than that, you’re not gonna see a lot of changes in the way we do things. Okay, so what are we changing? Some of you already picked up on it. And some of you are like, “Wait, what?” Actually, we’re gonna be changing something that we’ve changed several times over our 75-year history as a church once you check out this video.
Craig: That’s right. We’re changing our logo. Did you catch any of those historical logos? They were showing me logos that Mission Hills has used over the years and then some of them I’m like, “Woo, interesting,” you know. And honestly, you may feel like, “You know, okay, changing the logo, changing the color scheme, is that really significant, is that bare enough?” We think it does. And here’s why. What we’re doing is we’re changing some elements of our sort of our visual identity so that we can better communicate who we are as a church to the world because we wanna be outward-facing.

You know, one of the things that we’re doing as part of that is we’re kind of changing our tagline. For a while, our tagline as a church has been the same thing as our vision statement, which is Transforming Lives Period. And what we realize is that’s good language but it’s insider language. If you go to church if you’ve been part of a church for a long time Transforming Lives Period sort of, make sense to you, you get that. But if you haven’t been part of a church, that’s a little bit harder language to really get a handle on.

And so what we’re gonna do is we’re gonna translate that vision into a tagline as we’re outward-facing. And that tagline is Real. Messy. New. We wanna communicate to people, “Listen, we’re real people. We’re not full of fake smiles and pretend lives. We’re real, and because of that, it’s okay if your life is messy. Our lives are messy. God doesn’t mind your mess. That’s why He came in the person of Jesus Christ, right, because He didn’t mind our mess. And we don’t mind your mess, and so you’re welcome here.” But at the same time, we also realized that while God didn’t mind our mess that didn’t keep Him from us, He came to change it. He came to bring new life, to bring new health, and to bring growth, to bring hope. And so, Real. Messy. New. is the way we’re gonna kind of translate our vision statement for the world.

And the important thing and the reason that I’m sharing this with you, is I want you to be part of this. The church is not what I do on the weekends. The church is not the programs that we do throughout the week or on the weekends. The church is the people of God engaged in the Mission of God. That’s what the church is. It’s the people of God engaged in the Mission of God, which is carrying this good news of hope to a world, that’s desperately needing it. And so what I’m gonna ask you to do is I’m gonna ask you to ask the Lord like, “What’s my role in this? How is it that I’m supposed to help people understand that this is a place where we’re real and it’s okay to be messy and things are new? This is a place where transforming lives happen?” because it happens through your work. It happens through your ministries in this place but also as we spread out from this place. We need to do this together or it’s not gonna get done. So would you join me in prayer as we commit this New Year and this new phase of ministry for our church?

God, it is a crazy thing to me that You not only allow us to be part of what You’re doing in the world, but You call us to it. You invite us to it. You want us to be part of it. Lord, would You help us to do that well that we commit 2018 and the years beyond to You and ask that You would use us to be an epicenter of hope, a place where hope springs up and spreads out into the world. And when I say us, Lord, I don’t just mean the organization of Mission Hills. I mean each brother and sister in Christ who calls this place home. Would you allow each of us to be agents of hope in the world, to be light in the darkness? We commit this year to You for Your glory and for Your people’s good, in Jesus name, Amen.

One more new thing to talk about, and that is today, we’re launching a new series. And I’m really excited about this series because I get to talk about my favorite subject. I don’t know about you. But if I’m gonna be honest, I’m gonna tell you, I’m not a Christian because I love the church, I mean, I do, I love the church most days. But if the church is all their word of this Christianity thing, I don’t think I would have signed up. And I’m not a Christian because I love other Christians so much I do most of them, most of the time. But if it were just other Christians, I don’t think I would have signed up.

I’m a Christian because I love Jesus. I’m fascinated by Jesus. I’m captivated by Him. I always have been. And as a pastor, it is my greatest joy to be able to help people see Jesus clearly, to become like Him and to join Him in His mission in the world. That’s why I do what I do. And so I’m really excited about this series. We’re gonna be going verse by verse through section of the Gospel of John, where we focus almost exclusively on Jesus for the next several months, all the way up to Easter. And I’m really excited about that. I hope you are too.

If you have a Bible or if you can grab a hold of one in some way, I encourage you to do that and join me in John chapter 7. And while you’re finding your way there, let me explain why it is we’re jumping in, in John 7. See, when Jesus came on the scene, He attracted an awful lot of attention. And at first, everybody was pretty happy with Him because it was primarily about what He was able to do. They were attracted to His teaching. They were attracted to His miracles. They were attracted to His healings. But Jesus never allowed people to just focus on what He was able to do. He always insisted that people wrestle with who He claimed to be.

Video //
You stay the same through the ages
Your love never changes
Because I know that you love me
Your love never fails
And on at that point, people began to experience some division about Jesus. Is He really who He claims to be? Is He not who He claims to be? And in John chapter 7, we’re gonna encounter one of those claims that I think was a pivotal moment in Jesus’ life. It really kind of cemented His course to the cross. It really became one of the things that God used to take Him to the cross where He was executed because not everybody responded well to what He had to say here.

And the other reason that we’re joining John here in chapter 7 is that as we move on from this claim, we’re gonna see an increasing polarization as people respond to Jesus in one or two very different ways. And as we walk through this verse by verse, we’re gonna find ourselves at His entry into Jerusalem where He was crucified on Palm Sunday just in time for Easter.

We’re gonna join John 7:37, where John says this, “On the last and the greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and He said in a loud voice, ‘Anyone who was thirsty, come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me as scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow out from within them.’” Now, that may not seem like a really controversial claim. It may not seem like a really radical thing. It might not seem like the kind of thing that would really kind of set Jesus on the course, to execution. But we need to probably unpack a couple of background things that will help us to recognize how radical what Jesus said here really was.

One of those background things is just to kind of come to grips with the fact that Jesus shouldn’t have been saying anything at this moment at all. He really should have been trying to keep a low profile. And I say that because in John 7:1, if you just wanna flip back a little bit, we’re told that after this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill Him. So Jesus is already on their radar. He’s already attracted their animosity.

And in verse 11 in chapter 7, we’re told, “Now, at this festival, the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and they were asking, ‘Where is He?’” And so there’s this sort of heightened attention that has gathered around Jesus. People are on the lookout for Jesus, and not everybody is happy about Jesus. And for that reason what we expect Jesus to do at this moment is to keep a low profile to avoid conflict, but rather than avoiding conflict, Jesus is inviting it, right?

He’s making a claim about Himself and he’s doing it in a loud voice. And that’s what John says, in a loud voice. Literally, what it says as He cried out. In other words He kind of stops traffic, He did it in such a way that everybody had to turn on and pay attention so He’s not avoiding conflict, He’s inviting conflict, and He’s inviting conflict around three things. Jesus is inviting conflict around who He is, what He can do, and who He will do it for, who He is, what He can do, and who He will do it for. Let’s talk a little about that last one first, but who He will do it for.

John tells us that this announcement came during the last and the greatest day of the festival. Okay, which festival? And the answer is it was the Festival of Tabernacles. Sometimes you’ll hear it referred to as the Feast of Tents or Booths. And it was a Jewish celebration that took place in the fall. It was a harvest festival. There was a celebration of the time that God had set His people Israel free from Egypt and sent and sent them to the Promise Land. But in the meantime, as they traveled to the Promised Land through the desert, they lived in tents. That’s why it’s called the Festival of Tents.

And God provided and food fell from the sky and then water burst from the rocks. And so this was a celebration of God’s provision for them while they were in the desert. But what’s unique about this festival, what makes this festival different than all of the other Jewish festivals that took place throughout the year is this is the only festival, in which God explicitly told them, “Invite the Gentiles to go to Jerusalem for the festival with you. Invite the non-Jewish people to go and to be part of this celebration.” A couple different times in The Old Testament, God said, “When you go to Jerusalem to celebrate this festival, you’re to bring your non-Jewish acquaintances, they’re supposed to be part of it,” which means, that when Jesus stood up and he said, “Everyone who is thirsty,” He was speaking to a mixed crowd of both Jewish people and non-Jewish people.

And that’s incredibly significant because what happens is when He said, “Come to me and drink,” Jesus was offering God’s blessing to anyone who was willing to come to Him. Jesus was offering God’s blessing to anyone who was willing to come for Him. And that was radical because the Jews of the 1st century were accustomed to the idea that, “Yes, God wants to bless His people. God wants to provide for their needs. God wants to satisfy their longings.” But He does that to us. He does that to those of us who are on this side of the line, and there was a very clear line. There was, the Jewish people. There was the non-Jewish people. And they say, “Yeah, God’s blessings come upon these people on this side of the line, but not so much to people on that side of the line.” And Jesus comes along and says, “No, God wants to bless anybody who will come to Me that that line doesn’t exist from God’s perspective.”

And that was radical in the 1st century. And honestly, I think it’s probably a little bit radical for us today, although we draw the line a little bit differently. But we all have this tendency to think that there’s a line to think, “You know, God’s blessing comes to people on that side of the line but not so much to people on that side of the line.” We draw the line differently, but we still draw the line. You know, maybe we go, “You know, God’s willing to bless those who go to church on a regular basis. God’s willing to pour his love out on those who grew up in a religious family or who have their lives together or at least have figured out how to make it look like they have their lives together. That’s where God’s love is attracted. That’s where God’s blessings tend to go, but not to the people on that other side.”
And honestly, you might think that no matter where you find yourself in relationship with the line. Sometimes people like the Jewish people tend to go, “You know, yeah, I mean God’s gonna love me. God’s gonna bless me but not those people, not those who are involved in those kinds of things.” But sometimes we feel the same way, and we find ourselves on this side of the line, right? We go, “Yeah, God wouldn’t love me. God wouldn’t bless me. My life’s a mess. I don’t have it together.” There’s I mean, yeah, those people sure. Of course, God loves them. Of course, God would bless them but not me.

And what Jesus says is, you’re both wrong. You’re both wrong. God’s blessing is available to everybody who will come to Jesus. And see, that’s the only caveat. It’s not which side of the line you’re on but whether or not you’re willing to come to Jesus, right? So what He does here is He makes another very radical claim, not just who it’s available to, but where it’s available. And what Jesus says is God’s blessing is available to everyone, but it is available through only one That’s what He says, right, “Whoever’s thirsty come to Me. Whoever’s thirsty come to Me.”

What He’s saying is yeah, God’s blessing is available to everyone, but it’s available through only One. It’s only available through Jesus. And that was a radical statement. That’s still a radical statement. That’s still probably the one statement that catches more people up than any other statement. I mean, yeah, there’s people who don’t believe in Jesus at all, there’s people who don’t believe in God at all. But there’s a whole bunch of people who go, “Yeah, I believe in Jesus. Yeah, He was a great man. He was a great teacher. He did miracles. Maybe He is the Son of God. I don’t know quite what that means.” But, yeah, I mean God can do incredible things through your faith in Jesus.

What, are you really telling me that it’s only through Jesus? You’re really telling me that hope, and healing, and purpose, and significant that it’s all available only through Jesus? I can’t quite get onboard with that. This idea, the exclusivity of Jesus’ claims is still a radical statement, every bit as much today as it was then. But that’s what Jesus claims. And we have to deal with Jesus on the basis of what He says about Himself. It’s available to everyone, but it’s available through only One through Jesus.

And what is this blessing? And what is this thing that He’s offering? Well, I mean, there’s basically two pieces to it. What Jesus says is He promises to quench our thirst and to make us thirst quenchers, to quench our thirst and to make us thirst quenchers. He says, “Come to me and you’re gonna have your thirst quenched.” But He also goes on and He says, “Rivers of living water will flow from within them,” not flow within them, okay? This isn’t language that says that it will fill you up so that you’ll always have what you need to be satisfied, no he says it will flow from within.

In Greek, there’s actually an outward in there. It will flow out from, they will pour out from there it will pour into the world. And so what He’s saying is not just, “I can satisfy your longings.” He’s saying, “I can take what I do in you, and I can use it to satisfy the longings of others. I can quench your thirst, but I can also make you a thirst quencher.” And, of course, we understand He’s not talking just about water, right? This is a metaphor, it’s a powerful metaphor.

I think in Colorado we, kind of, get this metaphor. We understand what it’s like to be thirsty, don’t we? I mean, it’s so dry here. And people that come to visit me from, you know, other places where there’s a little bit more of this thing they call humidity, they come here and they spend a couple hours and they’re like, “I can’t swallow, it’s so dry,” like we get that, right? We know what it’s like to be thirsty. People like in Florida, they will never quite understand what it’s like to be Colorado-thirsty, to be working hard and not to have taken much of a drink of anything, and then just you’re like, “You know, my tongue is kind of swollen. My mouth is just bone-dry, and even my lips are starting to kind of like crease up,” right? And you know how powerful it is when you’re feeling like that to take that drink of cold water, how incredibly satisfying that moment is.

That’s the metaphor that, that Jesus is using. He says, “Listen, I’m the One who can quench your thirst.” And, of course, He’s not talking about physical thirst. He’s talking about spiritual longing, spiritual thirst. I think first and foremost our spiritual thirst is a longing to know that we count, that we matter, that there’s something significant about us because from the moment that Adam and Eve sinned, from the moment that sin entered in the world and our relationship, our intimate relationship with God was broken, we have been in this kind of lost fog where there’s a part of us that goes, “I feel like, I feel like I matter. I feel like I should count. I feel like there should be something about me that’s significant, but I don’t know what that is. I don’t know how to grab hold of it.” And honestly, we live in a world today that increasingly tries to remove that sense of significance from us.

I think one of the greatest damages of our widespread teaching of naturalistic evolution of the idea that you and I are an accident is that it is stolen from our generations, from our children, the idea that we count, that we matter, that there’s purpose to us because what we tell them over and over again in our public schools is, “You’re an accident. You’re just a cosmic happenstance. There nothing about you that is of any real significance. There’s nothing about you that really matters.”

And so we continue to struggle because we have this innate sense but that I feel like I do matter and yet we’re told, “No, you don’t.” And so what we find ourselves doing is we settle for substitutes, where we seek to slake that thirst in other ways. And so, you know, we turn to money, to power, to fame, to Instagram likes, to sex, and relationships, and stuff, and then the absence of what’s real, we settle for what’s ridiculous, but it doesn’t satisfy, does it? It’s like if you can imagine that you’re Colorado-thirsty, and you’re so desperate
for a drink of water and somebody hands you a cup, and you take a drink, and you realize that it’s warm chocolate syrup. I mean, warm chocolate syrup kind of tastes good going down at times, but does it satisfy your thirst? No, if anything, it actually makes you thirstier. And that’s what we see around us every single day, people desperate for meaning and significance, drinking what can never satisfy, and yet Jesus says, “I can.”

Jesus offers to satisfy our longing that we are made on purpose and for a purpose, that we’re not an accident, that we were made for a reason, and that we were made to do things of significance. And that’s what He says, right? It’s not just that I’ll satisfy your thirst. He says, “But what I give you to satisfy your thirst will flow out from you. You’ll become a thirst quencher.” And so what really Jesus is doing is He’s multiplying our purpose by making us agents of hope. Jesus multiplies our sense of purpose by making us agents of this hope. He allows us to be His hands and His feet and to speak hope into the lives of those who are so desperate for it.

And I realize that seems like a big claim, but it’s possible because this water that He’s talking about is actually the Holy Spirit, verse 10. I’m sorry, verse 39, “By this, He meant the Spirit whom those who believed in Him were later to receive.” Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified. So we already know that He’s not talking about literal water. We know it’s a metaphor but here explains it. He says, “I’m talking about the Holy Spirit.” And we won’t get into all the theology of it here, but it’s important that we understand this.

The Holy Spirit is not just the power of God it is the person of God Himself. We recognize this mystery in Christianity that there’s one God, but there are three persons who comprise this one, God. There’s Father, Son and Spirit. Spirit is not just a force. He’s not just an impersonal energy. He is the person of God Himself. And what Jesus says is that when we come to Jesus, God’s Spirit takes up residence inside us. God’s Spirit takes up residence inside us. He begins to change me inside out. He doesn’t just satisfy our own thirst to know that we matter, but He begins to strengthen us. He begins to encourage us. He begins to grow us. He begins to lead us to ministries, to conversations, to relationships where we can make a difference, where this hope that we have pours out from us.

And it’s interesting to me how often Christians, I think, they shy away from being used by God in the ways that He wants to use us. In being a part of the things that God wants us to be part of because we say, “I don’t know what I would say in that situation. I don’t know what I would do in those circumstances. I don’t know the words. I don’t have the strength. I don’t have the courage. I don’t have the training.” I mean, we’ve got all these different things that we say, “I’ve never been able to do that. What we need to begin to understand is that if you’re a follower of the Lord Jesus, then the Holy Spirit has come and taken up residence in you. And when we say, “I’m not enough,” what we’re really saying is, “He’s not enough.” And that’s not cool because it’s wrong.

What we need to do is we need to begin holding onto this promise, and we need to say, “I am not enough, but the One who lives in me is more than enough.” That’s the phrase that we need to begin making our hearts cry in these circumstances that God leads us to get involved in. We say, “I’m not enough, but the One who lives in me is more than enough.” Yeah, I saw this in operation this week. You know, Gracie, Zach’s wife, she has been, man, she has been an incredible inspiration to an awful lot of people because of her strength. And so many people have texted or called or communicated through others, “Gracie, I’m just I’m so blown away by how strong you’ve been in the midst of this.”

And, you know, and I spent some time with her the other day and I told her, I said, “Gracie, I’m so proud of you. I’m so proud of this strength. And it’s not that you’re not grieving, and it’s not that you’re not broken and it’s not that you’re not feeling weak, but you have been incredibly strong.” But the thing is it’s not your strength it’s not her strength, and she understands this completely, it’s not her strength, it’s His strength. It’s His strength shining through her. And then she has been as surprised as anybody else about how much she’s been able to glorify the name of Jesus and all this terrible stuff that’s happened, how strong she’s been able to be in the midst of this. And she’s learned this reality that, “I am not enough but the One who lives in me is more enough.”

And I’ve heard from so many people that have said, “You know, I couldn’t do what she’s done. I couldn’t be that strong in that circumstance. I couldn’t be that faithful and that gracious. I couldn’t be that loving and free. I couldn’t be any of that in the circumstances.” And I wanna tell you today that if you follow the Lord Jesus, you’re wrong. You’re wrong. You could be all of those things because you are not enough, but the One who lives in you is more than enough. We have to begin learning to live in light of that because Jesus doesn’t want to just satisfy your longing He wants to use you to quench the thirst of those around you, those that He will put in your life this year.

And I know that sounds like an incredible claim. And if you feel like I struggle even to believe that, you’re not the only one. People have always responded to Jesus and His claims in this way. Verse 40 says, “On hearing His words, some of the people said, ‘Surely, this man is the prophet.’” And others said, “No, no, it’s more than that. He is the Messiah.” And still, others ask, “I don’t think so. How can that be? How can the Messiah come from Galilee?” Does not the scripture say the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived? And thus the people were divided because of Jesus. See, not everybody believed what Jesus had to say when He said it. When Jesus makes claims, His claims always create division. Yet people went, “I think he might be something special.” And others went, “I don’t think He is.” And you might go, “Okay, wait a minute. They’re wondering how He could be the Messiah because He didn’t come from Bethlehem, but He did.” Yeah, you know that. They didn’t know the Christmas story yet.
Jesus says, “He can satisfy our deepest longings, and He can make us agents of a transformative hope.” Jesus says to you, “I can solve your deepest needs. I can satisfy your deepest longings, but beyond that, I will multiply your purpose and I will make you an agent of a transformative hope.” My question to you as we begin 2018 is just this, do you believe that? Do you believe that claim? There’s only three possible answers. One answer is, “Yes, I do.” One answer is, “No, I don’t.” And the other one is, “I don’t know.”

And if you’re here today, and you’re saying, “Yes, yes, I believe that Jesus is who He says He is. I believe He can do what He says He can do. He can satisfy my deepest longings. He can make me an agent of transformative hope.” If your answer is, “Yes,” then my question to you as we begin 2018 is this: “Then am I living as though Jesus is enough?” not just in terms of, “Do I look to Him to satisfy my needs instead of hedging my bets with other stuff,” but also, “Do I trust that He can use me in powerful and significant ways to make a difference where I’m planted?” Do you believe that Jesus is enough? And are you living in light of that or maybe today your answer is “No, I don’t believe that.”

And I want you to hear me. That’s okay. I respect that. I expect the clarity of it. Honestly, I respect people who say, “No, I don’t believe that about Jesus.” I respect them more than I do those who say, “Yes, I do but they don’t live as though it’s true.” They don’t live in light of it. So if you’re here today, and you’re going, “No, I don’t.” I respect that. I want you to hear that. But I also want to challenge you with this. “Are you willing to stake your eternity on that answer?” Because Jesus is very clear all of eternity hinges on that answer.

He says as we’ll see later in this series, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to Father except through Me.” He says that all is about Me. He is the only One. It’s available to all. God’s blessing is available to all but it’s available through One. Now, if He’s wrong about that, fine, go and find your way. But if He’s right about it, if He’s right about it, and you turn from Him, you’ve missed everything.

So if your answer is, “No, I don’t believe that.” Then my challenge to you is, “Are you willing to stake your eternity on that answer?” And maybe right now you’re thinking, “Well, I was, but now I don’t know.” Well, that’s okay. That’s the third category. I’d rather you be there. I’d rather you be saying, “I don’t know what I think. I don’t know if I believe that about Jesus.” And if that’s your answer, if your answer is, “I don’t know,” then my challenge to you today is then, “What do I need to do to find out?” because everything hinges on that answer. What you think about Jesus is the most important thing about you, because, all of eternity, hangs in your response to Him.

So what do you need to do to find out? Do you need to join one of the Starting-Point Classes, that’s starting, a great environment to ask questions in a conversational setting? I can’t talk. Maybe you need to start coming to church on a regular basis. Not necessarily Mission Hills, we’d love to have you, of course, but any church, there are so many churches. The only thing I would say is, make sure you pick a church that actually talks enough about Jesus that studies the Bible. I mean, we need to make church a regular part of your life and figure out what you think about this Jesus, or maybe you need to start reading your Bible or to join a small group that’s studying the scripture.

But listen, if you don’t know what you think about Jesus, this is not a question you can just put on the back-burner. This is not a question you can go, “I’ll get to that eventually.” This is the most important question in the world, and it needs to be dealt with right now. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we come to you today at the start of 2018 and we come longing for hope. We come longing for meaning and significance. And we hear the words of Jesus that You could not only satisfy that longing, but You will make us agents of a transformative hope, and that is a big claim. But Lord, those of us who say, “Yes, I know who Jesus is.” Lord, we ask that You give us the strength to embrace that truth this year, to live in light of it, to live knowing that Jesus is enough. For those who are here and their answer is, “No,” Lord, I pray for doubt. I pray for uncertainty. I pray that you draw their attention’s back time and time again in the coming days, and weeks of this year to You, to make them realize, “I’m not so sure that the answer is no.” Lord, for those who are here or who come to that place of saying, “I don’t know.” Lord, I pray that You’d show yourself in a powerful, in a fresh way this year as You give them a glimpse of You, will allow them to fall in love with You, as I did so many years ago, Jesus, it is all about You. You are our hope, and in You, we place our trust, in Jesus name, Amen.