THE INTIMIDATION MONSTER

Mission Killers
Revelation 2:8-11 // Craig Smith
September 16, 2018

Craig // Hey, welcome to Mission Hills at all of our campuses, including Church Online. So glad you are with us for our second week of "Mission Killers." We are taking a look at all of those things that can take us off mission with Jesus because, the moment we are saying yes to Jesus, we are saying yes to following him on mission. You can’t follow Jesus without following him on mission. The problem is, the minute we say yes to follow Jesus on mission, the world starts sending out mission killers. T-1,000 terminators whose job is to take us off mission. Last week, we saw one of the biggest mission killers that a church can face. We might call it institutional amnesia which the tendency of a church to forget what makes it a church.

What we saw is that Jesus said a church is a church because it holds the light of the Gospel up for the world to see. That’s not one of the things we do as a church. It’s what makes us a church. It’s not one of the ministries, it’s the ministry that make a church a church, but we can forget that, and so there is a mission killer of institutional amnesia. Today we are going to look at another mission killer, one I’ll call an intimidation monster. I think it’s something that we all face as the followers of Jesus. Let’s just take a little survey. How many of you have ever been in a situation where -- like, the situation was perfect. You are like this would be a just like perfect place to share the Gospel or speak the truth about Jesus or share something the Bible says, but you were just a little bit hesitant to do it. How many of you have ever experienced that hesitation? Yeah, almost all of us, right? You faced the intimidation monster.

In some way the world basically says sit down and shut up. You don’t have a voice in this circumstance. You don’t want to speak up. That’s the intimidation monster. What Jesus has to say to some of his followers in a city called Smyrna is applicable to all of us. Why don’t you grab a Bible and make your way to Revelations 2:8. While you are doing that, I’m going to ask you to do something a little different, which is to take out your phone. Some of you already have it out because that’s how you are reading the Bible. That’s great. If not, I’m going to ask you to take your phone out. I’m not going to ask you to silence. What I am going to ask you to do is share what we are doing right now.

If you have our church app, the Mission Hills app, I would love for you to go to the app, find the Online Campus and there is a share button. I would love for you to share the live stream right now with people on your social media accounts. If you don’t have the Mission Hills app, we are going to pop the website, live.MissionHills.org. I would love for you to go and share that. Basically say, I’m at Mission Hills right now, listening to God’s word. The reason I’m asking you to do this right now is not to promote our church. It’s really not. The reason I’m asking you to do this is because some of you will be like, oh, that’s cool. Happy to do that, but a lot of us will go, I don’t know if I want to do that. There is some kind of hesitation to letting the world know, letting your circle of friends know that you are in church right now, that you are excited about what God is doing because there is an intimidation monster in your life.

I want us to push into that a little bit and ask the question, what is it that might cause you to hesitate? What is it that might cause you to hesitate? What is it that might cause you to hesitate? What is it that might cause you to hesitate? Again, I think we all face the intimidation monster, but he takes different shapes and sizes. So to the church at the city of Smyrna Jesus says this, to the angel of the church of Smyrna write -- and we’ll just stop there. If you were with us last week, you probably already caught this. If not, I want to be sure you are on the same page. Jesus does this with each of the seven churches that he writes to in the book of Revelation. Instead of writing to the church of a particular city, he writes to the angel of the church in that city. The reason he does that is the angel is a personification of the message of the church. The word angel in Greek means messenger.

What Jesus is doing is, he’s highlighting the idea that the Church exists to carry a message to the world. He’s reminding us of our mission. It’s not one of the things we do. It’s the very thing that makes us a church, and then he says this, these are the words of him who is First and the Last, who died and came to life again. One of the things that’s interesting, in all seven of these letters, Jesus identifies himself in unique ways. He uses different language to talk about himself. If we pay attention to what he says about himself for each church, we actually get an immediate insight into what the mission killer they were facing was, what was looking to take them off mission.

Last week, he identified himself to the church at Ephesus. He said, I’m the one that holds the seven stars, which we said are the seven angels, the seven messengers to the church. And then he said I’m the one who walks around among the lamp stands, which is the Church because the Church holds those messages up high, holds the light of the Gospel up high for the light of the world to see, but Jesus is the one who walks around to see if they are doing that. Are you actually acting like a lamp stand? Are you acting like the Church? As soon as he identifies himself that way, we could have already gone, oh, the mission killer that the church in Ephesus was facing was the institutional amnesia, forgetting what
Here to the church in Smyrna he says I am the one who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. And that immediately tells us a lot about the mission killer that the church in Smyrna was facing because both of those statements, they are kind of jabs at the city of Smyrna itself. Smyrna was a prominent city in the ancient world. It had a very long history, kind of had famous people that came out of it. They claimed -- I don’t know if it’s true or not, but they claimed they were the birthplace of Homer. Remember Homer? Not Simpson. Not Homer Simpson. Homer the poet? The guy who wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey. Anyone remember the Iliad and the Odyssey? Well they claimed that they were the city he was born in. I don’t know if that’s true, but they had the plaque up, right? Hometown of Homer.

They were famous. They were prominent. They were on a very important trade route, so a lot of money, a lot of wealth moved through the city of Smyrna. They were a very big, powerful city. They were just a very prominent city, and in fact, they were so proud of that, that the coins -- we have coins minted in Smyrna. What they say are, Smyrna, the first city of Asia. They were like, hey, we are kind of a big deal, so Jesus says to the people of the city of Smyrna, I am the one that is First and the Last. What he’s saying is, your city thinks you are first? That’s adorable. They are not the first. I’m first. And I’m the last. I have been around a lot longer. I’m a lot more prominent, and I’ll be around long after they are gone.

Let’s be realistic, how many of you have ever been to Smyrna? Yeah, not a lot of hands going up. You know why? Because it’s gone. It’s been gone for a really long time. How many of you have never heard of Smyrna except for right here? This is the first time you are hearing of it. Quick little test, how many of you have heard of Jesus? Jesus goes no, no, no. Your city is not first. I’m first. Much more prominent. I have been around much longer. I’ll be around much longer after they are gone, right? So what he says kind of to the Christians in Smyrna, hey, don’t be intimidated. I know your city says they are a big deal, but I’m a bigger deal in the exact way they think they are a big deal. Then he says this, I’m the one who died and came to life again.

That’s another jab at the city because several hundred years earlier, the city of Smyrna had been destroyed in a war. Then in 290 BC., it was rebuilt. They were really proud of that rebirth. In fact they called it -- guess what? They called it their resurrection. Jesus goes, you call that a resurrection? That’s adorable. You guys are so cute. He says, no, no, no. That’s not a resurrection. You call it a resurrection because all of your rocks got knocked down and somebody picked them up and stacked them on top of each other. You think that’s a resurrection? Yeah, I was dead. Not like mostly dead, right? A little “princess bride” there for some of you. You’re welcome. I was really dead three days in the grave and I came back to life. That’s a resurrection guys. What he says to the Christians there in the city of Smyrna, he says, I know your city says it’s a big deal, but I’m a bigger deal in exactly the way they think they are a big deal.

You understand what he’s doing. He’s talking smack, okay? He’s slapping down their slogans. Like, you know, the city of New York. New York is a big deal. It’s a very prominent city. The slowing are for New York is what? It’s the city that never sleeps. That’s how they say, we are a big deal. Maybe Jesus would identify himself to the Christians in New York, I’m the one whose eye never closes. Everything that makes your city a big deal, I’m a much bigger deal. This is important because being a Christian in a place like Smyrna was intimidating. What Jesus was trying to help them understand, is I know your city feels like a big deal, but don’t let them intimidate you. They are not a big deal. I’m a much bigger deal even in the ways they claim, but the thing is, I’m for you, I am not against you.. I’m behind you cheering you on, so don’t be intimidated.

The reality is, there are lots of things that intimidate us, right? There are lots of people around us that we tend to go, yeah, they are kind of a big deal. There are organizations and groups and all kinds of things that we think, they are kind of a big deal, and what happens is, that intimidates us into feeling like we need to sit down and shut up, like I don’t have a voice in this setting. Like maybe some of you, you work with scientists. Scientists, you know, they are really smart, right? Science is kind of a big deal in our culture. There is an intimidation factor there. Jesus goes, science is not that big of a deal. Science is not that big of a deal. You know the science? You know who invented that? I did. The people studying the stuff I invented, they are not a big deal. I’m a big deal. Maybe you are leaders or people with power and influence. They are big leaders. They are “L” leaders right. It makes you feel like you need to speak softly or not speak at all.

But Jesus goes, you understand that people are still writing and reading books about my leadership from 2,000 years ago. I was on Earth for three years, and yet people are still writing books about the leadership of Jesus. Yeah, you might be around big “L” leaders, but they are still learning from me. Don’t be intimidated. What Jesus is trying to help us understand is this, Jesus is a bigger deal than anything I’m intimidated by. Make sense? Jesus is a bigger deal than anything I’m intimidated by. This is important because we are all intimidated by something. I want you to think for a second, what do you find intimidating? What circumstance do you find yourself feeling like, I need to sit down and shut up. I don’t have a voice here because they are intimidating. He’s intimidating. She’s intimidating. These type of people. These type of situations. What is intimidating to you? Hear the words of Jesus to you. Jesus is a bigger deal than anything I’m intimidated by.

Let’s say that together. Think about the thing we are intimidated by and say this together. Jesus is a bigger deal than anything I’m intimidated by. So what he does then, he starts to push in and go, let’s talk specific examples because the intimidation monster can come in a lot of shapes and sizes, so he begins to push into specific ones which begins to give us insight in what it looks like to take hold of that truth that Jesus is a bigger deal than anything I’m intimidated by. He says, I know your afflictions and your poverty, but you are rich. He says to the church in Smyrna, I know your afflictions. That’s persecution. Persecution for their faith specifically. He says I know because of the persecution, you are poor.
Like you don’t have a lot of money. The persecution meant that they couldn’t get business licenses. They couldn’t buy and sell in the markets. They couldn’t get opportunities, so they found themselves poor. Like literally, poor. Which is intimidating, right? Like I don’t know what your life circumstances have been, but I have been in that place where I have realized that I don’t have a lot of money, and people around me do. That makes me feel like I have no voice in the situation. It’s intimidating. It makes you feel small, right? I remember years ago, I bought my first car that wasn’t a hand me down from somebody. Honestly, scraping the money together. We had to have the car. We had to scrape and been saving for a while. I was at the dealer, and we were looking at a used car, and I didn’t know if I was going to be able to make the down payment. We were negotiating back and forth. I was looking for extra quarters in my pocket to see if I could get it over the edge.

While I was doing that, there was a guy who walked in. He kind of pointed to a car, a bright, shiny new SUV, and the guy in the desk next to my salesman, he said what’s the price on that? The guy told him, and it was a big number and the guy said, okay. And he pulled out his checkbook and wrote a check for it. I remember just feeling like that small. Like I’m still looking for quarters. I had sent my wife out to the car to look for quarters at that point. That’s intimidating. Poverty can be intimidating, and it doesn’t even have to be abject or abjective levels of poverty. It’s a relative thing, right? How many of you have ever been around somebody that just had a lot more money than you? It’s intimidating, isn’t it? And it doesn’t even have to be money. There are a lot of things that the world says that matters. That’s important. That’s what you need, and when we lack what the world says is important, it’s intimidating.

It makes us feel like we need to sit down and shut up. Maybe it’s intelligence. Like there are people that are just smarter than us, right? I have some people in my life that are way smarter than I am, and it makes me feel like I don’t have anything to say in the situation. Maybe it’s education. They have more degrees than I do. Who am I to say anything about my faith in this situation? I just need to sit down and shut up. Maybe it’s position or influence or power, authority, influence; it’s popularity, right? Anything the world says that’s important, when we realize I don’t have as much as somebody, that’s an intimidation monster. But what does Jesus say to them?

I know your afflictions. I know your poverty, but you are what? You’re rich. He obviously doesn’t mean financial wealth. But what he’s saying is like I know the world says that stuff is important and you are low in that resource, but everything that really matters, you have it in abundance. In the end, I know you don’t have a lot of money, but you have joy in The Lord. I realize you don’t have a lot of money, but you have peace with God through your faith and what I did on the cross for you. No, you don’t have a lot of money, but you are rich in hope. No, you don’t have a lot of money, but you have meaning and significance. He says, yeah, you are a little short on what the world says matters, but you have an abundance of what matters most.

So you can’t let what you are lacking cause you to be silent about the Good News you have in abundance, so here is what he says we need to be able to do. We have to learn to be able to say to ourselves, I will not let what I lack keep me from sharing what I have in abundance. Let’s say it together. I will not let what I lack keep me from sharing what I have in abundance. We have an abundance of hope. We have an abundance of what matters most.

He goes on to say I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and they are not, but they are a synagogue of Satan. In Smyrna, there was a large Jewish community, a large ethnic Jewish community, and they were the most vocal opponents of the Christians. In fact what was happening, they were telling lies about the Christians and that was resulting in the persecution because people didn’t understand what Christians believed. But it was Jewish people who were spreading a lot of these lies. There is a tremendous irony in that, of course, because I’m going to let you guys in on a big theological secret here -- Jesus was Jewish. You know that? Jesus was Jewish. The 12 apostles, guess what? All Jewish.

All of the followers of Jesus for several years in the early church’s existence -- Jewish. Every one of them, so there is a tremendous irony here. At a certain point in history God called a man by the name of Abraham and he said, you are my guy. You are my first adopted child, and all of your descendants are going to be my people, and that’s what we call the Jewish people, the descendants of Abraham. He said you are God’s people. You are going to shine the light of God’s love to the world, and I’m going to bring redemption through you, and then redemption came in the person of Jesus Christ, and there was a split among the ethnic Jewish community. Some people who are born of Abraham, descended from Abraham, they looked at Jesus said you are the King we have been waiting for. We are the King’s people, and you are the King we have been waiting for, and they recognized Jesus as God’s Messiah, but there were other Jewish people who said we are the King’s people, but they didn’t recognize the King when he actually showed up. When he came to town, they didn’t recognize him for who he was.

That’s the group of people Jesus is talking about here. They are ethnically Jewish. They are descended from Abraham, but he says you are not really my people because you didn’t recognize me. Instead he said you are not my people, he says, in fact, you are a synagogue or a gathering place of what? What? Satan. We need to be really careful here because that’s really inflammatory language, and somehow over the years, some people have used that to justify anti-Semitism or prejudice against Jewish people. And that’s not what Jesus is getting at. There is an irony going on here. Because the word “satan,” literally in Hebrew, it means adversary.

It wasn’t originally used as a name for the devil. It was used as a description of him. They were describing his activities because what the devil did, he was the adversary of God. He was the enemy of God’s people. He was trying to thwart God’s purposes and plans, right? So they called him the adversary. What Jesus is saying here, you have a group of people that should have been my greatest advocates, but instead they are acting as my greatest adversaries because they were spreading lies. They were spreading falsehoods. They were gossiping. We don’t know what
the details are. We don't know what they were saying, but what we know is that it caused a lot of antagonism, a lot of persecution against the Christians.

Let's just be honest, if you have ever been in a situation where people are spreading lies about you, that's an intimidating place to be. How many of you have been the subject of false rumors, false gossip? It is an incredibly intimidating thing. It really has the power to say, I need to sit down and shut up. I need to fade away. Who am I to speak the truth of the Gospel or to say I have wisdom from God or Good News from Jesus in a world where people think these lies about me? It can be really intimidating. I have experienced it. I served at a church for 16 years with a senior pastor who is a good friend of mine. At the end of the 16 years, he resigned. He left pretty quickly, and because of that sort of quick departure, there were some people that began to say, you know what I think happened? Craig wanted his job, so Craig drove him away. Craig drove him out. 100% not true. I didn't even want the job. They asked me to be the interim pastor and I was like, I don't think so, but I ultimately did it because I felt God was leading me to it.

I knew it wasn't true. My friend knew it wasn't true. He never said anything like that, but other people were saying, yeah, I know what's true. What happened, I would get up to preach Sunday morning and I would know that there were people in that congregation who believed that I had driven the other senior pastor out of selfish motivates, and what I found was it got that much harder to speak with confidence and courage and boldness. It got harder to do what God was calling me to do knowing that, that rumor was out there. How about this? This is fun. There is a Yelp review about Mission Hills out there right now. I ran across it a few months ago. I wish I had not, but I did. The Yelp review said I used to love Mission Hills, but now, they are obsessed with money, and Craig is not approachable. Oh!

I think it's my height. I think that's what's happening. That's a knife in the heart because I try so hard to be out in the lobby and just being there. Nobody escorts me off of the stage. I don't have handlers just sitting around. You're laughing, but there are all kinds of churches, that's exactly what happens. I'm just not that guy. I'm like, how do you think I'm not approachable? Here's what it does, sometimes after the service, I'll be down here and I'll be praying with people and in the back of my mind, there's that review. I'm like, I have to get rid of this person and get out in the lobby and show people I really am approachable. The fear of that lie can keep me from doing what I know God's called me to do. Or the money thing. I have to preach about money occasionally. I can't lead you. I can't shepherd you. I can't unleash you to be missional followers of Jesus if I don't deal with the things that take us off mission, and money has a huge potential to take us off mission.

God's word speaks about it a lot, but now that I know that lie is out there, every time I come across a passage where it's there, I'm like, there's another passage we could do. There's so much good stuff, right? And if you have ever been the recipient of false rumors, you know how intimidating it can be. And how much it tells you, you need to sit down and shut up. I have no voice here, especially not about something like Jesus. Let me tell you what I learned. What God taught me in the midst of that? It really doesn't matter what other people think they know about me. What really matters is what Jesus knows about me. Listen to me, what Jesus knows about me is way more important than what others think they know about me.

So here's what we have to do. We have to say, I know Jesus know, so here's the thing, I will not let what others think they know about me keep me from doing what I know Jesus has called me to do. Amen? Let's say that together. I will not let what others think they know about me, keep me from doing what I know Jesus has called me to. Jesus has called me to share the good news of the Gospel. To speak the light and life of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter what people say about you at work or in your neighborhood. It doesn't matter what people think they know about you, we can't let that keep us from what we know Jesus has called us to.

So he says, do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer, which is always good to be told, right? What? I tell you the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days, and what Jesus is saying here is not anything new. He's really saying what he's been saying from the beginning, which is following Jesus; especially following Jesus on mission in the world is beginning to result in pushback. Jesus was always up front about this. John 16 he said in this world you will have trouble. Not you will might possibility. There's an outside chance that following me might generate -- no, he said in this world, you will have trouble. It's a done deal. I'm sorry, but it's a done deal.

So he's just telling the Church, hey, persecution is coming. It's coming for ten days. I think the significance of ten is that it's not a small number, but it's also not a huge number. He says, I'm not saying it's a momentary passing thing. In this world you will have trouble, but I want you to know, it's not going to go on forever. There is an end to it. There is a countdown clock on it. It might feel like it's a long time in the midst of it, but in reality, it's not that long of a time, so stay faithful he says. He says be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

I know it might seem like a lot of pushback in the meantime, but honestly, it's not going to go on that long, but if you are faithful, what I'm going to give you in return is life. He says kind of a hard thing for us to grasp. He says following me on mission might actually lead to death. That was true in Smyrna, and it's true in parts of the world today. I have a friend in Pakistan who pastors a church, and he has had members of his church killed because they are followers of Jesus. And even beyond that, a few years ago, a whole bunch of houses were demolished. The government came in and demolished a whole bunch of houses of his congregation, and they said, it's because we need to build a highway, but it's been three years, and there's not any sign of a highway being built anywhere, and it just so happens that the only houses that got demolished were the houses of Christians. Suspicious? Just a little bit, right?
Like, we have brothers and sisters in the world who face that kind of thing everyday. Most of us don’t experience persecution to that level, right? But even in the United States of America I have known people that were unable to get tenure. They were professors but they weren’t able to get tenured at university because they are on mission followers of Jesus. They were out spoken about who they believed in. I have known people who couldn’t get scholarships. They were clearly the most qualified. But, in the interview for that scholarship, they were up front about their faith in Jesus Christ, and they didn’t get it and it went to somebody who was obviously less qualified. People don’t get promotions because they are out spoken followers of Jesus. It happens. It may not be death, but the point is, persecution will come.

But what Jesus says, is, if you will remain on mission with me, what you will get in return is life, and it is life that is so full of joy and hope and peace and meaning and significance, that it’s going to make everything that the world says they can take away from you now, look like nothing. Here’s the thing, and this is hard for us to wrap our heads around. The reality is that you have put your faith in Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross for you. You have been forgiven of your sin, and you will spend an eternity with him. You are going to spend eternity of a life filled with joy and hope and purpose and meaning, which means like -- you are going to live forever, okay? Which means, let’s just make it really practical, like there’s a day when you are going to turn a billion years old. Think about that. Like I have no idea what size the cake will have to be to get all of those candles on it, but you and I, we are going to turn a billion, okay? Here’s what’s never going to happen. You are never going to turn a billion and go on for a while and go, you know what, Jesus? It’s been a good billion years, it has. This love and joy and peace and being with God, it’s really awesome, but the problem is Jesus, 1,782,413,112 years ago, I didn’t get a promotion because I was following you.

That’s never going to happen. It’s never going to happen. What the world can threaten to take away, it’s very short term compared to the joy of what God promises. That’s long term. What we have to begin to do, we have to begin to say to ourselves, I will not let the world’s short-term threats scare me into keeping God’s long-term promises to myself. Let’s say that together. I will not let the world’s short-term threats scare me into keeping God’s long-term promises to myself. Speaking of long-term promises, he says this, whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death. That second death sounds kind of ominous, and it is. Let’s be honest, it is. What he’s saying is there’s a first death and we are going to face it. I hope I’m not letting the cat out of the bag here, but you’re all going to die. Unless Jesus comes back, before that, life is invariably fatal.

That’s the first death. Our bodies die, and when our bodies die, we go before God and we are judged. The reality, this is kind of bad news, but the reality is God is going to look at every one of us and say, guilty. Christian, non-Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, believer, unbeliever, atheist, whatever, he’s going to go, guilty. You have fallen short of the glory of God. Guilty, you have committed sin. Guilty, you have done wrong. Guilty, you tried to go your own path. Guilty, you tried to be your own little “g” god. He’s going to say everyone is guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty. Every one of us will face that, but not everyone will get the same verdict. Those of us that put our faith in Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross for us, God will look at us and go, guilty, but forgiven. Guilty, but forgiven. Guilty, forgiven, and we’ll be drawn into that life that he’s promised.

We’ll be drawn into this eternal life of joy and meaning and significance and peace with God that goes on forever and ever and ever, but those who haven’t trusted in what Jesus has done for them, who have insisted on trying to do it their own, they’ll stand before God and declared guilty like everyone else, and then, they’ll be allowed to continue on the road that they have lived their whole lives on which is a road of their own choosing. The problem is when we live on the road of our own choosing, we go further and further from God, and God is the source of life. He’s the source of light. He’s the source of hope. He’s is source of peace, so as we are drawn further and further from Him, we go into a deeper and deeper death, and that is the second death that Jesus is talking about.

He says those who are on mission for me, those who trust in me, the second death is not an issue for them, but it is an issue for many people in the world. What we need to understand, that -- that is the horror from which you and I have hope. Do you hear me? That is the tragedy so many of the world is facing now, that is the tragedy for which you and I have the remedy and the Good News of Jesus Christ, and that is why we cannot be intimidated into keeping that Good News silent. That is why we can’t be intimidated into sitting down and shutting up and believing the intimidation monster that says you have no voice. We cannot be silenced. Our news is too good. It’s why we cannot -- We absolutely cannot let what we lack from sharing what we have in abundance. It’s why we cannot let what the world thinks they know about us, keep us from doing what we know God is calling us to do. It’s why we cannot, absolutely, positively no way no how, we cannot be allowed to be intimidated into silence.

Our news is too good. Listen to me, our news is too good to let anything intimidate us into keeping it for ourselves. Amen? It’s easy to say, but do you believe that? Our news is too good to let anything intimidate us into keeping it for ourselves. So what are we going to do about it? Each week of this series we have a challenge, okay? So here’s the challenge. If you direct your attention to the screen, our challenge is this, I want you to show your faith this week. I want you to share some concrete way to show your faith. Maybe it’s that you share a verse or your story on social media. Maybe you post a Bible verse in your locker or share your faith at your kid’s game, but I want you to take a step of going public with your faith.

Maybe when I asked at the beginning about posting, you were like, I’m intimidated by that. Maybe now you are going, I’m never going to be intimidated by that again because the news I have is too good to keep it to myself. What is that step going to be? I’m not saying you have to run out of here, find the nearest stranger and say, I need to talk to you about Jesus. I’m not saying you have to do that, but my challenge is to take a step of showing your faith in a public way this week. Maybe in a way that’s more public than you have ever done, and in that way you are joining Jesus on mission in the world. Let’s pray.
Jesus, as your followers, and all of our campuses right now, we pray, and first off, we just admit that we have experienced intimidation from the world. It’s taken lots of shapes and forms, but we have experienced intimidation. It’s kept us far too quiet about the Good News that we have for the world. Lord, we acknowledge that. We ask for your forgiveness. We ask for a fresh start. We ask that you would pour courage into us, pour compassion into us. Lord, would you give us the strength to pushback against the intimidation monsters in our lives that say, you have no voice, and to find our voice, Lord, because our news is too good to let it intimidate us into keeping it for ourselves. Lord, give us courage and give us clear direction about how exactly you want us to do that this week. In Jesus name, amen. If you would continue in an attitude of prayer, I’m going to ask, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, would you begin praying for the people around you, the people watching online right now, the people at all of our campuses who don’t know Jesus?

Because I believe right now on all of our campuses, I believe there are people who heard that news about the second death and honestly they are feeling fear. The reason you are feeling fear is because you are ready to say, I am guilty. I have done wrong. I have sinned. There is no question about that. You don’t have any struggle about admitting that you are guilty, and you know that verdict is coming, and you are afraid, and I don’t want you to experience any fear. I certainly don’t want you walking out of this place fearing that moment before God because the reality is that God loves you so much that He sent His own Son Jesus who lived a perfect life, he went to the cross in your place. He did it because of his love for you. All of the wrong things that give us that guilty verdict, he took all of them on himself. He paid for all of them. Not in a little part. Not in some, but all of it. He took all of the price of our sin. He paid it for himself. Three days later he rose from the dead and said I will give you forgiveness and new life with me.

If you are here today and you know that you have done wrong, and you know you have not trusted in what Jesus did, if you are ready to do that. If you are ready to experience that freedom and that hope that comes from putting your trust in him, would you just slip your hands up right now? I see those. That’s fantastic. If you are watching online, click the button below me. On Facebook live in the comment line, say I’m ready to say yes. If that’s you, this is what you say to Jesus right now in your heart. Say, Jesus, I have done wrong, and I’m sorry. I know I’m guilty, and I can’t fix it on my own. Jesus, thank you for loving me enough to die in my place. I believe you rose from the dead, and that you are offering me new life right now. I receive your new life. I receive forgiveness. I receive hope and joy and a relationship with you. Jesus, come into my life. I put my faith in you. I’m yours. From now and forever. Amen. Can we celebrate those that came into our family today?