

Open to 1 Peter. If you have one of our Bibles, it's page 1,014, I believe. If you don't have a Bible, there should be a black, hard copy one in the seatback in front of you. You're free to grab that. Keep it. It's our gift to you.

We're starting a series in Dallas out of 1 Peter that we're calling *Living in Light of Jesus' Return*. Over the next four weeks, we're going to kind of launch in this week in thinking about, meditating on, the return of Christ. Then we're going to talk about suffering and eldering and a few other things in the next few weeks to come. Our hope really is in this series that you would, I would, as a church family we would collectively together really have our affection and our attention set on the life to come, the life that's going to come when Jesus returns.

So our text today is going to be 1 Peter 1:1 through 5. Let me tell you what we're going to see in the text (three things). We're going to see the *people* of heaven. We're going to see the *guarantee* of heaven. Then we're going to see the *hope* of heaven. When we get to the hope of heaven, I'm just going to prepare you and warn you. We're going to hop over to Matthew 24, be there for just a second, and then we'll close out in Revelation 21. So *people* of heaven, *guarantee* of heaven, *hope* of heaven. Let me read our 1 Peter text and then pray over us.

**"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: may grace and peace be multiplied to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!**

**According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."**

Father, I just pray, and I ask again for your blessing over our time. I pray as we go back and we navigate our way back through this text in 1 Peter that the God who wrote it, the God who inspired it, would be awe-inspiring this morning and that you, by your grace and by your mercy, might open up religious eyes to see Jesus in this room today. We love you. In Christ's name I pray, amen.

Last week, I was in Houston visiting some family. I went out to play golf and ran into a guy I went to high school with. We played together. It was quite depressing. My boy, Tony, thought he was still in high school. So to have a 20-year reunion coming up and thinking, "I'm still in high school, still hanging out with the same dudes every Friday night," I just thought, "Man, this is weird/depressing. I don't know if I congratulate you on this or not." It was uncomfortable.

In the middle of it, he said, "Hey, man. How much golf do you still get to play?" I said, "Maybe three to four times a year." He looked at me, and his response was this: "Life is too short not to play more golf than that." So here's what I want to do. I want to take Tony's statement, "Life is too short not to play golf more than three or four times a year," and I want to hold it up. I just want to go, "Would Peter agree with that?"

When Peter is penning this letter, when he is writing 1 Peter, would he have said, "Hey, do you know what? In light of the suffering, in light of persecution, in light of all that's coming, here's what you need to know. You need to know the gospel. You need to know family. You need to know marriage. You're going to want to know how to suffer in this. Golf. You're going to want to get some golf in before it comes crashing down"? Would Peter have said that in his letter?

If you don't play golf, it doesn't matter at all to you, but you still get the point. Since I'm a pastor and this is church, my guess is you know where I'm going, but we're still going to get into 1 Peter and navigate it for ourselves. All right? First Peter was a book written in AD 62. That is not a random fact. That's a fact that will be very personal to some of you in a minute, at least it has been for me. It was written to a large geography of churches, not to just one church in particular but to kind of a large region of churches.

Peter knew a couple of things. One, he knew persecution was coming for these guys. Two, he knew in these churches, just like in our church, there are men and women whose marriages are struggling, who are struggling with cancer, who have had friends who have died, who have lost loved ones. He knew there was hurt and pain all over. I mean, we're adults in this room. We know that. Peter knew this about these people.

He knew in their hurting, in their suffering, there was persecution heading their way under a man named Nero who was not a loving, friendly man. He knew these people (these Christians he was writing this letter to) needed hope. They needed hope! They needed a reminder of the hope we have in Jesus Christ. So he writes the letter. We're going to get into the letter right now. We're going to start in the letter where Peter started in verse 1 with the people of heaven.

1. *People of heaven.* Verse 1: "**Peter...**" All right. Stop right there. Some of you in this room need to know about this man Peter. Some of you need to know about the grace that comes with this one word *Peter*.

You're sitting in this room right now. You're listening to me, and you feel uncomfortable. You feel like, "If anybody in this room knew me, if you knew my past, if you knew last night, if you knew my college years, there's no way I'd be welcome in this room."

You need to know. You think you have committed the unforgivable sin. You need to know about Peter. If we jump back to Matthew 16 (we're not going to, but if we did), you would find this scene where Jesus tells his disciples... He has them all around. He is like, "Hey, guys. I'm going to have to die." Peter jumps up and is like, "Hey, guys. Listen. Calm down. I have this. Jesus, come here." He takes him off to the side, rebukes him.

Jesus looks at him and says, "Hey, Satan! Get behind me! You're a hindrance to me." If we fast-forward to Matthew 26, Jesus has just been arrested. Then Peter three times says, "I don't know that Man. I don't know him. Don't you associate me with him." Listen. Whatever you have in your past...that thing you would want no one to know about...Peter makes you look like a minor leaguer. Has Jesus ever looked you in the eye and said, "Hey, Satan"? No! No! I hope not! If he has, we'll discuss that after the sermon.

Whatever is in your past, you look like a minor leaguer. In light of that, even in Peter's past, there was still room at the cross for Peter. There's still room at the cross for you no matter what's there. There's room at the cross for you. There's something else about the story with Peter I want you guys to see. So if we look at Peter in the Gospels, we have this sort of aggressive, arrogant coward, right? That's who Peter is in the Gospels. "I'm arrogant. Hey, Jesus. Let me correct you. Hey, nuh-uh. I don't know that Man." Coward.

Then we look at 1 Peter. We have this serious man of God, a *serious* man of God in Peter. We too often will hold up our lives, and we'll look at Peter in the Gospels. We look at 1 Peter, and we go, "Man, my life looks a lot more like the Peter of the Gospels than it does the Peter of 1 Peter." Here's what I want you to hear. Thirty years. Listen to me, church. Thirty years. That's the time between Matthew 16 and 1 Peter. Thirty years.

Just because you feel like you're stuck in the mud doesn't mean you'll always be stuck in the mud. The Christian life is one of long seasons of steady discipline, and growing in Christ is going to look different for all of us. But for all of us, it's going to include time in the Word and time in prayer. Every one of us. If I could just say it this way to my brothers and my sisters in this room who feel like, "Man, I'm never going to get past first base in this gig," listen.

Steve Hardin doesn't happen overnight. Amen? Amen! Bill Seal, who is not here (he is at the Flower Mound Campus going now on Saturdays), doesn't happen overnight. He doesn't happen overnight. I hate yard work, and by, "I hate yard work," what I mean is think of that thing you hate the most in life. Double it,

and that's how I feel about yard work. We're trying to sell our house. In fact, I hate it so much... We had a friend come over this week. They were like, "Hey, did you guys landscape?" "No, just mowed the grass." I apologize to my neighbors for four years of living next to that.

Yesterday I was out there with this weed and feed. I'm sprinkling it all over. I'm angry, and I'm frustrated. If you knew the thoughts going on in my mind, you would not let me up here right now. I have the stuff all over, and it's supposed to kill the weeds and grow the grass, at least it better or I want my money back. I'm putting weed and feed all over the grass. This one substance does these things. It both kills weeds and grows grass.

That's what the Scriptures are for us. That's what prayer is for us. It's this one thing that we do that both kills sin and flourishes the gospel inside of our lives. I want to encourage you. I want to plead with you, get after it today. Church, get after it today. Do not wait until tomorrow. We had a fence blow over a year ago or so. I had a crew come over. We started rebuilding the fence. We did everything but the gate. I said to my wife, "Hey, babe. We're going to stop now and do the gate tomorrow." She said, "No, just do it now. You're out there." "No, baby. We got it. We'll do it tomorrow." A year later, still no gate.

Get after it today. Get into the Word. Get into prayer. If you don't know how to pray, that's okay. Just start talking to God. It will be okay. Just see what happens in a year. You start reading the Scriptures regularly. You start praying consistently. When you wake up in a year, it's like the measurements as a kid. You just don't even know how much you've grown. You just wake up and see it. All right. Get started today. Let's keep reading.

**"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles..."** "Elect exiles" is Peter's title for Christians. To understand this "elect exile" title, we have to understand both words. So let's start with *elect*. I'm going to give you the theology I gave to my 3-year-old daughter, not because I think you're dumb or 3 but because she is brilliant. If you disagree with that, you're welcome to keep that opinion to yourself, okay?

This week I said to my daughter, "Hey, sweetie. Jesus died for you." She very logically, very reasonably, said, "Yeah. Now we'll never find him," which makes perfect sense, right? To which I said, "That's okay, sweetie. Jesus finds us." That's election. That's what it means to be elect...that God found you. You didn't find him. He came after you. He pursued you. You had your heart, your mind, opened up to the things of God by God. You didn't line the Rubik's Cube up and figure out who Jesus is. He opened up your eyes. He found you.

Then *exile* means we live in a land that's not our home. If you said to me, "Hey, man. Where is home?" my answer is, "My home is where my wife is." Wherever my wife is, that's home. So if my wife is in Dallas, that's home. Dallas is home. If my wife goes to Houston, I'm going to go to Houston and bring her back to Dallas, and then Dallas is going to be home. As an elect exile, our home is where Jesus is. Wherever Jesus is, that's our home. Until Jesus returns, we're always going to be and always going to feel like exiles.

This week in our staff meeting, we were praying over the sermon, praying over this text, and just sort of talking about what the Lord might have in store for our gathering, for our family, for our body this weekend. As we hit this "elect exile," one of the things Big I said was... He is not "Big I" anymore. He is just "I" now. That's Isaac, our worship pastor. He said, "I feel like a lot of our people really just feel exiled right now."

You're praying for things, and you're asking the Lord, and you're not getting the answers you want to get. You're asking the Lord for a husband, for a wife, for a job. You want to be in ministry. You're pleading and asking God for these things, and you're just not getting them. You feel really exiled right now, and you don't feel very elect right now. I want to say to you, if that's the season you're in right now, listen. The Lord loves you. He loves you. You are his elect bride. You're the one who he has called to himself, for whom he sent his Son into the world to die. He loves you. He loves you!

At the same time, we have to understand we've been exiled for a purpose. Just keep reading. **"To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia..."** They've dispersed. We're elect. We're exiled and dispersed now throughout the world. God's heart has always been from the beginning to turn the globe into a church, to see the nations worship from one end to another.

If we go back to Genesis 1, what does it say? **"Be fruitful and multiply and..."** Okay, we're going to do it again. **"Be fruitful..."** AWV, help us out over there, all right? **"Be fruitful and multiply and..."** What? **"...fill the earth..."** Fill the earth. Genesis 11 (a few chapters later). They are gathering together, forming this Tower of Babel. Why? **"...lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."** A few verses later in Genesis 11, God comes down and says, "Nuh-uh. My plan from Genesis 1 on has always been, will always be, the covering over the earth, and to disperse them among the earth."

Then we fast-forward to the book of Acts, and the church still doesn't get it. So Acts 1. **"...you will be my witnesses..."** We're going to do it again. Are y'all ready? I'm prepping you guys this time. **"...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and..."** **"...to the end of the earth."** Acts 8. Where is the church? They're still in Jerusalem. They're still in Jerusalem! So what does God do? Ah, persecution.

It says great persecution came and scattered the church to Judea and Samaria. It's verse 8 that says, "**So there was much joy in that city.**" God has been and will always do whatever is necessary to get his gospel to the ends of the earth. Listen to me. He will do whatever is necessary to flourish the gospel inside of your own life.

That might mean some really hard days coming for some of you. You might have some really uncomfortable days that you don't want to have. It might mean cancer for some of you. God is going to do what is necessary to both get the gospel to the ends of the earth and to flourish the gospel in your life. We have been both elect and exiled for the proclamation of the gospel. All right. Let's keep reading. Elect exiles dispersed. Verse 2: "**...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...**"

We've talked about this a lot at this church. We talk about it often that this is in the heart of God. Before the world ever existed, you would be called his. You would be elect and exiled, which means whatever is in your past, you can stop living in shame over it. You can stop living in shame over your past. God, before the world ever existed, knew what would be in your past, knew what would be in your present, and was pleased to send his Son to die for you. He was pleased to do it.

**"...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood..."** The sprinkling of his blood is just conversion. Right? It means you have been converted, washed by the blood. **"May grace and peace be multiplied to you."** So if I could just kind of geek out for a little bit with you. I long to be more of a geek at heart. I *am* a geek at heart, but I want to be *more* of a geek at heart. I want to do this with you. I'm going to do it whether you let me or not. I just want to be comfortable for us.

If you look back at the text, you're going to see two *for*'s, right? Two *for*'s. You're going to see "**...for obedience...**" and "**...for sprinkling...**" Do you guys see that? Are we together? All right. There we go. Amen. In the Greek text, which is what the New Testament was inspired and written in, there's only one *for*. It's literally "....for obedience and sprinkling..." Here's what the translator is doing. He is doing a great job of pulling out the unity Peter sees between obedience and conversion, so between obedience and sprinkling.

Here's Peter's point. Peter's point is obedience is evidence of your conversion. Apart from obedience in your life, there's no evidence of conversion in your life. I think the fear I have for some of you in this room (not all of you) is that you think obedience equals going to church. You think church attendance equals obedience. You are living an illusion. You're playing a religious game that is dangerous, and it's deadly.

My beautiful little daughter has this Belle costume. Belle is a princess. I don't know where it came from, but she just has a Belle princess costume. Some of you moms might be able to help me out after the service with this. She'll put it on, and she'll run up and she'll say, "Hey, Daddy. I'm Belle." I'll say, "Hey, that's great." Then she'll take it off and go, "Now I'm not Belle." Then she'll put it on and say, "Hey, Daddy. I'm Belle" and then take it off and say, "Daddy, I'm not Belle." This is wonderful. We do it over and over and over. It's how my nights are spent.

Yesterday the kids were so sweet napping. We have a 2-year-old and a 3-year old. I hear them screaming in the bedroom. I go in there ready to unload some daddy thunder on their rears. Do you know what I'm saying? Some of y'all are upset by that, but... Thunder for my kids when they need it. All right? I walk in, and she has her beanbag chair... The beanbag thing (it's this high) is up on her bed, and she is standing up on top of it with her hands up going, "I'm Belle."

I run over to her, and I yank her down. I say, "Hey, baby. Hey, sweetie. Listen. That is dangerous. Don't do that. That's dangerous. See what you're doing here? You could hurt yourself. This is dangerous." That's what I want to say to some of you. This is what I want to say to some of you! Listen. This is a dangerous religious game you're playing. You attending church doesn't make you any more a follower of Jesus than my daughter is Belle when she puts the dress on. This is a dangerous religious game many of us are playing. I've been a pastor here since 2008. Don't tell me I'm wrong.

I'm praying by the mercy and the grace of God, whether you're in this room or you're in AWW that the Lord might open up your eyes to the majesty of Jesus today and you would stop playing a religious game, that you might give your life to Jesus right here, right now in this room and be done with it. When you do stop playing that game, the blood of Jesus washes everything in you, cleanses your past, reshapes your present, gives you a new future, and gives you a new set of lenses to see the world through. So work, marriage, singleness...these are things that are seen completely different in light of the gospel.

If we were going to summarize Peter's people of heaven, I'd say it like this: people like Peter, people from any background, anywhere, at any time, who are invited to Jesus. The elect exiles, those who have been called *by God to God* and exiled into the world for our dispersion so we might preach, proclaim, and live the gospel to the ends of the earth as we have been and have extended the transforming power of the blood of Jesus. All right. That's the people of heaven.

2. *Guarantee of heaven.* Let's talk about the guarantee of heaven. The guarantee of heaven. Verse 3. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again..."** Okay, "born again" has kind of been a political catchphrase in America since Jimmy Carter. What it means is you've had your soul awakened to Jesus. Your soul has been

awakened to him. There was this day when you said, "I don't really love Jesus." Then all of a sudden, you love Jesus. That's the new birth. That's God causing you to be born again.

So we're born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Here's what Peter knew. Peter knew a dead Savior is no Savior. He knew a *dead* Savior is *no* Savior. Often you'll hear it said like this that the resurrection is evidence of our salvation. No. The resurrection *is* our salvation. We have a living hope that is alive because Jesus is alive. The resurrection is our salvation.

The crazy thing about this is Peter has nothing to gain from this statement. There's nothing Peter is going to gain from this statement right here. If we think back and we remember the Peter of the Gospels, remember the Peter of 1 Peter? What happened? What changed? The resurrection happened. The resurrection changed everything for Peter. It changed everything for Peter! He knew the fact that Christ is alive (there's an empty grave) is the guarantee of things to come.

So we have the *people* of heaven (those who have been covered by the blood, washed by the blood of Jesus), the *guarantee* of heaven (the resurrection of Jesus). Now the...

3. *Hope of heaven*. Verse 4. **"...to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you..."** All right. Who remembers the TV show *Friends*? Show of hands. Let's get after it. Are you already? All right. Who remembers the intro song, the opening song? There we go. Everybody, let's sing it together. Are you ready? I'm going to start. I'm going to start just part of it. Not the whole thing. I've been wanting to lead worship here since 2008. Isaac won't let me. This is my shot right now.

I'm going to start the song, and then you guys finish. Are you ready? "I'll be there for you." That's why he won't let me lead worship. Let's do that again in a C maybe. "I'll be there for you." No! Failed, all of y'all, except for you. You did a good job, brother. There we go. "I'll be there for you, because you'll be there for me."

Listen. The TV show *Friends* is not holy. I don't necessarily recommend it. It's hilarious. All right. I'll give it that. That show is all about conditional relationships. Amen? "If I don't do for you, you don't do for me." That show is all about conditional relationships. Our inheritance is unconditional because the conditions have been met in Christ. This inheritance we have is kept permanently in heaven for us. There are no conditions placed on it because all the conditions that *could* be placed on it have been paid for by Christ.

We have a locked-down, secure future because of what Jesus Christ has done, which is great news for someone like me who continues to struggle with sin, who continues to wrestle. It means there is nothing I can do to lose something I didn't earn. It's been paid for by Christ. It's locked down, secured by Christ.

Let's keep reading. Verse 5: **"...who by God's power are being guarded..."** We have an inheritance kept for you. **"...who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."**

This is our climatic question of this sermon: *What is this salvation to be revealed?* The answer to this question is what's going to shape the rest of Peter's letter, and it shapes the rest of our lives. Tim Keller, a pastor in New York (kind of Yoda-daddy, if you will... I don't know if Yoda is a Christian or a non-Christian. If it's neutral, cool. Just "daddy." We'll go with Tim Keller is "daddy."), said what you do today is determined by what you believe about the future.

What I want to do is I want to get into Matthew 24, and then I want to go to Revelation 21. I want to see our future held up in front of us and see if it might not shape what we do today. Matthew 24. We'll start in verse 29. If you want to turn there, turn there. Verse 29 says, **"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man..."**

What they're saying is they're asking... I want you guys to hear this also. The disciples are saying, "Hey, what's going to be the sign of the close of the age? What's going to be the sign of the end?" We have a lot of people today...some are on TV, some are not on TV...who we're going to look and go, "Hey, do see what's going on in Iran? See what's going on in Russia? See what's going on in Mexico? See what's going on in Chicago? See what's going on in Houston? See what's going on in Dallas? Listen, man. The end is coming. These are all signs. It's clear."

There *are* things that are going to happen as time moves forward to the end that the Scriptures do talk about. What is the sign? Jesus tells us. **"Then will appear in heaven..."** What are the next two words? That's for you guys, not for me. What are they? **"...the sign..."** **"Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see..."** Here it is. Here's the salvation revealed. We have the sign. It's the salvation that will be revealed. **"...the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."**

Jesus is the salvation to be revealed. He will be revealed. Verse 31: **"And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."** Jesus is going to come back one day, and he is going to round up. He is going to gather his elect from one end of heaven to the other. Our call until that day is to be a dispersed, elect exile who goes and finds the elect. This is what our call is (you and I). This is why Christ hasn't returned yet. It's why The Village Church exists yet today now: to find the elect Christ will one day come back and gather.

Over the last month, I've been asked quite a bit why we're going to Chicago to church plant. If you don't know, my wife and I and a crew of us here (some are in this room right now) are loading up U-Hauls at the end of this year. We're moving to Chicago, and we're going to plant a church in that city. I've been asked repeatedly why we're doing that. "Why are you going to church plant in Chicago?" This is why. This is why right here.

Matthew 24 is why. Because there's a day when Christ is going to come back. The sky is going to rip open. Eternity is going to pour forth, and the elect are going to be gathered. We believe there are thousands upon thousands of elect in the city of Chicago who just don't know it yet. We're being sent there to go find them. This is our call right here in this city. In Dallas, Texas, it's no different that there are thousands upon thousands of elect in this city who just don't know it yet.

That's why as a campus, as a church body, we cannot get too internally focused inside. We have to keep our eyes pressed out, keep the mission of God out in front of us to keep trying to advance the ball in the city, in this Metroplex, that Christ is going to return to gather the elect. When he does, what will that day be like? Revelation 21. We're going to start in verse 1 and read a few verses.

**"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down..."** That's us. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem...that's the bride coming down. **"...coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."**

Now did you notice something there? Did you notice heaven comes to earth? We don't get to escape earth. Did y'all see that? This will change the way you live your life. It will change the way you see the world. Heaven comes down. We're not escapists. Christ said (John 17), "As you send me, I send them into the world. Protect them from the Evil One." No, we're not escape artists. We don't get out of here. Heaven comes here. This is Romans 8. The world is groaning for the day of redemption.

Verse 3: **"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"** Listen. My marriage affects everything about me. If you are in this room and you're a female, you and I will never go to Chili's and hang out one-on-one. Do you know why? I'm married.

If you're a male in this room, my home is open to you, but it's not open 24/7. Do you know why? I'm married. It shapes everything about the way I live my life. This day to come...this glorious, grand day when

the sky rips open, new heavens, new earth...needs to shape everything about our lives that what Keller said is true. It's true! What you do today is determined by what you believe about tomorrow. This needs to shape everything, this day when there's a renewed city.

The bride is going to be with her husband, going to be with Christ. A renewed home when God is dwelling with us. We're no long exiled. We're not exiled Christians any longer, but we're gathered together. A renewed world. No tears, no pain, no hurting, no suffering anymore. It's a new world to come, and it shapes everything about today.

Here's what we're going to do. I want to come back to our original question. I want to come back to that original question...*Is life too short to only play golf three to four times a year?* In light of what he has just said, in light of who he was writing to, would Peter have agreed with that? I really hope golf is in heaven. I love it. I want my TaylorMade driver with me in heaven. I mean, I can stinkin' smoke that thing. I want it with me. I want golf in heaven.

But I don't know if it's going to be there. What I do know is Jesus will be there. If Jesus is there, then we need to give our lives to things that are eternal, things that are to the One whose blood and whose resurrection purchased and secured our place in eternity. My fear in this room right now (if I could just come clean and be completely honest with you) is I really do believe a lot of you think you've done this, think you've given your life to Jesus.

You think there's this grand day to come for you. It's an illusion. It's an illusion! You've spent your life in a church building, but you've never given your life to the person of Jesus Christ. You've been in buildings but never been a part of a body. You've blended in, but you don't know him. You know a lot about him, but you don't know him.

Maybe you're more like me, and you didn't grow up in church. You know on the outside your life looks pretty together. On the inside, you know you're crumbling. The offer is going to be on the table right now to come to Jesus. Come and say, "I don't want this anymore. I don't want this life. I want a former life. I want the life Jesus offers. I want whatever new heavens, new earth, whatever this stuff means. If it comes with him, I want it. That's what I want in my life." The offer to come to Jesus is on the table.

If you came with a friend, let me plead with you. Grab your friends. Tell your friends, "I want Jesus." Say these words. You don't have to know anything else. Just say these words: "I want Jesus." If you look at your friend who brought you, and you're like, "I don't think this dude is a Christian," you come talk to one of us. We're here to pray with you. We're here to talk to you. Just come say the words, "I want Jesus."

There's an offer and an opportunity today to stop playing a deadly and dangerous, religious game that no matter what's in your past, no matter what your background is, there is room at the cross for Peter. There's room for me, and there's room for you. The invitation is on the table to come to him. Let's pray.

Father, I love you. I do pray for the men and women in this room right now. I pray as we sit and as we pray right now and as we move into Communion, I just pray, Lord, you would, by your grace and by your mercy, do what only you can do. That is, encourage the hearts of the saints and awaken the hearts of the blind. There are men and women in this room right now who are walking in extreme pain...pain many of us have no clue what it's like. They need to know the comfort of Christ right now.

There are many in this room who have walked in and played a religious game their whole lives. They stand in the Foyer week in and week out with the same smile on their face, all the while their trajectory is not one leading them to Christ. I pray you would do what you do, and that is, open eyes and soften hearts. It's in Christ's name I pray, amen.

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