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The Church is the Family
Forerunner Church

Glad we could make it here this morning. The ice was not nearly as bad as we had anticipated. How many of you were without power just this last week? Raise your hand up. Raise it high, You deserve this. This is your moment. Put your fist up in the air. You made it. Okay. Well, glad to see you all. You've survived. Many of you, I love, you know, we've been talking about family, and so, just many people getting to host one another in their homes and keep each other warm and bring each other food and all of that was happening in our community, and I'm just so grateful to the Lord for family like this who had people reaching out to us and, you know, asking if they needed a generator or whatever, and anyways. I'm just really grateful for our family.

Turn to Matthew 16. This morning we're gonna be talking about the glory of the church and looking at some different things in regard to what Jesus intends for this entity called the church. We're gonna read from Matthew 16, and then I'll pray. Beginning in verse 15. Jesus said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon, Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who's in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loose in heaven."

Father, we come before You and we come before the authority of Your Word. We ask that Your Spirit would come, that You would give, this morning, living understanding to us in regard to Your Word, in regard to Your people, us, the church, the ecclesia of God, the family of God. We ask, Father, that You would strengthen us, that You would give us what flesh and blood, what mere mortal men cannot give. Lord, would you release the revelation from the Father and of the Father in our midst. Lord, we glory in You, and we love You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Well, we're gonna look at some things this morning in regard to the church. Who is she? Why is she? What does Jesus say about her? You know the great glory and mission of the church, I believe, is to elevate and exalt the Person of God, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. We stand as witnesses, ambassadors, and messengers to tell the world what God is like. And more than just tell Him, but to show the world what God is like. There is no greater glory than exalting the Person of Christ, higher and higher and higher in our own hearts and within the hearts of others. It is a glorious endeavor.

A.W. Tozer said something about this once. I'm gonna paraphrase it. But he said, the reason there's so much trouble in the church is because she has low thoughts of God. And so, therefore, there's a great need to exalt the person of God and the worth of God and the majesty of God higher and higher until He's rightly seen and esteemed by all the peoples in the whole earth. There's a great glory and mission that we have. Not only to raise the esteem of Christ in the earth, but to raise the esteem of Christ within our own hearts, within our own families, within our

own fellowships and communities together. That we would constantly, daily, and weekly, and yearly be going on this journey together of exalting the Person of Christ because there's no way to exalt Him too highly. He's the only Person that you can't exalt too highly. You'll never stand before Him and have to be confronted with the reality that you exalted Him too highly. You lived with too much abandon. You worshiped too deeply and desperately, and in your own soul, you sought Him too fiercely. I want to assure you, He'll never rebuke you for that. That will be not something that you hear at the judgement seat.

And so, we stand as the people of God, seeking to know Him and grow in our understanding of Him because our understanding enflames our emotions and the passion of our soul, but we want to be turned to Him. See, this is called the first commandment, that we would love Him with everything that we are. To know is to love. To know God is to love God, and the more deeply that we know Him, the more passionately we will love Him and enjoy Him as He enjoys us.

But there's a second mission and glory that we have. It's not just to lift and esteem God, but rightly to lift and esteem His people, the church, us. Now, that's not always the message that you hear or expect to hear on a Sunday morning. "Well, of course the pastor wants us to love the church," but there are truths in the Word of God that are revealed about the deep passion and longing and glory that Christ both has and expresses towards His people. And the question is, can we see what it is that God sees? Can we look around at the church both locally and nationally and internationally, can we see the people of God and rightly see them in the way that God sees them?

And so, Jesus, in this verse, verse 16, He tells Peter. He says, "On this rock, Peter," He's making a play on words. Peter's name in Greek is Petro, which means Rock. He says, "On this rock," He says, "I will build My church." Now, just pause there for a moment. Consider the words of God Himself, Yahweh in the flesh. That's who Christ is. Yahweh, the Word became flesh. He's saying, "I'm gonna tell you what I'm building. I'm gonna tell you what I'm about right now." Verse 18. He says, "I will build My church. I am building My church." It's the thing that Jesus is building right now, today, tomorrow, yesterday, a hundred years ago. And a hundred years from now, the thing that Christ is building is the church. He's building the church. He's about building the church.

Beloved, as the church, ask yourself, "Am I about building the church? Am I building what Jesus is doing?" When Jesus came to the earth to manifest the Father, He said, "I only say what the Father says. I only do what the Father does. I'm about what the Father is about," and we as the disciples of Christ are to be about what the Son is about.

Well, what is the Son about? He's building His church. And I think that we're at a cross roads a little in regard to the body of Christ, of the church. And there's so much pain and angst and dissention and disagreement within the body that maybe some are asking, "Is Jesus done with the church? Is He done? Is there a new thing that we should be doing? Is there a new method? Is there a new wineskin? Is there a new model that we should be taking up?" Because when we, from our perspective, sit back and observe the church, I mean, the thing that is shouting to us is not glorious bride, holy, blameless, spotless without wrinkle.

A couple years ago, I was reading through the Bible, and it came to Ephesians 5 verse 27. It says this, "That Jesus would present her to Himself as a glorious church, as a glorious church." He says, "That she would not have spot or wrinkle or any such thing. That she would be holy and blameless before Him." And when I read that, it was like reading it for the very first time. I read Ephesians 5 many times. I've been to many weddings like many of you have. You hear Ephesians 5 at weddings, and yet, this verse, for some reason, had never connected with my heart. And when I read it, it was like this arrow of conviction suddenly pierced me and just brought me to my knees. And the Lord just began to gently whisper to me. He said, "Isaac, Isaac, I'm building a glorious church. Do you see My church as glorious? Do you see My church? Do you want for My church what I want? Are you building what I'm building or are you building something else?" And in that moment, it was if all of these years of my life, of the way that I had thought about church, my own experiences, the experiences of friends and family and pain and woundedness and all of these negative feelings and negative thoughts, they were suddenly just brought to bear in this moment before the Lord, and I had to not just stuff down the emotions and stuff down my analysis and critique of the church, but I had to be confronted by it. I had to deal with it. It came up in front of me, and Jesus just, this simple phrase, "Will you see My church as glorious?" And if I were honest, and if I were raw, and often it takes an encounter with the Holy Spirit, you know, in more or less ways to kind of get us to this place of realness with our own soul, right? I had to ask myself, do I see the church as glorious? Do I even care if the church is glorious? Does it bother me that she's not? Does it bother me? Am I a critique standing on the outside maligning another man's bride? And my own experiences and my own woundedness had changed my perception, and had built up this idea of what the church was like and what was wrong with her, and all this stuff. And then the Lord was like, "You're the church." Because sometimes when I talk about the church or I think about the church in a negative way, I disassociate myself from that. I go, "Well, that's the institution over there that causes so much pain and is messed up and a hypocrite, but it's just over there, so I disassociate. So, I disassociate, and I go, "Man, the church is just really messed up."

That's like the family gathering at the house and the kids come together and they go, "Man, the family is really messed up." It's like, "Yeah, buster, you're in it." My kids have no problem in identifying quickly the issues within our family and talking about them and bringing them up. And, Lord, help us. The oldest are only 10 and 11. What happens when they're like, in their teen years? I'm just gonna be like, "Oh, Lord."

And so, we accidentally disassociate ourselves from the church. Why? And what that does is it shows us that we've seen the church as an organization. We've seen it as an institution. We've seen it as something that we attend or that we join or that we go to on a Wednesday night or a Sunday morning. It's a place we go. It's a building with a sound system and a staff and a cleaning team and a parking lot. It's a place we go. It's something that we do. And Jesus thinks of His church as something that we are. He says, "This is My family. The church is My family. They're a people. It's not a place. It's not an institution. It's not an organization. It's a people." You don't go to church. You are the church. You're the church tomorrow morning at 7am. You're the church picking up the kids from soccer practice. You're the church dropping off a meal for someone. You are the church. The church is not an institution. And when we speak of the church or when we malign her or critique her, it's maligning ourselves and critiquing ourselves. And the Lord wants to change our understanding of the church.

There was a word that was given back in 1982 in Cairo Egypt to Mike Bickle, and he said, the Lord said to him that He was going to change, the Lord was going to change the understanding and expression of Christianity in the whole earth in one generation. That's what the Lord was up to. He was gonna change the understanding and the expression of Christianity in the whole earth. In one generation there would be this radical process, this transformation, and the change and the understanding mostly had to do, and Mike has said this publicly many times, mostly had to do with the way that the world sees the church. The world looks at the church and they, I would guess from what I've read and heard, mostly just kind of disdain the church, like, "What? It's outdated. It's archaic. It's irrelevant. It's has no bearing. It's not a threat. It's not a help. It's just there stagnant, and there's a bunch of weird people that go there." And the Lord said, "I'm gonna change the way that the world sees Christians by the way that they love God and begin to love one another." I'm adding that part in.

The way that the world knows that we're the disciples of Christ is by our love for one another. And so, when an unbeliever comes into your presence, they will know you're a disciple of Christ by the way that you love the church, the person next to you. That's how they will know it. And Jesus goes, this is what I'm building, but here's my question, if the Lord is gonna change the way the world sees and relates to Christianity, wouldn't He change the way we see and relate to ourselves? Wouldn't He begin with us? Wouldn't He release a revelation across the earth that would exalt Christ and then lift the view of the church out of the ashes of history? All of her issues, all of her problems, can it stand before the presence and the power and the declaration of Jesus that says, "I will have a glorious church,"? Can it stand before that? If God said it, it will happen. If God has declared it, it will come to pass. And sometimes we're the last ones to find out. Can we see and observe the way that God sees and observes?

It's interesting to know that the first mention of the church in the New Testament, the actual word of it is in Matthew 16:18, that we just read. In the whole of the Word of God, the church is first mentioned on the lips of the Son of God. It is no invention of man. Man has imposed his traditions on it. Man has tainted it. He's made it wrong. He's twisted it around. He's made it for his own gain. Why? Because he's man. At the end of the day, man is man, but Jesus says, "This is what I'm building. This is what I'm doing, and I want you to do it with Me." It's interesting that the word "church". This word that's used is the word ecclesia. It's a Greek word. It's ecclesia. It has three parts to it. It basically means an assembly called out from and called to all in one word. An assembly called out from and called to. We just kind of use one word for it, 'church'. It means the building down the road. This word is charged and loaded with understanding and with purpose from God Himself. Ecclesia.

Number one, three parts to the ecclesia is that He has called His people. The Father. The Father has called a family. He's called to them. Out of His own initiative, out of His own prerogative, the Father has decided He wants a really big family. He wants sons and daughters and mothers and fathers. He wants a family. That's why He calls Himself Father. If He didn't want a family, He would just go by a different name. But He's chosen the name 'Father' because He wants a family. So, the first thing of the ecclesia of Christ building His church is that the Father had a desire and He called to humanity. He called to them. He sent His own Son. He manifests the

Word, Yahweh became flesh. He walked on the earth. He called to us, and He came, and He demonstrated His heart and His purpose as a Father to the world.

The second part is that He's called out from. He's called out from. When the Father invites us as sons and daughters into His family, we leave the other family. We leave, and you don't look back. And there's a legal moment, even when you adopt a child where, the child doesn't go back to its previous guardianship. It's sealed. There's a court order. It's legal before heaven. They're called out, now they become this family. They're this family, not this family any longer.

You can't mention this without thinking of the picture in your mind of the Hebrews in slavery in Egypt. And the Father raise up a messenger named Moses who goes, and He goes, "Let My people go that they would worship Me. He was planning an encounter with them on Mount Sinai just across the Red Sea in the wilderness. He was planning to reveal Himself to a whole nation, but He didn't do it in Egypt. It's interesting. He called them out of Egypt. And they had to leave everything behind. And the old way and the old lifestyle, and the old paradigm was called out.

This is what it means to be ecclesia. You've left one thing to join another thing. You've joined the family of God. And so, as the slaves were leaving from Egypt and crossing through the Red Sea, they were leaving that previous life. They were leaving that previous lifestyle and mindset and emotion construct and the way that they did family and the way that they did money and the way that they did sexuality and the way that they did power. All of that had to go through the baptism of the Red Sea so that they could go and meet their Father in the wilderness.

God has brought you through a Red Sea. He's brought you, many of you, through the work of the cross, and you've been baptized, and you've been called out of the world. You're no longer apart of the world. Don't go back. Don't go back. Don't let the world lie to you and cheat you and steal you and say, "Hey, come do money the way that we used to. Hey, come do sexuality the way we used to. Hey, come do family the way we used to." Don't go back because that was the turmoil inside the heart of the Israelites in the wilderness as they faced the hardships and they're going, "Ah, I don't know if I want to be obedient to this God. Let's go back to Egypt." Because to join the family of heaven means there's different rules and different lifestyle, and you've got a new father, and you relate to one another differently. Don't go back to the old way. Why? Because it's bondage. And it's slavery. It's the ecclesia. You've been called out of Egypt, out of bondage, out of slavery, out of sin, out of the old way, out of your own broken sexuality, out of your broken relationship, out of your abuses, out of your addictions. The Lord has called you out. You're the ecclesia, the people of God, called to Him.

The third part is this, you've been called to something. Christianity is not the religion of omission. Christianity is not the religion that just says no to everything because well, we've just got to be holy. So, just no to culture, no to movies, and no to cigarettes, and why can't we go there? No, just because I said. The answer's no, no, no, no, no. Christianity is not a 'no religion' primarily. It's a 'yes religion' to the Father as a part of the family. You've now joined a family. Now we look up. We see the Father, and we see one another, and we relate differently, and we act differently, and we behave differently. Why? Because now we've joined a new family. There are things to do. Being a Christian is not just, here's the no-no list. Work really hard and make sure that you don't do anything on this list.

For years, I mean for years, especially as a kid. As a kid, you grow up imagining that many do, Christianity is just about the things that you can't do. There's no understanding of the things you get to do, of the people you get to know, of the God that you get to experience, of the power that you get to walk in, of the freedom that you get to walk in, of a joy that surpasses every circumstance, trial, and affliction before you. You get that joy in Christ. You disciple others. You make them. You make disciples. You see the change in people's lives. You testify of the goodness of God. You shatter the power of culture by declaring the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You get to. You get to gather together. You get to be brothers and sisters in Christ. You get to strengthen and encourage one another. You get to call out each other's gifts. You get to see them walk in those gifts, prayer and healing and deliverance and hospitality and words of wisdom and words of knowledge. You get to see the fruit of the Spirit and enjoy it. You've been called to something.

God called them out of Egypt so that they would worship Him. He brought them to the foot of the mountain because He wanted them to know Him. He wanted the people to be where He was. These three components, they constitute this word, ecclesia. It is a charged and powerful word. You've been called, you've been called out of, and you've been called into. You have a glorious destiny. And the person next to you, if they are a believer in Jesus Christ, they have a glorious destiny too. Can you see it? Can you see it? Can you see the gift and the calling and the purpose of God, of the church here, the church of the person next to you, the church down the road, the church where your in-laws live? Can you see the church as glorious and as a people called out and for Christ alone? See them that way. And we must relate to them in that way. That needs to be the primary way in which we relate to the body of Christ, as being a part of it. And also, believing God's purposes and calling for it.

Jesus says in verse 18, second part of the verse. He says that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The gates of hell will not prevail against the church. This is, this is uttered by no just mere man. This is God telling us something really important. He says, "This ecclesia that I've pulled out of Egypt, these men and women and sons and daughters that the Lord has delivered out of the bondage of slavery and unbelief, they are the force in the earth that is going to declare and manifest the glory of God." And so, you better believe that all the gates and schemes of hell are coming with all its fury to try and resist, distort, minimize, accuse, and disqualify and discredit this church, this ecclesia. The gates of hell are the gates of a city, an ancient city, rather, is where the leaders would gather together to make their judicial decisions, their executive decisions. They make decisions concerning war. They make decisions concerning peace, concerning economics, family, social structure, da, da, da, da, da. It's where they gather together to make their plans and then execute them.

And so, some people have read this verse as, the gates of hell will not prevail, therefore because I'm a Christian, I will go to the gates of hell, pull and kick them down and take out the dead. They're not in hell yet, just so you know. Like, unbelievers. They're not in hell. No, the gates of hell prevailing means that there are schemes of the devil where they conspire together. The devils and the demons and the principalities, they scheme together, and they want to come and resist. What do you think they want to resist the most? The ecclesia, the church. The devil has hatched plans and schemes for your life, for your marriage, for your finances, for your future,

and the future of the person sitting next to you right now. And he's trying to get those schemes to prevail, and one of the ways he will prevail in those schemes is if the church doesn't see herself as the church. If it's kind of this self-help group, if it's this kind of club that I join in a building that I go to, if it's not flesh and blood and walked out and ecclesia, called out of something and into something else, the gates of hell begin to prevail. And the Lord says, "No. Don't let the gates of hell prevail. I'll give you authority." The next verse He says, "I'll give you the keys of the kingdom," why? So that the gates of hell do not prevail.

The church is founded upon two realities. I didn't mention this in the first service, but it's that Jesus is the Christ, which means the Savior, the Anointed One, and He is the Son of God, the Son of God. If I were to surmise where many are at, it's that they've related to Jesus as the Savior, the Christ, who forgives our sins, and helps our finances, and restores things, and heals us, but they have not surrendered to Him as the Son of God, their Lord. And here's why. You can be the center of your kingdom, and a Messiah can come along and help your kingdom get bigger with you remaining at the center. But if you're the center of your kingdom like we all are, and that's our natural bent, and the Son of God shows up and He says, "Come, join My kingdom," that means we're not the center anymore. That means there's a complete reorientation that takes place. That means that everything that we are, goes, see, we leave ecclesia, and we join something else. We join a new family.

He is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, yes. He saves us from our sins. He washes us in His eternal blood. He suffered the wrath of God. He died our death, but He didn't just leave us there. He displayed Himself as God. And He's not just an addition to our life and the next God that we bring in to the pantheon of idols within our own souls of money and our self and then when we add Jesus to that. Because He's Messiah, so we've got to have Him to help us. He says, "When I'm the Son of God, all the other idols go. They must yield. The idols of self, the idols of self-preservation, self-reliance, self-strength, self, self, self, self. All those other idols, the idols of this world and of this age, they go, and now I am at the center." Christ is at the center. He goes, "That's what I'm building My church on." That's the ecclesia. You leave all the idols. You leave all of the things. And Moses, He's delivering you out of idolatry and out of bondage, and now, who's at the center? God. God is at the center. There's a reorientation.

And then Moses cries out to the Lord in Exodus 33 and 34. He goes, "I want You to go with us," and He goes, "I'll go, and I'll be at the center," and so, they build an ark where the presence of God would rest, and the people would all encamp. And who was at the center? It wasn't a king or a governor or Moses. It was God. God was at the center. And the whole nation from that time forward was constructed to have God at the center because He is God.

The schemes of the devil will not prevail. The schemes of the devil seek to disrupt and ridicule and undermine the glory and the revelation of the church. These schemes of accusation prevail when the church accuses herself, when we accuse one another. Do you know how Jesus dealt with the accusation in John chapter 8 of the woman caught in adultery? He is the Law. He is the Truth. He is righteousness. And their accusers come and they say, "This woman has been caught in the very act of adultery. What do You say we should do? Moses says we should stone her." See, the schemes of the devil are not about righteousness and restoration. They're about destruction and death and hypocrisy. They're trying to tempt God into killing His own creation

there, to exacting the law without grace, to being truth without grace, to being truth without love. The schemes of the devil bring this woman to Christ. He doesn't even answer them. He doesn't even answer them. He asks them a question. He says, "Which one of you has no sin? Whoever has no sin, let him cast the first stone." And they're all ashamed, and they all walk away, and when what does He say to the woman? He says, "Where are your accusers?"

See, these are the schemes of the devil that get into our midst, and we accuse one another. We malign one another. Not just here. I'm talking about out there. We are critical of this denomination or that denomination, and we're critical of the old way. And we accuse the old way. "Wow, they're so off." What we're saying is, "They should be like me." Really? We really want to go there? We really want everyone to act just like us? The schemes of the devil are perpetuated through the mouth of His servants. They're seeking residence. Now, in this actual context that Jesus is talking here, the schemes of the devil were not this kind of charismatic binding and loosing of demons. Let's get the anointing oil out and splash it around on a holy sword, whip it around during worship. I mean, that's what it's been reduced to. Partially because simply our religious freedom. But when Jesus is talking about the schemes of the devil, He's going, "No, evil men, called the Roman Empire that are oppressing the earth and other empires, these powers and schemes are manifesting through their laws, through their legislation, through their action and they're bringing oppression to the people of God."

The earth is being oppressed, and they can't find the Father. They can't find God, and God, in His justice, wants to remove those schemes of the enemy. It's true justice. It's true justice. True justice is when the earth can rightly see and behold God. That's what true justice is. To rightly see and behold God. And Jesus says, here He goes, "My church is going to be the agent through which this power is released in the earth. The schemes of Hades will not prevail against My ecclesia." Jesus has a very high vision for the church.

In Ephesians chapter 5 in verse 25, he begins part way through. It says that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. If we are His disciples, are we not to do the same? He loved her and therefore because He loved her, He did not love her in word alone. He loved her in deed so He gave His own life. He laid down His own glory. He set aside His own splendor, became a man, suffered death wrongly because He loved her. He spoke tenderly to the broken, to those that came to Him, to the humble. He spoke tenderly. He drew them in. He was building a family. He was calling them out of the world and out of the ways of their father, the devil, and into the Kingdom, and into the glorious family of God.

He will sanctify her. He will cleanse her. She will be glorious, holy, and without blemish. That is your portion. That is what God says about you. That's what He wants for you. That's where He's bringing you. Will you bring others in that? Can we go together in this? Can we say, "Jesus, if this is Your plan then I want to be a part of Your plan and what you're doing, and so I want to love. I want to lay down. I want to sacrifice. I want to get in the way of the confusion and the pain of life and go, I'm gonna walk with others in this. Can we do that together? Can we see the purposes of God that He's building, this glorious church that's gonna have His glory?"

There's a verse in the Song of Solomon in chapter 6 verse 4, if we could put that verse up. How does Jesus see His church? Song of Solomon 6 verse 4, He says, "Oh, My love, you are as

beautiful as Tirzah. You are lovely as Jerusalem and awesome as an army with banners." First, He calls her His love. Jesus calls His church, His people, His love. He goes, "Of all the things I could love, of all the things I could set my affection upon as God," He's got a lot of affection and a huge capacity to love. Of all the things, He goes, "I'm putting it on My people. I'm putting it on My church. That's where I've given My emotions. They're not just good workers for Me. They're not just serviceable. They're not just servants. They're not just slaves." He goes, "They are My love. All of My affection, all My heart, I've put it on this church." Think about that. I mean, let that mess with you a little bit. When you think about the church, do you go, "Oh, all of my affection and all my love, I'm gonna stretch it out. I'm gonna put it on this people because that's what Jesus is doing. I'm gonna put my love there. I'm gonna put my affection there, not just in word, but in deed. I'm gonna act upon it. I'm gonna stretch out my heart."

He declares over her and over you that you are beautiful and lovely. Beautiful and lovely. You know, there's such power in beauty because beauty doesn't often serve a functional purpose, but when we think in terms of the church and service and the kingdom, it's like, ra ra ra! it's all functional. It's, you've got to make disciples, and you've got to go to this Bible study, and you've got to drop off a meal at this person's house, and function, function. And it is that. That's an overflow of something, but Jesus says, "Woah, woah, wait. Let's just put that on pause for a second. Put on pause everything My people can do for Me, and just set that aside, and when I look at them, I just see them as beautiful and lovely. I enjoy them. I want them. I delight in them. When I look at them," when you look at something that's beautiful, what does it do? It moves your heart. You move the heart of God. The church in the earth today with all of her disfunction and all of the wrongs that are going on, He looks at the church and goes, "You move My heart. You move the heart of God. You're beautiful."

A couple weeks ago, I was going to a meeting and the other individual was running a little bit behind, and we were meeting up at the IHOPU campus. It was right around sundown, and there was just this unbelievable sunset that evening. And so, I just decide, I'm not gonna... I hadn't done this in years. This isn't something I habitually do, but I was like, "I'm just gonna stop in my car. I'm gonna put away my phone. I'm not gonna have the radio on, whatever, and I'm just gonna sit here and just look at this sunset." And so, I pulled my car over and I prop my feet up on my dashboard like any person from Missouri should, and I looked out over the scenscape of downtown, beautiful Grandview, Waffle House was twinkling off in the distance. The 'W' was kind of flickering in and out, and I'm looking at this sunset. I'm just thinking, "Why did You do this? You didn't have to do this." We don't have to have a blue sky or sunsets. We don't have to have mountains. We don't have to have beauty. It's not functional. It's not practical. That's why, I'm gonna get in trouble with this. Somebody's gonna freak out, but that's why evolution can't be real. If it's all about just the survival of the fittest and pragmatically how do I get my next meal and avoid being the meal of the other animal. Like, there would be no beauty or even acknowledgement of it. And yet, here's this God that paints this sky of just beauty and splendor, and I'm sitting there with my feet propped up on my dusty dashboard. I didn't realize how dusty it was until I took my feet off. And I'm looking at this, you know, scene, and I'm just thinking like, "You're beautiful." And He goes, "When I look at My people, they don't always just serve this functional purpose. They're not just this cog in this machine, this organization, they're not the CEO of Jesus Christ and the corporate kind of ladder just making the machine go." He goes, "They're beautiful to Me. They move my heart. They're lovely. When I look at them, I just want

to keep looking. I'm doting upon them. When you're in love, you just dote upon the person. It doesn't matter always what they're doing. When your heart's really in love, it's not all pragmatic and practical like, you just want to behold and want to linger and want to see. The Lord looks at His church in that way.

The final point, and we'll have the team come out. Brenton, you can come out. The final point is this, she's seen as awesome as an army with banners. And the word 'awesome' here is interesting because it doesn't mean just awesome like in the way that we use awesome. Well, actually, the way we use awesome doesn't mean anything. Everything's awesome. This carpet is awesome. No, it's not. This burrito is awesome. Yeah... The word 'awesome' here actually means terrifying and dreadful. Strange. It means terrifying and dreadful. And she's seen, depicted as this army with banners.

Now, I was just really intrigued by this kind of banners thing. When you're an army with banners, you're declaring who your king is and where your allegiance lies. So that whenever you see someone from another army, you know that you're distinct, and they know you're distinct, you serve a different king. You're a part of a different family. You're an ecclesia. Your allegiances don't lie where this army does or where this army does or where this kingdom does. They lie somewhere else in the heart of the Father. But it's not just a hidden allegiance under cover, secret service, it is a declaration, loud.

So, that from a distance, people would see the church and go, "Wow. Something is different about them. They're apart of another army. They're marching to a different tune. They have a different king. I'm interested in knowing who that King is. Like, who are these people? They're different." There's such a pool within churches to be like this group over here and like this group over here and like this kingdom and like this army. And the answer is no. Raise the flag and be who we are, who God has called us to be, made us to be, filled us with power to be His people in the earth. Strangers and aliens are what Peter calls us, strangers and aliens. We're passing through. We're on a journey towards eternity.

Do you see yourself in that way? Do other people see you in that way or do you look just like the world, act just like the world, speak just like the world? Are you an army with banners? She is dreadful and terrible. Again, that word 'awesome' because her enemies cannot overcome her. It's the one force in the earth. It's the one family that will not be overcome. Every other family and kingdom will be overcome. Christ will overcome them or they will overcome each other. But there's only one family. There's only one ecclesia in the earth that will not be overcome by the schemes of the devil, and it says in Revelation 12 verse 11, it says that they, meaning the saints, the believers, overcame him, the devil, the dragon, by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives unto death. And so, when the powers and principalities, when they see the church, they're more afraid of us than we realize.

In Ephesians 3, Paul said that God has chosen that the manifold wisdom of God would be revealed through whom? Through the church to principalities and powers. God is going to shame principalities and powers through your worship, through your weak love, through your discipleship, through your reach for God, through your family, through your marriage, because

even though we're in the pressure and the fires of the wilderness, we are of a different Kingdom.
We're of a different family. The ecclesia of God. Let's stand.