0:00:00  
Chapter number two. Turn your Bibles with me to the book of Joshua, chapter number two. You can see there are a lot of things going on inside this building and will be for probably the next few weeks. So just kind of bear with us as we move things around, shuffle things around, and open up, and in the end, there'll be far more space than when we began with. Amen? Book of Joshua, chapter number two. Book of Joshua, chapter number two, and we're going to be reading verse 24 book of Joshua chapter 2 verse 24. We have it. Can we say amen? And they said to joshua truly the lord has given all the land Into our hands and also all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us Follow the word this morning and pray your hand to guide us and pray That my mind and my thoughts lord is just centered on hearing from you and Lord take the word or lead us guide us all for your glory in Jesus and we pray amen a woman who is behind me that seems to be with they've been trying to fit me with thing right and I feel I feel weird and so I like the lapel thing that works so no one can see it.

0:01:17  
I feel like a kid who has braces and you got that little thing that's going on like that. So I'm like, I'm not always feeling it. But nevertheless, yes. So if I have to switch, we're good to go. Thank you very much. A lot of times people don't know that Sound and Media team back there, they do a lot. And thank you for everything you guys do. Now I look good enough to make sure the camera is doing all right anyway so I'm joking all right I got it in before the sermon started all right all right so now we can move on right. So today we stand on the brink of entering into something we all call new. As less than In 12 hours from now, many will gladly shout, Happy New Year.

0:02:05  
This is the moment in time when we begin to prepare ourselves for what lies ahead as we seek to see what this new year offers us. As Sunday approached this week, I was busy doing quite a few things, as you can see around you. And I kept asking the Lord, what would you as we stand on the precipice of this new year. And I poured over many verses of scripture that would be in Psalms 103, one, bless the Lord, O my soul, in all that is within me.

0:02:40  
Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. I thought it would be a good reminder for us to not forget all the Lord has done for us throughout this past year. Then I considered Psalms 90 12. So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. I thought okay, I can teach that we should remember the Lord every day drawing near to him living out his purpose. And then I considered 2 Corinthians 5 17. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is passed away, and behold, the new has come. That would make a really good sermon. I even considered Ecclesiastes 1 9. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. There are so many passages of Scripture that I could use to focus on bringing in the New Year.

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However, the scriptures weren't written for that purpose. Now that doesn't mean that we don't have an application for ushering in a New Year by looking at some of these texts and some of these verses of scripture. They all have a message that would be consistent with something new. As I sat down to write, I started pouring over some past sermons that I had given in regards to New Year. And I've used some of these passages in the past, except I couldn't bring myself to go down that path this morning. Instead, I was led to walk through a chapter of Scripture that I believe speaks to where drawing breath stands at this place at this moment. So I want you to keep your Bibles open this morning as we journey through Joshua chapter number three.

0:04:31  
Don't panic. We will not be here until the clock strikes 12 again. Okay. It's not an old-fashioned watch service where we just hold service until 12 a.m. so you can relax. However, I do pray that we'll hear from the Holy Spirit as we go to the Word of God. Now with that said, I opened with Joshua chapter number two. Here's the backdrop. God called a man named Abram to go to a place where he would make him a mighty nation, through which the nations would also be blessed through him. Now Abraham had some difficulties in learning how to trust God. trusting God along the journey. Then Isaac had Jacob and then Isaac had Jacob, excuse me, Abraham had Isaac, Isaac had Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel and we know that he had the 12 sons. The 12 sons became the 12 tribes that we know as Israel today. Now if you're familiar with the scriptures back 15 Abraham Missed child he was told that His people would go into bondage So I want you to keep that picture in mind because Israel did go into captivity in Egypt according to the prophecy that was given before That was given to him before he had his first son. If you're wondering why I'm bouncing all over the place in my head, it's because I hear my voice cutting in and out and it's distracting the heck out of me, so it's probably distracting the heck out of you. We're going to keep on going anyway. Now, the Lord being faithful to his promise sent Moses to deliver Israel so they could inherit the land he promised, a land that was flowing with milk and honey. However, after being delivered by God, the Israelites in their lack of faith found that a journey that should have only taken them 40 days Took them 40 years now. It's at this point that Moses who led Israel out of Egypt Moses had His successor is a young faithful man known as Joshua Now one last note just before Israel was to enter the promised land the first time Moses sent over 12 spies and when they returned 10 of the 12 feared that they couldn't take the land that they would be defeated by the inhabitants of the land there were faithful men however that believed that the Lord would fulfill his promise and one of those men was Joshua now that's the backdrop to this letter that we're in so keep this in mind Moses is gone and Joshua is ready to go on to the land the Lord promised Abraham. Now before he goes in he also sends two spies and after some adventure they come back and said in chapter 2 verse 24 in chapter 2 verse 24 truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands and also all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us Unlike before when Joshua was one of the twelve spies their report was unlike the ten who said Israel couldn't take the land Now these two men affirmed what Joshua knew that the Lord has truly given this land to Israel now these men didn't move with fear.

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They moved in faith. And this brings us to chapter 3. Chapter 3 reads like this, Then Joshua arose early in the morning, and they set out from Shechem, and they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. The first thing I want to point out is that Joshua began to move early in the morning.

0:08:29  
Think about that for a second. When the Lord calls us to move, we're not to delay. Much of the work we as believers are called to do is left undone, as many are often saying there wasn't enough time in the day. I read this thought and I thought it was pretty interesting. Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows that it must run faster than the fastest lion or will be killed. Every morning, a lion wakes up. It knows that it must outrun the slowest gazelle or will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle.

0:09:05  
When the sun comes up, you had better be running. I think the believer needs to recognize that when the sun comes up, we ought to be running. More often than not, what winds up happening is sometimes we're slow when it comes to moving throughout the day. And what I simply mean by that is that... Okay, let's preach. What I mean by that is that sometimes we have to recognize that during the time, right, we all, some people are early risers, some people say they like to sleep in. Beloved, can I tell you something when God calls us to move? He calls us to move Okay, and so when people say things like well, there's not enough time in the day. Well, what times you get up? There's always enough time in the day The question is whether you're willing to put God first The question is whether you're willing to do what he's asking you to do versus doing what you feel you need to do And so I'm not gonna go down that road because that's not the point of the sermon I just want to point out that when the time came he rose early in the morning because he knew he had something to do. My wife always asks me, she says, why do you stir so early? It's and I always tell us not that I stir early, is that I struggle with sleeping because there's always things on my mind, not things pertaining to me, things pertaining to the work of the Lord. My question is how can people sleep so easy? How can people sleep so easily as if nothing's going on in the world except for the things that go on around them?

0:10:31  
We're not going to camp there. I Want to keep going it's at this point that Joshua He comes to the place where they're going to cross the Jordan Many of you've heard the story of Jericho And so we know that Joshua is going to go and take Jericho But before he can get there he comes to the place of crossing the Jordan River Now I have to understand at this time of the year the Jordan River is overflowing. So crossing is very dangerous Joshua had already sent two spies over to prepare for the cross He wanted to see what they were going to come across come up against when he entered into Jericho. Listen, many claim to have faith, few show evidence of it. So the first thing I want you to take away this morning is that we see in Joshua we walk by faith, not by sight. This verse doesn't teach a blind faith. Instead the word walk is used metaphorically, refers to how we live. So Paul's saying we are to live in a way that places our focus on the things which have eternal significance. Back to why I can't sleep. There are very many people who are dying on the streets who don't know Jesus. There are people around the world who are passing who don't know Christ. And yet we have the gospel hidden in our souls, written on our hearts. And we should be struggling within ourselves to have that message go out Lord. How can you use me? When can you use me?

0:12:06  
Where can you use me? So I want you to get this picture of where they are right now Joshua knows that they are to embark on this journey If they're going to cross over the Jordan so he comes and he encamps right there at the Jordan River now This had to be intimidating because as I said the rivers overflowing so picture. I don't know where you guys go hang out at Salt River I ain't never been but okay Salt River, okay, so you go to Salt River, right? So imagine if you go, and it looks all nice and calm imagine if it starts to rise And you see the water is just rushing, and you know you can't cross it You see things floating down and you see things floating you're looking at it You think there's no way we're gonna be able to get across that and then Joshua says we're gonna camp out right here so now I'm looking at this for the next few days a bit intimidating you begin to wonder is it even possible for us to pass by verse 2 says they waited it's interesting they hurried to the bank but then Joshua was showing us something they still had to wait on the Lord.

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Sometimes we move quick, but we need to understand that God will slow us down so that we can wait on Him. They had prepared to cross, but how? How were they going to cross? Can I tell you that there are times the Lord will slow us down so that we could focus on His ability and not our own? I want you to think about it. How many times this year did you encounter a situation that appeared overwhelming? A time where all you could do was sit and watch as your problems seem to overflow its banks. How many times this year did you find yourself in the midst of something and you're crying out to God and you see the water is rising higher and higher and higher And you're wondering if you could keep your head up just a little bit just enough to be able to breathe They're sitting at the bank of this river and they're looking at it They know the answer that they are looking for is on the other side, but we still have to get across How are we going to do it? I don't have the ability. Can I tell you who does?

0:14:26  
God does. They're in this place where they're looking. And can I tell you something? There are lessons to be learned in the waiting room. I'm going to say it again. There are lessons to be learned in the waiting room. God doesn't move when you want him to. But God is always moving. And he wants us to understand that when you're in the waiting room of God, there are lessons to be learned there.

0:14:49  
Don't be so fixed and focused on I need to get to the other side. What are you teaching me while I'm here? Let me tell you what we can learn. I've learned this past year that I'm frail. I've learned this past year that I have no power. I've learned this past year that I don't have any control. I've learned this past year that I can't dictate anything. I've learned more this year than any other year that I have the power to do absolutely nothing. I've learned that in the waiting room. What are you learning in the waiting room? Israel set looking at the river. You want to know what God's desire was? For them to stop thinking about what they think they can do and begin to think about what he knows he can do. This is where our minds focus on him, his faithfulness, all that he is. Think about it. When you encounter adversity, as you encounter adversity this year, let me ask you a question. What were you focused on? The problem or he who overcomes the problem? Israel already had a tall task before them. You see, on the other side of the river stood Jericho. It was impenetrable. They knew they weren't gonna be able to get in. They knew there were giants on the other side of the land. So they already knew, we have issues, but we can't even get to those issues because we have some things going on right in front of us. They had to first Jordan River and God wanted them to do one thing remember remember my faithfulness We can get so caught up on the enormity of the challenge that we forget that the Lord is all powerful Love what Solomon penned in Ecclesiastes 12 1 Remember also your creator in the days of your youth Before the evil days come and the years drawn near of which you will say I have no pleasure in them Here's what he's saying before problems come See it's really easy for us to remember God when the problems are here He's saying I need you to remember me before the problems come so that when they come you're already there When your body is weak, when the land isn't giving forth what it needs, when the things aren't happening the way we expect them to, read Ecclesiastes chapter 12 all the way down and you'll see him say, listen, when all these things fail, what you need to remember is your Creator. Beloved, we all need to remember our Creator. This was the picture that God was placing Israel in.

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As they sat there, He wanted them to remember. If you don't remember anything else from this sermon today, when you leave here, can you do me a favor? Can you remember your creator? Can you remember the one who made you? Now, it's with this in mind that I want to continue going through this chapter. Verse 5 says in Joshua 3, then Joshua said to the people, consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, the Lord will do wonders among you. Now, it's important that we understand that sometimes when you read Hebraic narratives, they bounce back and forth between the past tense and the present tense. So sometimes you're reading something like, well, did that happen?

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Then you read something else, well, that happened. No, that didn't happen yet. No, that's going to happen. That's the way their narratives unfold. So you're gonna see me jump back and forth over verses, but trust me We're gonna work through them So with that in mind He tells them to consecrate themselves Remember, they're waiting for three days Can I tell you something? Constant when they're there waiting. There's a focus that the Lord wants them to have on him To concentrate on Me. Concentration leads to consecration.

0:18:55  
When you focus on God, it leads you to a place where you begin to separate your mind and your thoughts from everything in the world, and you begin to only think about your Creator. See, everything else is waging war in our minds. No matter what we're doing, we're always doing something. Hey, go a day without your phone. Okay, I don't know why my phone's up here. Go a day without it. A bad example, okay? Go a day without your phone. I brought it up here in case I needed to change the air-conditioning. Go a day without your phone, okay? Where you're not looking at it, you're not scrolling through it. Go get to do this all day long.

0:19:40  
Hold on. And then you go back to it again. I want you to think about it. We say we don't have time. What if you could capture that time? What if you could capture that time and actually spend it concentrating on God You see it's interesting because sometimes we lose sight on what God desires for us Our waiting is never without purpose It's so that we can draw near to him Remember what James 4 8 says draw near to God and he will draw near to you cleanse your hands you sinners and purify your hearts You double-minded like I said since I know no concentration leads to consecration, then when James says to cleanse your hands and your heart, what he's basically saying is he's highlighting God's holiness and man's sinfulness. When you begin to concentrate on God, something begins to happen. You begin to see yourself for who you are. The greatest of Christians begins to realize that he is nothing but a sinner. Praise God for God's mercy and His grace. And sometimes we lose sight of that Oswald chamber said we should measure our growth in grace by our sensitivity to sin We should measure our growth in grace by our sensitivity to sin there are many things that I don't do in my life not because they're sinful but because they have the propensity to call somebody else to sin and that Puts me in a bad situation considering the Lord told me to be careful and not to cause my brother to stumble.

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You see, there's a sensitivity when you begin to concentrate and focus on God. Joshua called Israel to get ready, and then he takes them to the bank of this river, and they're looking at it and thinking, how are we gonna pass this? He says, don't worry, we're gonna camp out here for three days, and for the next three days, they're looking at it, and they're looking at it and then he says consecrate yourselves I want you to separate yourself from everything that's out there and begin to focus here's why personal holiness is necessary for spiritual victory personal holiness is necessary for spiritual victory we want God to step in and give me victory while I'm still living like the world and here's the beauty you know how merciful God is? There are times when he does.

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To grow you in personal holiness. It's never without purpose. And so we have to get this picture. They needed something from God. They desired to continue on the journey. And Joshua says, listen, men, I want you to consecrate yourselves. If we're going to cross to Jordan, then we need to be set apart mentally, emotionally, spiritually. Our minds need to be on the Lord. Here's what I find interesting. He didn't bring them to this place and say, okay, I want you guys to get ready. Get your weapons ready. No, get your heart ready. They knew the spies had already talked about Giants on the other side They knew what was taking place in Jericho, but they believed God was going to give Joshua victory and Joshua doesn't say Okay, hold on since we know we're gonna cross this river and we're gonna go into battle Let's go ahead and get our weapons ready. You know what your weapon is. It's your heart Because God doesn't need you to fight He needs you to trust him See, this is the picture that he's painting for us You remember Zechariah 4 6 not by might nor by power, but by my spirit says the Lord Joshua was instructing them to consecrate themselves because tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among them. I Said and I just kept thinking about that Tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among them." The word used there for wonder is exactly what you think. Extraordinary or amazing. To cause a wonderful thing to happen, something beyond one's power to do. They needed something amazing and Joshua describes it for them. Joshua chapter 3 verse 6. I'm going to read through verse 13. And Joshua said to the priest, take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people. So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. The Lord said to Joshua, today I will begin to exalt you in sight of all of Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, when you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan. And Joshua said to the people of Israel, come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God and Joshua said here is how you shall know that the living God Is among you and that he will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites the Hittites the Hivites the parasites The Gergesites the Amorites and the Jebusites Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan now therefore take 12 men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man.

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And when the souls of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, and the Lord all the earth, shall rest in the water of the Jordan, the water of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap." You wanna talk about wonders. An unpassable river, God says, I'm going to cut it off. Just as soon as the ark steps inside the water, the priest carrying the ark. The ark represents something. It represents God's presence. It represents God's power. Stay with me a little bit longer. I'm going somewhere Let's go back to Joshua 3 2 at the end of three days the officers went through the camp and Commanded the people as soon as you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priest Then you shall set out from your place and follow it Love one of the most amazing things about the Ark of the Covenant is the mercy seat that set on top The very thing that we all need every moment of every day.

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So I want you to understand that when they were looking at the ark, they weren't looking at a treasure chest. In their minds, they were looking at the presence and power of God. It was as if God were with them. And you wanna know what? He was. Now, he's not wood. He's not a seat.

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But where it went, where the ark was so was the Lord and They knew this and so here's this picture He tells them that when you see them carry it when it begins to leave you follow it You follow it So many people today Struggle, but what it means to follow God. I want you to get this picture because when they sent the 12 spies over the first time and the 10 came back and said they couldn't take the land, you remember the punishment that was passed that said that those who were 20 years and older would never see the promised land.

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But there were many young boys who are now men. And during that wilderness wandering, they seen many things from God. They seen God moving with them. The tabernacle that they would set up when they went from place to place. The tabernacle, although we look at it and think, oh, it's just a tent, it was more than a tent, because that is where Moses would meet with God. Here's the beauty. Whenever the Lord's cloud would rest over the tabernacle. That's where they stayed. And then when it would leave, they would get up and they would move. Numbers chapter 9 verse 16 says this. So it was always the cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night. Whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, after that, the people of Israel set out and in the place where the clouds settled down, there the people of Israel camped at the command of the Lord. The people of Israel set out and at the command of the Lord they camped as long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle they remained in camp even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days the people of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and did not set out they were to move as the Lord moved how about us beloved can I tell you that we're called to follow and not lead. So often as disciples, we lose sight of that truth. Israel's now under the leading of Joshua, and now they know that they're going to cross this raging sea. However, that which appears physical is actually spiritual. We're so quick to see the physical side of our problems. Yet it's interesting, when they hungered in the wilderness physical where the bread come from Well, I think it rained down from heaven. Did it not when they were thirsty in the wilderness and wanted water What did it come from if I'm not mistaken? It came from a rock We see physical and we think okay physically. What do I have to do and God says do you not know who I am yet?

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Do you not understand that I can meet your physical need of spiritual weight that does not mean that we don't do things But I want us to shift the way we're beginning to think about things because it's important. We understand what's taking place with this group What he's trying to get them to understand what he wants them to see We have to remember God can solve our physical problems through spiritual means He didn't say listen. It's time for you guys to cross the Jordan, so I need you to build a bridge. That's what we would do. We would sit down together and be like, Jordan, OK, how are we going to get across this bridge? See, I don't know. Why don't we throw Ray out there, see how far he falls down, see how fast the water is going. We'll come up with all kind of ways to try to figure out. We want to test the water, see what's going on. Right. OK, I think we could do this. Why don't we do this? And if you guys would have been here with me this week, we're hanging stuff all over the place. You've seen some of that stuff actually taking place. I was just throwing stuff everywhere. And so I want you to get this picture, right? We want to figure out how to do it We only see the physical and God's saying Don't you see me?

0:30:11  
Can't you see me? Listen I want us to take a step back He didn't ask them to build a bridge He just said can you purify your heart? In other words, can you just trust me? It doesn't mean we don't do anything. It doesn't mean that no physical effort is needed on our part Israel would have to cross to Jordan Just as they pass through the Red Sea The crossing would be physical But the safety of the passage would be spiritual spiritual. They physically had to cross, but they were trusting in the power of God to take them safely across. The same holds true for us as believers today. In order to safely travel through the trials we face, we must be, as the writer of Hebrews says in 12.2, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God We're to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Can I tell you something that doesn't mean you just stay stare and you start gazing We keep our eyes fixed on him because when he moves we move when he sits he said it's a call to action We're called to be locked in so as to move when he moves sit when he sits and however long he wants us to be in a place That's where we will be our coming and our going should never be without the Lord's leading So I'll ask you again. Who are you following this morning? Not just in times of difficulty at all times Man, I got this great job offer. Everything's fantastic Then you take the job and you find that the job is taking you from the very things of the Lord Well, did you ask God? Well, it wasn't like I was going through anything your eyes are to be fixed on the Lord at all times Remember remember your creator in your youth not when you're going through remember him before but here's the beauty Sometimes we don't remember him till we are going through And can I tell you something? It's okay Heard a sermon today and that today a couple days ago It really affected me as I was driving. And the gentleman, he made a comment. He started listing diseases, and it got my attention. And he said that many of those diseases were the best evangelists he had ever seen. Because when people find themselves going through, that's when they find themselves calling out.

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But here's the beauty. God's okay with that. He wants you to call out. Because He wants you to see that He's there. You see, we live in a sinful world, a fallen world, and we all go through so many different things, but God is faithful. He wants us to turn to Him. He wants us to look at him. He wants us to fix our eyes on him. Can I ask you a question? Would you know if the Lord even moved?

0:33:22  
I was having a conversation with Pastor Ralph this morning. It's the last argument. Hi, Ralph. And he's home, young Roman is sick, and we're going back and forth on a question, and I saw things one way, and he saw things one way, and he saw things one way, and I saw things another way, and then we both agreed I was right. I'm joking. And so, he's not here to defend himself, so it makes it easy. And so, here's why I say this. Because sometimes we believe Jesus to be right where we left him at church on Sunday morning or a Bible study on Wednesday night. We didn't have prayer for the past two weeks due to everybody traveling and so on. So we didn't have prayer on Tuesday. We didn't have Bible study on Wednesday. So we gathered together on Sunday. And if we were to cancel a service or if somebody were to be out of town And it might could possibly mean that for the next couple of weeks I really haven't spent any time with God because that's where I left him Now that's not everybody And I believe I believe that all of you have taken him with you and continue to carry him with care carry him with you But that's not everybody Sometimes we leave him in the last place we were.

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As if God's supposed to say, okay, hey, Will, I'm moving now. I'm moving now. Just come on. That's not what he said. He said, keep your eyes fixed on the arc. When it moves, you move. When it stops, you stop. When it moves, you move. When it stops, you stop. In other words, don't take your eyes off. I said, it's interesting, right, because we're so used to moving in different places. We'll move for a job.

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We'll move for a relationship. Sometimes I'll have people call me and say, Pastor Will, I cannot find a church anywhere where I'm at. Did you look for one before you went? Well, no. That should have been your first priority. See, when the ark moves, you move. When it stays, you stay. If the ark is just, if the cloud's resting with you right here, then rest right here. But this is a great opportunity. Yeah, there's best and there's better. And so I'm not saying you can't go. Please hear me, because there are churches around the world that are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is when I get those calls, it's because it was prioritized third fourth fifth sixth and seventh Should have been number one Because you should have been asking God from the word go is this the job you want me to take not the job? I want to take Two totally different things and listen. I know sometimes people will disagree with what I'm saying, but remember I said we see the physical not the spiritual He said consecrate your heart. In other words put all the things of the world out Keep me in and let me direct your path. So make sure I'm clear you can move Not telling you don't move not telling you don't pursue a job What I am saying is that are you fixed and focused on Christ in?

0:36:39  
Where he is leading you You're waiting for him to tap you on the shoulder when he's telling you you need to keep your eyes fixed on me Now at this point there to follow the ark and we already established that that represents the Lord Notice what Joshua says next in verses 4 verse 4 yet There shall be a distance between you and it About 2,000 cubits in length do not come near it in order that you may know the way you shall go For you have not passed this way before." It's interesting they're told to follow but not too closely. Now some of you may be wondering is that a thing? Can we actually follow God too closely? Well this section of Scripture is not talking about intimacy There were a lot of people following that ark.

0:37:39  
So one, they needed to be far enough back so everyone could visually see where the ark was going. Large crowd. There had to be some distance between the crowd and the ark. However, I believe the primary reason for the distance lies in what Joshua said. Do not come near it in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." Now, if you've been wondering, what does this have to do with New Year's? I pray the Holy Spirit will let me for a moment, or rather should I say I pray the Holy Spirit will tie this all together.

0:38:22  
12, 31, 23, sharing the Word of God. It's been an interesting year. I opened and I said in a little over 12 hours we'll be ringing in the new year. In some ways, nothing will change. Our children will go to school, work will be waiting for us, hobbies will resume, so on and so on and so forth. However, with each passing day, let alone year, we are faced with new choices, new problems, new opportunities, new joys, new temptations, new trials, new sorrows, and new beginnings. 2023 was a year for me that was met with great joy and also with deep pain. A year that affected me physically and awakened emotions in me that had me weeping at a stoplight and Enoch delivered sermon for New Year. And I had no idea what 2023 would hold. And now I look forward to 2024. There's only one thing that I know.

0:39:45  
I'm in the same position as the Israelites. I realize I haven't been this way before. See, I started by saying everybody in this room is in the same spot. Not a person in here has been through 2024. None of us. And we don't know what's ahead. The thought of not knowing what lies ahead can be intimidating. It can be flat out scary. found in the first six verses of Joshua 3, reminding me why I should not and why in 2023 I did not fear. I may not know the way of 2024. I may not have been that way before, but the Lord has.

0:41:18  
When we begin to talk about a new year, we either look to the past or begin to think about the future. But can I tell you something? When the clock strikes midnight, 2023 will be numbered with years past. But have you ever considered this? With the Lord there is no yesterday and there is no tomorrow For us there's a yesterday For us there is a tomorrow Hebrews 13 8 says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever That's because everything for the Lord is present to his eyes right now Therefore if we're to know the way of 2024 we have to follow the Lord Hebrews 4 13 says no creature is hidden from his sight But all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account In other words, I don't know. I didn't know what this year was going to hold And as it spiked up and down I don't think I've ever had my emotions moved in a way and many of you were here when my daughter went through her accident But I have never been moved like this and I've never felt so powerless But I've never been afraid.

0:42:42  
Because the same God that was there two years ago is the same God that's here right now. And I didn't know the end of 2023, but he knows the end from the beginning. And so I'm looking at a Jordan River, and I'm thinking, I can't cross that. I don't know how to get over it. I don't know how to help. Show me what I need to do. And all he keeps telling me is, consecrate your mind.

0:43:06  
Just stay focused on me don't take your mind off of me I don't know what you're struggling with in here today but can I tell you something if you just grasp what I'm saying 2024 2025 or however many years the Lord gives you it doesn't matter because I don't need to know what's going to happen he already does and I'm gonna live for him every single day between now and the day. He calls me home So I'm not trying to figure out how am I going to do something? I'm trying to learn how do I trust your ability to do it when I can't see how it can be done This is where he's calling us So when we sit back and we think about a new year We sit back and think about what's going to happen when the clock strikes midnight Beloved the same thing that happened before the clock struck midnight God was faithful then and God is faithful now We as believers Need to understand nothing's hidden from him.

0:44:29  
Israel struggled with trusting the Lord in the wilderness. And now here they stand before this raging river. And if that weren't enough, they know they have to go to the other side. And there's Jericho. Every new thing God allows in our lives is an opportunity for us to grow in our faith. Every new thing God allows in our lives, that's good and bad. So when I sit back and say, I didn't know some of these things were going to happen in 2023, you want to know what it was? It was an opportunity for me to grow in my faith. New paths create new opportunities to trust God in a deeper way God knows exactly what he's doing. He's not figuring this out as it goes along. He knows again I'll say the end from the beginning So we as believers have to take a step back What I want you to take away this morning is that none of us in here have gone the way of 2024.

0:45:39  
So I don't know what each of you are going to experience. But if you can remember, if you can just remember that new path test faith, then you'll know you're on the right road. The Lord allows us to go through. He places choices before us, why? So that we can choose him See as believers we can get ahead of God We see obstacles as I said and immediately we want to fix them We see the temporal we overlook the spiritual believing we've been this way before beloved. We haven't been this way before This is what you know what I'm having my second kid that's different than having just one kid I'm having my third kid that's different than having just two kids Every time it's just a little bit more and a little bit more and a little bit more but beloved We should be growing a little bit more a little bit more and a little bit more God's desire is that we trust him That we slow down to see him Him. We must remember God's desire isn't that we learn to trust ourselves, contrary to psychological babble of today. God's desire is that you trust Him, that you put your faith in Him. That does not mean that you need to think less of yourselves.

0:47:13  
It just simply means that when you think about how he sees you, you see you're far higher than you could ever esteem yourself because he died for you. This is the picture. This is what he's calling us to. Isaiah 30, 21 says this, and your ears shall hear a word behind you saying this is the way walk in it when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. I walked in here this morning and I wasn't sure what kind of mood I was in and I turned and I saw Courtney, Jackie, Sala and Sarah. They They were all there in that sound booth.

0:48:04  
And they all represent something to me in my life. Through some of the things the Lord has allowed me to be able to do. And I saw the four of them back there. And the four of them have something in common. And I have the same thing in common with the four of them. And I just turned and I saw them and I just took a picture because God was showing me you didn't know what was gonna happen in 2023 but I need you to look at this I need you to see what I'm doing I'm working just stay focused on me listen that scripture tells us your ears so here a word behind you saying this is the way walk in it whether you turn to the right or whether you turn to the left We're not to turn from following him. It cannot be our will be done, but his will be done They would have followed the rate the ark across the raging river We have to place our trust in the Lord who provides Because he's been that way before They're looking at the Jordan and wondering how they can cross God's hit you forgot about the Red Sea open They're trying to figure something out God said been there done that you haven't been that way before but I have We find ourselves praying and I don't know how this is going to happen I don't know how this beggar is going to be made well, but God says been that way before I Don't know how this is going to happen or how that's gonna happen and the Lord says been that way before When you begin to read through the scriptures there isn't a way he hasn't been before so Joshua when he's speaking to the people and trying to get them to understand that they need to focus on God And when he utters those words you haven't been this when the Lord orders you haven't been this way before Beloved that's not a bad thing. All he's saying is trust me. You haven't been this way before Isn't that what we tell our kids listen?

0:50:19  
I need you to listen to what I'm saying why because I've already been there and done that We see as parents all the time been there done that well, let me learn things my own way Yeah, yeah, okay. That's the story for another that's another sermon and so and so it's like I want to learn things my own I do it my own way, but listen God say you haven't been this way before Why can't we be what we want our children to be? Why can't we Consecrate ourselves and turn to our father. It's not enough to say he's my heavenly father if I don't act like he's one If I'm going to say father our father who art in heaven if I'm gonna call him my father Then I have to trust him when he says listen. I need you to stay right now. It's a great opportunity I need you to stay why because I'm staying right here. This is where I need you to be It's not what we tell them when they're five when they're eight when they're ten We don't want them wandering off. We want them right here right here with us.

0:51:13  
Don't leave. Lord, that's the picture. So I don't want you to be afraid going into 2024. And I don't want you to think, I don't know what's gonna happen. I don't want you to ride too high. I don't want you to ride too low. I want you to be content knowing that he's already been that way before. Some of us are experiencing the emptiness some will be leaving I Would second that but I got something that's still saying For whatever reason they think the clouds just still rested over my house. It ain't nobody left nowhere Yeah, I said the cloud went that way. This isn't all the clouds still here dad and So it's all good. And so I want you to get the picture Beloved because this is what he wants us to understand as We turn we have to remember our Creator God is faithful Deuteronomy 31 8 it is the Lord who goes before you he will be with you He will not leave you or forsake you do not fear or be dismayed Moses speaking to Joshua he's telling him God's here.

0:52:29  
Don't be afraid. Listen, fear's going to come. It's an emotion, we all have them. Frustration, anxiety, it just can't control us because we know who we belong to. We have to remember what Jesus said in John 14, 18. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you Beloved it's a beautiful picture It's easy to fall so far back that we lose sight of the Lord It's easy to be so close that you can't see the full picture But there's this perfect distance Where you can see all of his splendor Psalms 26 3 for your steadfast love is before my eyes and I walk in your faithfulness His love is forever before me So as this new year begins to unfold I Want to remind you consecrate yourselves Here's why Because tomorrow he's gonna do wonders. What does that mean? I don't know what's going on in your life But if you will consecrate yourself today Let me tell you something God can do exceedingly Abundantly above anything that you could ask or think according to the side. Start moving things out of the way. I found that even small things have been taking up space in my head.

0:54:15  
My wife and I have been sitting at night and she's like, are you okay? Are you okay? Are you okay? And I'm like, I just feel like I'm losing my mind sometimes. And I've tried to guard Friday night like it's going out of style. Friday night, me, Harkins, popcorn, Hershey bar, Coke Zero, extra-large popcorn, layer of butter, don't cheat me on it. And that's me every Friday night, go, sit, watch a movie. That's what I did Friday night. I may have been in here all week, but on Friday night, with a bunch of fiberglass in my hair and dust on my clothes, I went, called the wife, I said, I'm going to see Aquaman. Yeah, wasn't that good? Oh, sorry. Anyway, anyway, I went to go see it, all right? It's good enough to go see. All right, so I went to go see it, and I sat there, and I'm looking at it and I'm watching it. I don't really even know what happened.

0:55:18  
I was just checking out, but the whole time I was there, I was thinking about what I needed to do. And then God started dealing with me. You know, you kind of guard these hours. I'm like, well, Lord, it's only like four, the end of the day. I've been doing stuff all day. Aren't you wanna cry and you ain't got enough time? Well it's just a movie, it's just an outlet. Oh you need an outlet from me? Well no, an outlet from your people, Lord. Can I at least say that? Can a brother get an outlet.

0:56:06  
The day you draw your last breath, you'll be able to praise me forevermore. In the meantime, before you came to me, weren't you doing what you wanted? Weren't you living how you wanted? Was I not merciful to you then? Can I not use you now to go show mercy to those who've yet to see it?" Beloved, all 24 hours belong to Him. You're not entitled to any of it just for self. I don't care what the psychologist tells you. I don't care what the psychologist says. I don't care what the pastor who's slash psychologist is saying. There's all types of sermons today that talk about you but can I tell you something if you want the answer to life then you need to go to the person who's been that way before that's the only answer God will give you respite he will give you rest he will give you what you need when you need it sometimes he gives it to you when you just want it.

0:57:15  
But you have to trust Him all the way through it. And I'll bring this to a close. Psalms 139, 1 says this, Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting. Now sitting in that theater, he was searching my heart. And reminded me of a scripture that I've held dear, and that anybody who knows me knows that it was, well I'll change it now, my password for everything.

0:57:55  
Second Samuel 2424. There's another thing I need you to remember. Second Samuel 24 24 and basically it says this I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing see David had sin he did a census count of the people God told him not to and so King David needed to make a sacrifice wanted to atone for sin so he goes to this guy he needs a threshing floor so that he could offer the sacrifice. But the guy sees King David, he's like, oh man, this is King David.

0:58:33  
He says, well I need your, he said, well, hold on, you can have it, King. I'll give you whatever you need to make the sacrifice. I'll give you the threshing floor, whatever you need. And David looks at him and David says, I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing. Beloved, we do God a lot of favors, but we make very little sacrifices. What did it cost you? What did it cost me You know what it also pays me Because when I have no answer he has them all And I know the Bible says I will honor those who honor me and I know in the end. I can't keep them he can So the only place I'm gonna be is serving him. I Won't offer him anything that cost me nothing. I'm trusting him. Why? Because he's been that way before.

0:59:48  
So beloved, as we close service today, I want to challenge you. You don't have to leave here full of joy Because you know that no matter what I experienced in 2024. I got my eye on the ark I'm just gonna follow it It may look like the river is overflowing But I'm gonna keep following ark because the last time I checked when they stepped into the river The water was dammed up not before they stepped in the river make sure you understand that it was when they stepped into the river. He says, listen, when the priest's feet, when the sole of their feet steps in the bed of the water, then I'll dam up the water. In other words, faith is something that you see. God told them to go, but he didn't move until they went. And so we have to understand that we have to keep moving forward. I've been this way before, just trust me. I've been this way before just trust me 2024 will be a blessed year why because God's been that way before and no matter what you face good or bad God is going to be faithful because I've been this way before this is what we take away and if you're not the Christian in here this morning and in your mind you're thinking what is it what do I need to do in order to be that believer?

1:01:16  
Can I tell you something? You need to believe. What does that mean? It doesn't mean that you say a prayer, click your heels together three times, and there's no place like home. It means that you come to understand something. That when Eve ate from that tree in the garden, and sin entered the world. Every single person born of Adam, and that's all of us, is a sinner in need of grace.

1:01:46  
Listen, not because of what you do. I don't drink, smoke, or chew or date girls who do. That's not the issue. Those are all a byproduct of who you are. We're born sinners. Every single one of us. Adam's transgression became ours. I don't care how good you think you are or how bad you think you've been. And until we recognize that, then it's hard to understand grace. You see, grace is extended to the person who can see a sin, not because of the things you do, but because of the sinner you were Born once to die twice or born twice to die once. Born once to die twice just simply means you were born a sinner, didn't receive God. You will die again, the judgment. Or you were born once a sinner, you came to recognize that you were a sinner in need of grace and you recognized that Jesus wasn't just some man, but the perfect God-man.

1:03:17  
He who came to die for the sins of the world. You see, God said, if they eat from the tree that they would surely die, which means man needed to die. God couldn't come and die for man. Man needed to die for man. So man had a fundamental problem because everyone born of Adam is born of sin, then we needed a second Adam. Enter the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary.

1:03:42  
Mary coming into, Mary giving birth to Jesus, who is now 100% man, but hold it, 100% God. And he lives the life that we couldn't without sin, and then dies in our place. And it's only when I come to believe those two things that I then can say, Lord, my Lord and my God, forgive me. I need your grace. That's a prayer and a conversation between you and him. And you can have that conversation right now.

1:04:26  
You see, I don't need to give you the words. He's looking for the person who's consecrating their heart and you can't do that without him. Once he comes in, he comes in the moment you truly confess and believe, he begins to do what you cannot. And he continues to do it until the day he brings you home. So I don't know who I may be speaking to, but if you don't know him, don't leave here without speaking to him. And if you don't know what to say or where to go, find me before you leave here. Because his desire is that not another minute passes that you don't know Jesus to be your Savior and Lord.

1:05:03  
Because then you know who's going before you and in that place we have hope and hope never ever disappoints. With that being said I'm gonna ask you to stand because we're gonna partake of the Lord's Supper. What's going to happen is And as they are passing trays around, I want you to take a moment. I want you to take a moment and think about where you are in your relationship with Christ. Because to partake isn't something we do in remembrance of He who died for us. The Scriptures are clear that if we partake in an unworthy manner, then we're guilty. We're trampling the blood of Christ. But the beauty is if you're the believer in this room, repentance is ongoing. Lord, thank you.

1:06:36  
I haven't been what I needed to be, but I thank you for the grace and the forgiveness and I ask you to do a work in me right now. See, the beauty is we can come to Him. We can ask him to guide us and to keep us. So the reality is is that the Lord desires us to remember his birth, to remember his life, to remember all that he is. Not just today, but every single day we draw breath. And so on that night, a night that would be the last Passover meal he would have with him, he wanted them to remember something. Tonight, today, as the clock strikes midnight and we go into a new calendar year, the Lord would have you to remember something. I'm the same God on 12-31-23 as I am on 1-1-24.

1:07:53  
And I want you to remember me. He turned to his disciples and taking from the loaf, he took and he said, eat for this is my body. And as we know that Christ gave his body for us, we too are to give ours for him. And then he took from the cup and pouring into the cup, this is representative of his blood and he said take and drink for this is my blood. For as often as you eat at this table and drink of this cup, you do so until he returns. I'm going to close the service, but I want to close by praying. But I want to pray specifically for my granddaughter.

1:08:58  
I'm going to ask her, her sister and her mom if they would join me. And I'm going to ask Miles, Pyrus, Leslie, Jeanette, Steve, if they would join me. The body has been praying for quite some time. And for some of you, you know exactly what we're praying for. For some of you, you might be unsure. My granddaughter is battling something. And the river is giving the appearance that it's overflowing. I didn't know what I was going to speak about today. I think I stayed busy enough so the Lord would give me a word. And I have that word, you're gonna cross the river. Because greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world. And so if you don't know her name, her name is Tatiana.

1:10:43  
And we're going to, if you don't mind, just reach your hands forward. And we're gonna pray for Erica, for London, for Tatiana. We're gonna ask God to be God, to do exactly what he has always done, be faithful. Father, we come before you right now, we just thank you. Lord, we know that with each passing day, you are the God who sits on high and looks down low. And Father, you have afforded us yet another opportunity to come before you as a body. Many have kept Tatiana in their prayers.

1:11:25  
Herika, London and Marshawn, Patrick, Lord, we ask you to give a mother Lord strength. They can only come from you. We're asking for a peace of mind. That leads to a contentment to know that you are God and you are here. Praying for a sister a niece a cousin Father I'm asking you from the crown of her head to the sole of her feet Lord I'm asking you to begin to touch your body Father you have been doing a work far before I ever begin to lift my voice to pray We've been saying throughout the sermon that you know the end from the beginning Lord, and that is true And so father we're only walking in accordance with what you have ordained before the foundations of the world of God that we would lift her up before you Oh God and that we would trust you Oh Lord to carry her across the raging river Oh Lord we know it may seem like it's rising Lord but we're not looking to man we're looking to God we're looking to you father to do what we cannot we're asking you to speak a word from on high Oh Lord we know that you don't have to be present but like the centurion said just speak the word Oh God if you speak the word we know father all will be well Lord we come before you not because you give gifts, we come before you because you've given the greatest gift of all. You've given us our Savior Lord. You've given us Jesus Christ and it's because of the blood of Christ that we now have access to the mighty throne of grace to ask for help in time of need. Lord we come and ask for mercy. We come and ask you to move. We come and ask you to do what only you can do Lord. We have access because of your son. So as we remember Christ Lord, as we remember His blood, we remember Father was spilled for a reason.

1:13:19  
So that we could have life. Father, that life is eternity with You. But godliness, as Paul writes, is profitable for this life and the one to come. And so we're asking for that profit. We're asking for You to touch. We're asking for You to heal in a way that only you can. We're asking you to hold her as you've already been holding her. And that smile which is so amazingly beautiful, continuing to shine through 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, and Father, to the day that you call her home. Father, we don't leave here wondering if you heard us. We know that you have. And we know Father, as we pray for Tatiana, there are countless others who will need a touch. Those within this body, even as we speak right now. Father, I'm asking you to reach and to touch their heart, to let them know that you hear our cry for them. We may not know what's going on in their body. We may not know their name But you do Father your healing touch isn't just limited to 30 50 South Country Club Drive For you do not inhabit inanimate objects. You're the God who sees And so Lord we ask for a touch throughout the world We thank you Lord. You see the weak before her. You see the weak before us.

1:14:45  
We thank you for walking with her every step of the way. We magnify you. We love you. And we ask all these things in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ we pray and let the body of Christ say amen. hug somebody before you leave here today

Transcribed with Cockatoo