

Hillside Fellowship Church
April 5, 2020

Dave: Hey, Hillside, it's Pastor Dave. I wanted to give you some announcements for upcoming events so you can be aware. By the way, this is my youngest daughter, Katie. She's precious.

We've got Easter coming up, April 12, next week. And we're going to have communion at home. So we wanted to give you a head's up so you can have the crackers and juice ready so you can celebrate communion with us.

We know things are tough right now. The jobless report came up and it's close to 10 million. We want you to know about Hillside Helps. We love you and you're not alone. We wanted to give you some avenues to reach out if you need help.

First, you can email us as care@hillsidefellowship.org and let us know how we can serve you. Or you can call us if you don't have email. 830-228-4673. That's 830-228-HOPE. Or you can just reach out to anyone on staff if you have their number.

We're here to help. We set aside a lot of resources to be able to care and help and make sure that, at this point in the body, there's not any need among us. So thanks

for joining us. We look forward to worshipping with you and the Lord together.

You want to go upstairs and play. [Kiss.] All right.

John: Hello, Hillside Fellowship. Thanks for joining us online for Hillside at Home. We're so glad you're going to be worshipping with us today. Let me encourage you as we worship this morning that we be able to really exalt God together. Let's lift up our voices. Let's lift up our hearts to our King. He is our mighty fortress, our everlasting Father and he is good. We can rest in him. We can trust him no matter what the situation. So will you worship with me and sing to the Lord?

♪ [worship] ♪

I'd like to take some time to pray. For us to humble ourselves before God and ask Him to help us in this time of need. Maybe you're that person who is in need. Maybe you know that person who just lost their job or maybe you know somebody who is actually sick. Whatever the case may be, can you just -- we're going to just take like a minute and pray for the need we know of, whatever they may be. So take some time with your family, as a group, and worship through prayer. Lift up God and ask Him to help you and help those you know that are in need. Would you do that now?

Dear Lord, we lift up those around us we know that are in need. We lift up those who maybe this past week, lost their jobs. We lift up those that may actually be sick that we know. We pray that you would comfort them by your Spirit. That you would reach down and be with them in this time of need. Lord, help us to be a people who care for our neighbors even though we can't be right with them. Help us to be those who share the gospel in a trying time as people fill their lives with anxiety and stress and worry. I pray that we would be a people that we lay those down at your feet. I lay those down at your feet.

We come to you in need for we need you. For you are good. Father, meet us here. Meet us now. Sing this with me.

♪ [worship] ♪

Dave: Hey, Hillside at Home from our home again this week to your home. It's so good to be with you. We believe that Jesus changes everything and that includes us. And oftentimes, as his family, he changes us through difficult circumstances to make us more like him. To make his family more like him. To make us be formed in his image and be fruitful.

So as we walk through this difficulty, we just want to remember and rejoice in the fact that he is using this difficulty to make us his family, to make us look more like Him and to make us be fruitful.

So we've been walking through the book of Acts. We've got a long section today. I want to walk through it with you. So if you'd open up your Bibles at home to Acts chapter 5. I'm actually going to read the very end of it. I'm going to start at the very end of the story and then we'll walk through it and enjoy it together.

Acts chapter 5, verse 40, 41, and 42. God says, Luke writes that "they took Gamaliel's advice and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council rejoicing that they had been worthy to suffer shame for his name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on preaching and teaching Jesus as the Christ.

I want to start off a little bit different. Normally I do big picture, little picture. I want to start off different and I haven't done this in years. But everything is different right now in America. And so I want to set the framework just through a story.

I'm not sure how many of you, if any of you, have ever checked in to drug and alcohol treatment or rehab, but when I checked in, man, that day everything changed. What I knew yesterday was no longer true today. Everything around me had changed. And when everything around you changes, everything inside of you begins to get stirred up.

And so that first day and that first week and two weeks and three weeks, man, there was this constant anxiety. Constant fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of, am I going to be able to handle the changes. Then that fear turned into agitation and then frustration. We just call this detox or withdrawal.

In fact, if you were ever in a facility, you would hear this phrase used over and over. Man, I'm crawling out of my skin. And that's because everything changed. Over the last two weeks, as everything has changed for us, the closest I can identify it with is a national detox. A national withdrawal. Where everything we knew is different. And now we're trying to figure out how to do life differently. And there's a lot of frustration and a lot of agitation.

What I wanted to walk through is this. Whenever God wants to form his family, whenever God wants us to be fruitful, oftentimes he shuffles the deck. He uses

massive changes and we walk through these times of detox and withdrawal as he begins to change things around us.

Now here's the beauty. In rehab, it wasn't just about stopping drinking. It was about changing what's inside of us. You see, for us as Americans right now, a lot of us are frustrated. A lot of us are agitated. A lot of us are crawling out of our skins because we can't do what we used to do. Man, last week, the week before, everything is different now. We're stuck inside and many of us are agitated and frustrated.

The beauty of withdrawal and the beauty of detox is, man, oftentimes God loves to remove our freedom to do so that we can begin to focus on being. You see, God looks at our hearts. He wants to transform us from the inside out. And so oftentimes he changes everything so we can begin to look at the inside. And that's what I want to look at today.

He's forming his family and he's not so much interested in what we can do for him. Believe it or not, God is omnipotent. He doesn't need me. He doesn't need you. He doesn't need us. He can do it all by himself. But he loves it when we're a family. A healing family. A patient family. A family that is confident in our King and in our God.

So today, I'm going to walk you through and we're going to look at how he forms his family to be a fruitful people. I'm going to start out in Acts chapter 5. I'm going to read it to you. I'm going to go verses 12 down through 16. We're going to look at the fact that we are, wherever we are, Christians are a healing family. Watch this. I'll read it to you. I'll show it to you in the text.

Verse 12. "At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. But none of the rest (the religious leaders) dared to associate with them; (the apostles) however, the people held them in high esteem."

Verse 14. "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and the laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed."

This is where the Christian family starts out. We are a healing family. Here's a fact. Here's truth. Historically,

for 2000 years, wherever Christians are, we bring life and light and love and hope and help and healing with us. Wherever we go. Wherever we're at, we are a helpful, healing, helpful, loving, life and light-giving people.

This is so amazing that I'm amazed that people don't see it. But the fact of the matter is, we live in the kingdom of darkness and they're against us. You guys see this every night. Most of you are watching the coronavirus, corona team as they as president and vice president, Trump and Fauci and Birx talk about the coronavirus. You want to know how life-giving and light-giving, how loving and absolutely helpful and healing the Christian community is?

You see it on TV every night but most people don't recognize it. I just sit back and laugh. Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. Doctor Fauci. Does anyone know where he went to college? I'll tell you. Holy Cross. So that will tell you what team they bat for. How about Dr. Birx? Houghton Christian College. How about vice president Trump. How about president Trump? Every single one of these guys that are on that team that are bringing help and hope to the nation, went to Christian colleges.

You say, well, Dave, those guys may not be Christians. You're just proving my point. Jesus is so will life-giving

and help-giving and hopeful that he will even educate and care for people that don't love him. See this is what Christians do. We are a healing community wherever we go.

Now, you may read through this text and some of you will, so let me go ahead and interact with you on this. But you say, Dave, this is supernatural healing. I mean, they were just laying people out and they were laying cats on the street and Peter would walk by and even his shadow would fall on them and they would be healed.

Man, sometimes I feel like we miss the obvious, y'all. You see? Christians are a supernatural people. It is supernatural to be a Christian. He puts his life into you. You have the life of Christ in you. Sometimes I feel like we miss the obvious because he has put love in us. In fact, he says, in this is love. Not that we loved him but that he loved us and he sent his son. He so loved us that he sent his son to die for us. And then he gave us his spirit and his spirit, number one, grows us in love and sheds his love abroad in our heart. And he tells us, beloved, let us love one another. Love is supernatural.

We are a healing community. So wherever you go, Hillside, you can love and be supernatural. You can sacrifice your well-being for the well-being of others. Because love is supernatural. Let me give you an

illustration of my illustration.

This is what Wesley Autley taught me. Most of you don't know who Wesley is but you can Google him and look him up. Wesley is called the hero of Harlem, the superman of the subway. You see, one day, Wesley Autry was going to work and taking his two girls to school on his way to work. As they got on the subway, they were there on the subway platform and all of a sudden this cat named Cameron had a seizure and fell onto the subway tracks.

Immediately Wesley looked down at his two girls and he said, baby girls, stay here. I'll be right back. And Wesley jumped onto the tracks and held Cameron as the subway passed over him. He was stuck underneath the train for 40 minutes until they could get him out. And he was immediately hailed the hero of Harlem. The superman of the subway.

You see? This world knows it. Love is supernatural. Love is healing. And this is exactly what Jesus told us. Before he ascended, he said, guys, stay right here. Love one another and I'll be back soon. So Hillside, he's left us here to love. And remember, the darker the night, the brighter the light of the gospel shines. So even if you're stuck at home, we're going to be a healing community. We're going to love one another fervently from the heart. Because by this you know that you're born of God.

Because it's supernatural to love.

And number one, we're going to be a healing community. Watch what comes next. Watch verses 17 and 18. So we're out there loving. They're out there loving. They're out there serving. They're out there caring for people. Watch what happens.

Verse 17 and 18. "But the high priest rose up along with his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees) and they were filled with jealousy." Because these Christians were out there bringing life, light, healing and hope to people. All of a sudden the religious cats got super jealous.

Verse 18. "They laid hands on the apostles and they put them in (my text says) in public jail." Here's the truth. We're going to be a patient family. Here's what you need to know. A cliché goes like this. No good deed goes unpunished. Even when you're out giving light, life, healing, hope, loving people, sacrificing your well-being for other's well-being, bad things are going to happen. Unjust things are going to happen. This life in a fallen world is difficult. And it's difficult for all of us.

Injustice is going to happen. What's your response? You see? We're not only going to be a healing family, we're also going to be a patient family. This is what dolphins

taught me about God. Most of us don't think dolphins show up in the bible. Most of us don't sit around thinking where do porpoises show up in the bible?

I want you to pause the video really quick and I want you to look up Exodus 25:25. It's an amazing, amazing text that most of us have probably read and read over. I'll read it to you. You don't even have to pause it. I'll read it to you.

In Exodus chapter 25, they'd made it out of slavery, through the Red Sea, they're now in the wilderness and God's going to take an offering to build this sanctuary. When you get to chapter 25 verse 5, listen to what God tells them to give.

"Bring rams' skin dyed red and porpoise skins." You ever read through that? See, when I was reading through that I had to stop and say, wait a minute. They're in the desert. They're in the middle of the desert. Where did these cats get porpoise skins. Who has porpoise skins in the desert and why would God tell them to bring porpoise skins and ram's skin dyed red?

Let me shorten the story for you and show you how injustice is going to teach us how to be a patient family. The last time that the Israelites were near the sea, it was at the Red Sea where the sea split. And apparently

what happened after the sea split and everything came back together, a whole bunch of dolphins got washed up on shore. And the Israelites were incredibly resourceful. They were like, let's skin them and take the skins with us.

So they had carried these porpoise skins with them throughout the time and now that they were going to build the sanctuary, God said, bring the rams skin that has been dyed red and bring the porpoise skins and we'll make a roof out of it. So that every time that you walk in to worship me, you'll look up and you're remember the Red Sea and you'll remember how I delivered you.

You see? When injustice happens, these guys got locked up for doing good. The one thing you've got to remember is not to freak out. When injustice happens, it's time to chill out, not freak out. Give God time to work. He'll show up. He always does. If you'll not join the chaos and freak out, if you'll just wait for him, he'll show up. It's what he does. I can guarantee you this. Your biggest dilemmas, our biggest dilemmas, our biggest difficulties, will become the source of our greatest delights. If we'll just be patient.

Write down Psalm chapter 40. It starts out like this in verse 1. "I wanted patiently for the Lord and he inclined his ear to me and he heard me and answered me." You

see, whatever you're going through, if it's injustice, if it's unfair, if you've been locked up for doing good, remember this. Don't freak out, chill out. Because your dilemmas and difficulties will be the source of your greatest delights when you sit back, just like the Israelites did and looked at the dolphin skins and said, remember when God showed up? Remember when God delivered us? You see, God intends you to be where you are so that we'll simply learn to be, not only a healing family, but a patient family.

Now, watch what comes next. This is a long section. I'm going to read it to you because not only are we going to be a healing family and a patient family, we're just going to be a faithful family. Watch, I'm going to go verse 19 down through verse 32. He talks about being obedient. Peter does. Watch this.

Verse 19. "But during the night (as they waited for him, they were a patient, patient family). But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison and taking them out, he said, go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."

I'm going to read the rest. I've just got to stop there for a minute. That's not what you expect to hear. They just got arrested for preaching the whole message of this Life. They just got in trouble. You expect the angel

to say, hey, I'm letting you out of prison. You gotta get outta Dodge. You gotta get out of town. You gotta Shawshank this thing, get down to the coast and get a boat and enjoy your life. It's dangerous here.

The Lord doesn't tell them to do that. The Lord tells them to go smack dab in the middle of the city and continue preaching Jesus crucified, Jesus buried, Jesus resurrected. Watch what they do. God hasn't called us to be fancy or famous. He's called us to be faithful to the little things that he's asked us to do. Watch.

"Upon hearing this, they (did exactly what he said), entered the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought. But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back,

Verse 23 "saying, we found the prison house locked quite sincerely and the guards standing at the door; but when we had opened it up, we found no one inside."

Verse 24. "Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. But

someone came and reported to them, 'The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple teaching to the people'.

Verse 26. "Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned). When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's (Jesus') blood upon us.'

But Peter and the apostles answered, (and said this), 'We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you have put to death by hanging him on a cross. He is the one who God exalted to His right hand as the Prince and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.'"

Not only are we going to be a healing family and not only are we going to be a patient family, but we're going to be a faithful family. Let me walk you through what just happened in these verses.

God showed up because he always does. He let them out of prison and he gave them the next step. He said, guys, here's all you need to know. Go to the city and continue to preach the name of Jesus. He didn't call them to run. He didn't call them to get safe. He called them to go and to love and to be a healing people and a patient people and a faithful people.

You see, here's the bottom line. Many of us don't know what to do right now. We're locked inside. So we're binge watching Netflix. We're frustrated because we can't get out and be around people. We can't get out and love people. So we're like, I don't know what God would have me do.

Very simple. Do the next thing he asks you to do. Do the next thing he puts in front of you. Take the next logical step that God tells you to take. For you husbands, it may be loving your wives like Christ Jesus loved the church and just serving. For you wives, it may be loving your family. Sacrificing your well-being for the well-being of others. For you kids, it may be sharing with one another.

But you take the next step. You see, something's happened in America. We've convinced ourselves that, you know what? I don't need to obey the little things. I'll just obey the big things.

But here's the bottom line. If you haven't obeyed the light that he's given you, he's not going to give you anymore light. In fact, if you don't obey the little things, the little light that God has given you, he'll actually take away the light that you have and you'll be darkened.

Romans chapter 1, Paul says it. You'll be darkened in your inner [inaudible.] You'll begin to worship created things rather than the Creator God. Let me illustrate it for you this way. When I was auto tech school, I had a professor named Montizi. Mr. Montizi. He would start out every single class, not teaching us about auto tech, not teaching us about engines or drive trains or any of the different systems to pass our ASCE certification.

He would start out each class yelling at us and saying, you guys take off your bling. Take off your jewelry. If you don't take off your jewelry, you're going to kill yourselves and you won't be auto mechanics at all. I was like, whatever. I'm here to learn about engines. Like, I want to learn about how to take an engine apart, put it back together. Don't talk about my bling and my rings. That's kind of dumb. And I kind of ignored him.

It was a simple command that I ignored. To take off this ring right here. And I didn't want to. So one day I was working on my car and taking out my battery. And

wouldn't you know it, the wrench touched the positive terminal and the negative terminal and my ring at the same time. And it literally melted onto my ring and began to melt the skin around my finger. Immediately, I was like, you know what? Mr. Montizi knew exactly what he was talking about. I should've obeyed in the little things.

You see, this is what God does. He gives us a little light and says, obey me. Simply obey me. Boys, go preach Christ in the middle of the town. Obey me in that and I'm make the rest of the plan clear when you need to know it.

Hillside, he's called us to obey him in the little things. To be a faithful family that takes the little steps that he's put in front of us. Hillside, what little step would he have you take today? You see, the truth is, he's writing the story. He's just called us to stay on script. And today's he's called you to be a healing family, a patient family and a faithful family. To begin to love one another fervently from the heart.

Start at home. You're not going to love anybody else more than you love your family, your spouse, the people that are around you each day. So start by being faithful to the little light he's given to you. Because if you won't do the next thing he's asked you to do, even the light you have will be taken away. So we're a healing family, a

patient family, a faithful family.

Not only that, we're a confident family. Watch what comes next. You're going to love this one. Verse 33 through 39. It's called the Gamaliel principle. Gamaliel -- I don't know if he believed in Jesus or not. But he got something that most people don't get even today. Watch what Gamaliel says.

Verse 33. We're going to be a confident family. "But when they heard this, (the religious leaders) were cut to the quick and they intended to kill the apostles. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law respected by all the people, he stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the apostles, the men outside for a short time. And he said to them, 'Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men (the apostles). For some time ago, Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished and all those who followed him were scattered.

So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; (or it will come to nothing)

but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found to be fighting against God.'" "

You see, Gamaliel knew something that our world doesn't know and even most Christians don't get. It's this. When God is behind something, it changes everything. And this is why we historically, actually, practically, truly, in line with reality as reality really is, we can be a confident family. You see, because history is proven out that God is unstoppable and that his son, Jesus Christ cannot be stopped.

In fact, many have tried. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, miedo-Persia, Greece, Rome. Those nations have risen and fallen but Christ Jesus continues on. You see, I think for most of us, when we look at this world, we're withdrawing from wanting to see spectacular things. What Jesus is asking us to do is just follow him in the simple things. To realize that he can't be stopped. And Gamaliel got it.

This isn't about walking by sight. You see, walking by sight will always get us in trouble. In fact, let me tell you this. Hillside, if all you can see is what you can see with your eyes, you'll never see what you need to see to see the changes that you want to see in yourself and in society. If all you can see is what you can see with your eyes, you'll never see what you need to see to see the

changes that you want to see in yourself and in society. I call it the Ford principle.

In 1997, I had been working for about 4 years and I had \$2000 saved up. I was supposed to invest it. Our work had an investment advisor come in and say, we've got some great opportunities. And he sat down and went through the different opportunities. I remember him saying, we've got some great tech opportunities. If you want to invest your \$2000, invest it in these tech companies that are coming up. One of them was Amazon. It went public in '97.

I asked him, what is Amazon? He said, it's an online retailer. I was like, but what do they make? He said, well, they don't make anything and you can't really tangibility touch it. It's an online retailer. You can't see it. You can't touch it. It's online. And I told him, you know what? I really want to see and touch what I'm investing in. So I decided in 1997 to invest everything in Ford. At the time, it was going for \$18 a share. That's the same price that Amazon was going for. You see, I wanted to touch it. I wanted gears and grease. I wanted to be able to see with my eyes what I was investing in. I drove a Ford at the time and I figured it's a great investment.

Let me walk you through the last 24 years. You see, in

the last 24 years, my Ford stock has gone from \$2000 down to about \$820. So it's more than cut in half. Well that same money invested in Amazon would have been worth about 1.4 million right now. You see, that's why I say, if all you can see is what you can see with your eyes, you'll never see what you need to see to see the changes that you want to see in yourself and in society.

We're called to be a confident people. You see, God calls us to walk by faith, not by sight. But it's not really faith. We all have faith in something. Even if you're watching this and you reject Christianity and Jesus Christ, you have faith in something. You're probably trusting currency. You're probably trusting your cash. You're probably trusting your country. You're probably trusting in commanders and kings or military.

Here is what history has said. Currencies rise and fall. Countries rise and fall. Commanders and kings rise and fall. But Christ Jesus has historically been unable to be stopped. And that's exactly what Gamaliel says. Guys, if God's behind this, you're not going to be able to stop it. And here we are, 2000 years later, nobody has been able to stop Jesus Christ. And if you can't see that, if you don't have eyes of faith to see that, then you'll never see what you need to see.

You'll never see that God is. You'll never see that God is

love. You'll never see that God sent his Son. You'll never see that Jesus Christ lived a life without sin so he could die in your place for your sin. So he could be buried and conquer death. So he could rise again and by faith through grace give you eternal life by sending his Spirit to regenerate you. You'll never be able to see that the Spirit of God comes to dwell in the child of God to grow him in love and joy and peace and patience and goodness and kindness and gentleness and faithfulness and self-control. You'll never be able to see those things.

So you'll continue to put your confidence in a world system that's failing. That ultimately is going to perish and be done away with. As for me and my house, we'll put our confidence and faith in Jesus Christ because he's historically proven to be unstoppable. You see, if Jesus is behind something, it changes everything.

Now let me wrap up with this. I just want to spend a couple minutes on verses 40, 41, and 42. Because not only are we going to be a healing family, not only are we going to be a patient family, a faithful and confident family, but Jesus is going to use difficulty to make us a joyful family.

Watch where this story ends. Verse 40. "They (the Council, the Sadducees) took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not

to speak in the name of Jesus. And then they released them."

This is a straight beat down. You can study flogging. The boys got straight beat downs, spent a round with Mike Tyson. They got the daylights beat out of them. That's what flogging is. Then they got ordered for fear of their lives not to continue teaching Jesus. Now I don't know what your response is when you get locked in jail for preaching Jesus and then you get beat down for preaching Jesus. I don't know what your response is when there's been injustice or unfairness, when things go really, really bad for you. What's your response?

Watch what the boys' response is in verse 41.

"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

Here's the truth. In this world, you will suffer. In this world of sin and sickness and suffering and sorrow, it's going to be difficult for all of us. And if you're not suffering right now, someday you will. That's the truth in the fallen world. God has left suffering out of His goodness to open our eyes for a need for a savior. So

we're all going to suffer. You're going to suffer. I'm going to suffer. The question is, will you suffer for meaningless things or will you suffer for the mattering things? That's the bottom line question.

Because it will make all the difference in the world whether you're jaded or joyful. We're all going to suffer. Will you suffer for meaningless things, pursuing meaningless things or will you suffer for mattering things? You see, this is what I learned for signing up for a half-marathon. I was totally going to train. I Googled it, I looked it up. How to train for a half-marathon. I was told thinking about prepping for it. But time got away from me and the day came.

So like any wise person would do, I decided to run the half-marathon without training. We got there and got set up and they said, go. We started running. And I felt really good for about a quarter of a mile. And then about mile one, I realized this really isn't a wise plan. By mile eight, I felt like I was going to lose all control of my bowels, my body was burning. It was horrible. Like, I wanted to die. It was awful.

By mile 10, man, I just didn't know if I was going to make it. But here's the rest of the story. It was a marathon for adoption. To raise money for adoption. And because that's precious to my heart and my wife's heart, I knew

I wanted to finish. And even in the midst of the pain, even with -- I couldn't feel my feet, my legs were burning, even in the midst of that, there was joy. Because what I was running for mattered. It was a mattering thing.

You see, in this life, many of us are running after meaningless things. I can tell you what happens when you find your identity, security, and significance in work. When you suffer, you become jaded. You become angry. You become agitated. You become frustrated. Because you are never meant -- in fact, work was cursed. You were never meant to find your meaning in work.

Some of you are finding your identity in chasing after money. And when you suffer, when the markets drop by thousands of points, you become jaded, frustrated, and angry. This is because you're running after meaningless things. You see, when you're running after Christ Jesus, when you're running that race that's been set before you and you're running it faithfully and you've got your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith, man, suffering brings great joy. Because you know you're suffering for something that matters infinitely, eternally.

And the boys were suffering for things that mattered. They were suffering for preaching the name of Jesus.

And they knew something that most people don't know. When you go all in with Jesus, when you invest everything that you have following after Jesus, this light momentary afflictions and difficulties that we have in this world, we can be joyful because they're actually producing for us an eternal way of glory. When we suffer in this world while following Jesus, while staying on script and while suffering for our savior, he gives us that assurance in our hearts. This matters. This is meaningful. This is a mattering thing. Yeah, it's hard. Look to me. I'll give you grace.

Man, don't suffer for the meaningless things in this world. You'll become jaded. If you're going to suffer, and we all will, suffer for the mattering things. Knowing Christ Jesus your Lord. He's worth losing everything for to be that family that's a healing family, a patient family, a faithful family, a confident family. And ultimately a joyful family because we know that Jesus changes everything.

So, Hillside Fellowship, man, I miss you. There's days I just sit around and think about where each one of you sit and pray for you. Because even though now, for a time we're separated physically, I want you to know, my heart is with you, my heart is for you, I love you and I pray for you. And Hillside, this is our time to shine. This is our time to be formed into that family that is a healing

family everywhere we go.

Today is the day to love. Love is supernatural. So where you are, love. Let that light shine. Today is the day to be patient. If he has you wherever you're at, if you're sick, if you're hurting, be patient. Remember the porpoises. He'll show up. He always does. Be patient. Call out to Him.

So, Hillside, in the midst of the darkness, I want you to remember. The darker the night, the brighter the light of the gospel shines. So, Hillside, stand firm. Stand firm and move the gospel forward. The gospel has always moved forward through adversity. Not in spite of adversity.

And I'm going to end with this, because I don't think it can be said enough. Many of you are hurting. And God has given so graciously to us and the Hillside body has been so generous. We long to meet the needs of the body. So please reach out. Whether that's through care@hillsidefellowship.org, whether that's through prayer@hillsidefellowship.org, whether you call us at 830-228-4673, reach out to us.

We love you. And Hillside, this is our time to shine so the gospel might advance through adversity. Not in spite of adversity. So until next week, Hillside, I love you. God's

peace be with you. Amen.