

Sermon Transcript from August 14th, 2016 Resistance Pastor Chris Wienand, Bridgetown Church

Hi, everyone. It always is a delight to be here and I feel very daunted for a number of reasons. I really love and respect John Mark and Tammy and the weight that this pulpit has in the life of this church. That's daunting. It's daunting, also, because you are, really, quite a remarkable church. I know when you come in on Sundays and you dabble with a bit of missional community and splash it with the odd prayer meeting that it's not easy to understand what role God has for this church in this nation and beyond.

But, I must tell you it's incubating some pretty forward thinking ideas in kingdom advancement. And all of that's good and all of that, in and of itself, makes feeling the heart rate going up a little bit would be fine. But, I think there are three things that God wants to do amongst many. And the first is this: I do think that some of you who have been walking far away from God are going to walk closer with Him as He does with you tonight. I think God, in His love and mercy, is going to Jonah you. He's going to call you out of the belly of the whale. He's going to draw you back into Him and into the story of redemption.

I think, secondly, some of you are going to encounter God tonight. You've been asking Him for confirmation of a fairly significant career/destiny direction. You've been feeling Him stir some things in your heart and you've struggled with it because it seems so counter, the direction that your life has been taking. I think God – now, I can't do anything about it. But, I think God wants to bring about some changes.

I think, thirdly, that God is going to continue to add some strategic pieces to the big conversation that you're in in living in exile. We're all culture strapped. We're all very much fashioned by the nation, the family, the city we live in. It's like Gulliver. We are strapped down by those little ideas that hold us captive. And one day, we want to say "yes" to a God adventure and we can't because we are strapped down. And what moments like this do is they kind of wrestle us free from those strappings – particularly culture strappings – and allow us once again to be freed up to say "yes" to some God adventures.

The brief I have, which I feel very honored, is to read through quite a chunky piece of Daniel; a chapter with some light exegesis. We'll comment here and there about the text. And then, John Mark has asked me to tell some stories about being the church in South Africa during the Apartheid years and the transition into the freedom that came with Mandela being released out of prison after 27 years of fundamentally believing in the right and the dignity of every human being. But, what I want to do is put the Scripture front and center. So, grab your Bibles with me, please, and go to Daniel 4. Or, it may appear behind me on the screen and we will just read it and exegete it.

I want to ask God tonight to shift your thinking significantly. You know, one of the best things that ever happened to Meryl and I, 20 years ago, I was 38, she was 22 – no, not really. She was 34 when we took our two little kids, 8 and 10, and we straddled the Atlantic to move here. It was not our destination of choice. It was not a nation that Meryl and I wanted to escape to. We actually wanted to live in Hong Kong and work the Pacific Rim. A billion Chinese, a billion Indians, most of whom have never heard the precious name of Jesus. That great Pacific Rim, that region that has suffered under so much volatility and heartbreak and heartache and is still particularly suffering from, amongst other things, sex trafficking. We wanted to be based right in the incubator of those spaces. We pleaded with God to send us there. So, when God sent us to America, I have to tell it was with great disappointment.

I said, "Lord, how can you send us to a nation, most of whom have heard the precious name of Jesus, when 60% of people who died today have never heard that name once?"

I'll say it again: 60% of people who died today have never heard the name of Jesus once. And somehow, in the great economy of God, it will be something for which we will give an account. We will have to give an account to God when the great mandate was to go and disciple all nations, take this mysterious, glorious, liberating, freeing, redeeming Gospel to the far corners of the globe and how we somehow managed to transition that from a great global adventure into a self-serving, preoccupied, inner worship.

That's a revelation and it's a revolution. So, your Bibles please. Daniel 4.

"King Nebuchadnezzar, to the peoples, nations and men of every language who live in all the world: 'May you prosper greatly.'"

So, we know instantly Nebuchadnezzar is the author of this chapter. It creates some theological and historical complexity because many historians would say there is no historical knowledge of this event happening. That doesn't mean it didn't happen, it just means it's not given an account. But, you and I understand that the victors write history. Nebuchadnezzar was the victor and who would write of himself what is about to be recorded, but for the Scriptures.

"It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous."

And can I suggest those four verses together almost provide us with a political piety? In other words, we don't know if he really meant that. We don't know if he really was declaring a politically expedient doxology or was he really believing that with all of his heart? Tragically, some of our politicians currently feel obligated to have an element of spirituality. But, do I really know if they believe in Jesus or is it expedient to get the evangelical vote? I don't know until I see his life or her life. I don't know until I see what happens in either times of incredible and sublime blessing and prosperity or times of dark heartache where the faith is the default of those who wish to lead me.

"I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me," Nebuchadnezzar said. "So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me."

Well, here it comes. You see, he just said God is this incredible God. But, when he's under pressure, he looks. Where does he look? He looks for the magicians and the enchanters and the astrologers.

"The diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. Finally, Daniel came..."

Please be patient, dear friends. We do not have to beat down the door to hear our voice heard. Our great and heavenly Father will give us a "finally." When all other options and opportunities are exhausted, men and women in desperateness seeking, solution will find us. We don't have to be arrogant; proud. We don't have to walk up and down with ridiculous placards that are full of offense and anger and resentment. We can come with humility, with love, with empathy, with compassion.

"Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

"I said, 'Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me. These are the visions I saw while lying on my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. The tree touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

"In the visions I saw while lying on my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He called in a loud voice' 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field.

"Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.

"The decision was announced by the messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.'

"This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

Whew. What a passage. What a story. Isn't it amazing that God uses the very thing that made him proud, the hanging gardens of Babylon. One of the great wonders of antiquity is the very image that God uses to grab his attention. God did not use spaceships and Star Trek. God uses a tree, a hanging garden, to describe and perplex this king what was about to happen to him.

"Then Daniel (also called Belshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, 'Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.'

"Belshazzar said, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning...'"

Don't you love the humility here? I think the true prophetic community are men and women of love and empathy and compassion and peace. Here, Daniel, I love the different translations. The NIV says "perplexed and terrified," the ESV said "dismayed and alarmed," the NKJV says "astonished and troubled," the Amplified is "appalled and speechless."

Now can I, as fellow Americans – because obviously I am one and I carry dual citizenship, but not for political reasons, for the Gospel. I can go to Brazil without a visa as a South African. I can go to Libya without complexity as a South African. I want to take the Gospel to the four corners of the globe and not be held down by any political bias or patriotism. The Gospel is that which has my highest loyalty. But, can I say to us in these times in which we live, it's okay to feel perplexed and terrified. It's okay to feel dismayed and alarmed. Confusion does reign supreme, but this is a great story.

Let's gallop ahead a little bit here just for the sake of time, or we won't even get to the message.

"Belshazzar said, 'My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having the nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air—You, O King, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to the distant parts of the earth.'"

Wouldn't that be great, to just stop there? Bless him. Give him a house. Give him a wife. Give him stuff.

"But you, O King, saw a messenger, a holy one coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of earth; let him live like wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.'"

For the sake of time, let me rush ahead if you don't mind. Nebuchadnezzar is found sometime later. Twelve months. And he's on the roof of the hanging gardens of Babylon. The city's magnificent. He owns. He's a warrior. He's a soldier. He's an engineer. He's an architect. An amazing man. He rules the known world. There is no nation city that he does not have personal dominion over. And, in that moment of self-assessment – and let's be very careful how we self-assess – his conclusion is how incredibly good and gifted he is. And, in a moment of pride – and that's often the passage taught, and it can certainly be taught that way – God, in a moment of divine instruction for the ages, exposes him to the consequence of pride and he ends up leaving the palace, becoming like an animal, living in the soil without dignity, without humanity, without clearness of thought.

And it is a moment when seven times is over – whether it's seven years, seven days, we don't know – in a moment of humility and repentance, Nebuchadnezzar finds his sanity and he lands it exquisitely. Now, not in a spiritual, political piety, but in a doxology of actual worship.

And he said, "At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes towards the heaven and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

"His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of the heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand and say to you: 'What have you done?'"

"At that time my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me..."

Etcetera, etcetera. South Africa was a product of colonialism. A brief history is necessary to show you the absolute rank abuse of humanity that I was born into. The colonists came during the great era of imperialism and pretty much sought to occupy all of Africa from Cairo in the north, which became British, all the way to Cape Town in the south, which was also British. Each parcel of land was divided up, not by the authentic ethnicity of the languages that people were spoken. For example, the Shangaan people, an incredible gentle, tender, amazing tribe, was cut straight in the middle between Portugal that claimed Portuguese, East Africa or Mozambique, and South Africa that Cecil John Rhodes gathered under the great British empire.

But, not only was it a colonial division and a political scattering based on greed and expansionism, but it also evolved into a sense of elitism. So, the nation that I was born into, if you were white and male, you were the top of the pile. But, it wasn't just inferred, it was legislated. Most of the fathers who led the nation during the 50s and 60s were schooled in Germany in the 1930s. They came back not just with an instinct for elitism, but with a practice of racial segregation. So, when I was born in 1958, there was a separate educational group. If you were white, you were crafted intentionally to be educated, to be professionals, to lead the nation, to lead education, commerce, industry, the military and everything.

If you were black, by the opposite – and forgive me for the terms I use. They're the ones we use in South Africa. So, if it feels a little politically incorrect, it's because I want to help you understand the trauma that the nation was groaning in. Blacks were educated by political decree to be servants. They had a different educational system. Their curriculum was devised so that they would be servants, trench diggers, work in the homes, nannies and all that that holds. In between blacks and whites were the Indians who were brought in from India to cut cane. But, pretty soon it was evident they were not cane cutters, but master businessmen and women and found themselves tucked into a second place of privilege and the third being the so-called colored people who carried that name with honor and they were people of mixed race. Mostly of Malay and Caucasian distinction, although the coy people were intermarried in the early days as were others.

So, into this context of political decree came the worst, the most dastardly of racial separation, economic privilege. And it was into that that I was. So, I grew up a racist. My father was a racist. He said he didn't hate blacks, which made him feel good about himself. Because, he didn't hate them, he just was quasi kind to them. It never entered my mind growing up, "Where did they come from?" Because, they couldn't be my neighbor. And at the back of our house was a little house called a "kaya", which is the Zulu word for "little home or house," in which a one-roomed house was attached to a bathroom which had cold water, not hot water. It ran a long drop toilet and the woman who stayed there that cared for my house, her husband was not allowed to stay with her by law. Her children weren't allowed to stay with her by law.

Company, that was policing, it had to be policed because it's contrary to the very human nature of collaboration, family and togetherness. And my life began to change when I said "yes" to Jesus as a freshman at college. Something inside of me, what I saw around me somehow progressively no longer aligned itself with what I saw in the Scripture. I couldn't define it, I couldn't understand it, but I knew my heart shifted. And I just want to walk you through four simple things. My subject is resistance; my commentary is four things that we found in a journey of how to bring about transformation in the nation. Are you with me? I hope I didn't spend too much time with history, but I could tell you much, much more.

Remember, I was a soldier. We all were. White men were forced to go to the army because we had to uphold the political system. In 1983, we planted a church. Forty of us, a group of friends, said, "Let's plant a church. How difficult can that be?"

So, we had fun. We lived in communal houses. We did everything together. We worshiped, we prayed, we went to the beach, we were at each other's wedding. It was great. Then we all had kids together. It was kind of this great journey. But, in 1985 – and this is the first of the moments where God addressed us how to be a people who are prepared to

embrace resistance as a legitimate Christian practice against an ungodly system that drove our nation, was justified by our leaders and promoted some of the express disadvantage of the rights and privileges of others. And ironically enough, we read – a few of us who led the church at that time – two passages of Scripture.

And the first is, I'll read it to you, Daniel 9: **"In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom—in the first year, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of God given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years."**

Seventy years. That's my whole life gone.

So I turned to the Lord God in spite of knowing I could have said, "God is sovereign. God will do it. Let's just trust Him."

Ladies and gentlemen, that is a misuse of theology. God is sovereign, therefore I take ownership of the quest that God has to translation the world. "His Kingdom come" is a most profound political statement. The moment I pray the Lord's prayer that's so pleasantly prayed at many a public gathering, at least in the past, is a major political statement. It says that His Kingdom, above being American, above being South African, His Kingdom come.

"So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed:

"Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love..."

We wrote songs. We sang this. "O Lord, keep your covenant of love. You've said seventy years of the desolation of Jerusalem, but we want to cry out to you, God, for the freedom of South Africa from the brokenness that political and economic elitism is causing in the lives of generation after generation. We have sinned and we have done wrong."

I want to suggest to you, as we discovered – and this was a journey of discovery – that the first and the high value of resistance is through prayer.

1 Timothy 2:3, Paul says – am I too intense, my love? Should I breathe? I'm breathing every third minute. Shall I make it every minute? Would that be okay? So, you know, I am so passive. When Nelson Mandela walked out of prison after 27 years, I was watching the television and I wept. I wept. Because, for years and years we fought with seemingly no impact whatsoever. And when he walked out, a man of dignity, not only was he liberated and where most other leaders who had been imprisoned in Africa came out, two things happened throughout Africa. Please hear me. The first is this: they came out of prison angry. They danced with their fists up. There were those within South Africa who danced with their fists up saying, "One settler, one bullet. We will shoot every white man, every white woman, every white child."

And Mandela came with his hand up in surrender and said, "We will love our enemy and we will reconcile."

A man who gave 27 years of his life for a crime that fundamentally is earthed in the right and dignity of every human being should have come out angry, and he said, "Reconciliation."

The second thing that every African leader had done throughout Africa when the colonists were pushed out, it became one man, one vote, once. Mugabe in Zimbabwe. One man, one vote, once. He's still in power in his 90s and he has destroyed that country. And I honestly believe, not only was Mandela a man, they call him Madiba. Madiba means "father." I honestly think in those years in prison, the church was crying out, "God, save our nation."

When you see people on street corners having riots, tubes poured over their head, gasoline poured over them and then lit. Our nation was burning. And the church prayed. First of all, pray. There is a kind of prayer that Daniel does. There's a kind of prayer that Daniel prays here that – can I be honest and say – the American church hasn't grasped yet? He pleaded with God in spite of God declaring His intent. Seventy years of desolation. He pleaded with God. I love listening-prayer, ladies and gentlemen, but that's not it. Let me

just read one more passage and I'll explain what we did then.

Daniel 10:1: **"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the estate come to him..."** – here it comes.

1985, July of that year.

"At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all..." – no deodorant – **"...until the three weeks were over."**

God spoke to us from that passage of Scripture and we called our church to a three-week prayer and fasting. We ate soup and fruit juice only. We made every night at seven o'clock, every man and every woman and ever child, and we literally cried out to God. When we left every night, we were hoarse. It wasn't a little Buddhist hum. "Hmm. Hmm." We walked, we sweated, we literally cried out to God on the top of our voice. People were in the corners weeping, people were shouting, people were marching up and down. The band got tired of playing as we cried out to God.

You see, ladies and gentlemen, it is a first of all reaction. It isn't the Nebuchadnezzar one. "Let's get all the magicians, all the clever people. Okay, what does this mean?"

It's this punchy, understanding prayer that changes things. When Mandela walked out, we wept. And can I say this? We were not the only church by any stretch of the imagination. There were Methodist churches, liberal churches, there were conservative churches, Baptist churches that cried out to God for a night or two or three. Across the nation, prayer went forth. And I want to say to you, if I can, with compassion and passion of a father, it's the first step of resistance where we change our prayer. Not just I pray, but we pray. Not just I reflect, but we petition. And we stand in the gap between divine intent and the brokenness of a nation that's sinning.

The second occasion happened when we were here. It came in 1996 through a church – a broken church – in the greater L.A. area. And one of the first things I noticed is that the church didn't pray. That coming from that passionate culture, it was such a glaring weakness. So, instantly, we called a night of prayer and there was such fuss. "No, we don't do that. You must understand. We don't do that stuff."

We called for three nights of prayer. A man walked up to me and he said to me, "Chris, I'm so delighted that you're calling the church to fast."

I'll bet you that's a relief. Except he didn't come once. So, I saw him the next time and I said, "You were so delighted that the church was called to fast."

He said, "Yeah, we were, man. This church doesn't pray."

So I said, "But, you didn't come."

And he said, "Well, I didn't say I was coming. See, I have the right to first refusal. I'm a rampant individualist. I do just what I want to do."

And I thought, "Oh, my God. Really? Has that sense of the corporate 'us' been lost and all that exists is personal piety?"

1999, September, God called us to 10 days of prayer and fasting. Now, I do not like fasting, as you can see. And the church groaned. Meryl's here. She'll tell you. It was not a happy church. In the first few nights, there was hardly – it was low by proportion. When I call a fast, I'm expecting 100%. I would say things like, "The only reason you miss it is if God says, 'No. Don't go.'"

You don't have to pray whether you should go, because everyone should go who calls this church home. Aren't you glad you're not in my church? Pretty pushy. In the middle of that week, I got a phone call from one of the elders one morning. I think it was a Wednesday morning. And he said, "Is your TV on?"

I said, "No."

He said, "Turn it on."

He put the phone down and I turned my TV on as the second airplane hit the Twin Towers. And I watched as one of the two great symbols of the great economic power of this nation crumbled. And we wept. Suddenly, from a grump church, what are these elders doing? Why are they calling us to pray? What do they know? Suddenly, we were incredibly prophetic. Morning and evening prayer meetings were filled to the hilt as people could not squeeze in crying out to God. But, you know what was my grief? Not once did I hear the church arise with one voice in this nation to say, "Ladies and gentlemen, like Daniel we have sinned. God, would You come and heal our nation?"

We flew flags, we declared our great patriotism. And I did. I'm very proud to be an American. I want you to know that. I have an American-born son. But, there was no call to prayer, no call to repentance, no call to surrender to the great King and His Kingdom. Are you with me? Was that too harsh, my love? Was that quite strong? But, you understand why that was?

The second thing that we did – and I'll iterate it just because it's simple and is – is to proclaim. Very simply to proclaim the wonders. Remember when Jesus came back from the desert? Luke 4. Remember the moment?

It said this in Luke 4:1 "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, he was led by the Holy Spirit, he returned from the desert in the power of the Holy Spirit and he stood up and he said, 'The spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of the sight for the blind and release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'"

And he rolled up the scroll and He said, "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in my hearing."

Ladies and gentlemen, I know you come from many different Christian cultures and traditions, and I understand something of the awkwardness, particularly in a nation that prides itself in the separation of church and state. But, please let that not disarm us for the privilege that we have to proclaim the wonder of God's Word, whatever the cost may be.

In the 80s, I met a man called Joseph Korbel. Josef was a great church planter in the Trans Sky, which is the [garbled] area in the south eastern part of the country. But, he was one of many that would get arrested with some frequency. A Gospel, Jesus loving man who proclaimed the truth as he saw it. Not unnecessarily a political activist. But, if we do what the Bible says, we will be perceived to be political activists. And he got arrested without trial. Detained without trial was the kind of thing many, many times to the point where he used to have a suitcase at the front door and his family, his wife and his kids knew when that knock came, "Police!"

He'd open it up, he'd kiss them, he's pick up his bag and he'd go to prison. That was normal. If we proclaim the Word of God without apology, like John the Baptist, there's consequence. And it's an incredible consequence. John the Baptist said to Herod, "You shouldn't be married to your brother's wife."

She hated him for it. Not only was he put in prison, but the daughter got him to have his head chopped off. What did he say? What was so amazing? He dared broach the power of the day with the proclamation of God's Word. It was a hard journey for me. I'm an Afrikaner, which means I'm of Dutch, German heritage. And it was my culture that produced this. So, I grew up under this mindset that you've got to be loyal. You've got to be loyal to the government, you've got to do all those things which I'll allude to in just a moment.

But, I realized as a young church leader – I was about 28, 29, 30 or something to that affect – that we couldn't stand by and do nothing. So, we did an event called "Towards a Multicultural Church." It was very poorly attended. We had John Perkins from America. Some of you will know him. I invited John to come. It was amazing he came. I mean, I'm this little, young South African. We had brothers from different ethnic groups and we had this event and it turned the police spotlight onto us. Shortly after that, the security police or the FBI, if you wish, came to see me. They said, "We hear you say things that aren't helpful."

And I said, "Well, I'm not too sure what you're referring to."

They spent the first time, probably about an hour with, probing me; pushing me. And they said, "I want you to know we're in your congregation. We are watching your every move. We are listening to your every message."

The black pastor said to me, "Chris, if you were one of us, you'd be arrested."

And I said, "What would I be arrested for? Preaching the love of Christ to a broken world? Preaching that every person matters with love and compassion and redemption?"

And there was a rather humorous moment – and I don't want to spend too much time. I want to move on to the other two quickly. But, the security police came to me one day and they said, "Pastor, we heard you've got a prayer meeting on Thursday night."

I said, "Yes, we have."

They said, "Well, is it a political prayer meeting?"

I said, "Well, before I answer it, can I ask: if it's a political prayer meeting, will you come?"

And they said, "Yes."

I said, "It's definitely a political prayer meeting."

Quickly moving on. Practice. Not only is there power of resistance through prayer, there's the power of resistance through proclamation using the pulpit for the advancement of the Kingdom, the upside down Kingdom that John Mark teaches so magnificently about. But, there is a practice peace.

In Acts 1:1, it says, "This is an account of all that Jesus did and taught."

And when Jesus looked at that woman caught in the very act of adultery, the powers that be wanted to expose him and see whether He really was a man of justice; a man of the law; a man who upheld what it meant to be Jewish; a man who was prepared to defend the traditions of the day. And, rather than offer judicial condemnation, he offered judicial grace. All I find mesmerizing by the story is not just the fact that she was probably naked as they threw her down at His feet to embarrass her fully before her ultimate execution by being stoned, they looked very carefully to see what His response would be.

So often we're intrigued. We want to know what He wrote in the sand. But, we missed the point. It wasn't what He wrote, it was what He wrote with. The finger of God. The same finger that gave the first covenant to Moses on the mountain was the finger who wrote the new covenant of grace and mercy and reconciliation.

My friend, Terry Fishay, was one of the pastors with us. Sorry, I'm just a little tender. He and I were in South Africa together recently and Peter Walt, a fellow pastor, said, "Chris, I have someone to introduce you to."

There was this young, black guy – and again, that's the language of South Africa – and he looked at me and his face was radiant and he said, "Do you remember the story," and only as they told it did I remember. Terry was a young pastor with me on staff and Terry met this black man called "Banana." And he lived in Chesterville. Chesterville was, in American terms, a little bit like a ghetto. It was an area closed off by the police and the army and you could only get access in and out. Such was the volatility and the crime and the violence and the death and the destruction and civil unrest. You could only get in if you lived there.

But, Terry became friends with this man and would go in – he told me a few of the stories which I've forgotten. He would go through the barricade. The only white man within miles. He would get to the police and they'd say, "Where are you going?"

He said, "I'm going to visit my friend."

They said, "No you don't. You're a white man. White men will get killed if they go in

there."

He said, "No, you don't understand. I have a friend in Chesterville. His middle name is Banana. We're both pastors. I have to see him."

And the police would shrug their shoulders. "Hey, buddy. You ain't going to make it out tonight."

He would go and sit with Banana and take food for his family. One day, Terry got message that he'd been arrested and detained without trial. Terry got in his car and drove through the pickets and the barricades and went to his wife. He took her bags of food and, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Banana's son sitting in the corner weeping. His father was in prison. He didn't know if he'd come out. Terry would take them food regularly and decided to go and visit him.

So, he went to the commandant at the political prison and he asked for an appointment and he went in and he said, "Sir, I'd like to see Banana."

The commandant looked at him with a gruff voice, "What are you, white man, wanting to do with these black men? Only family can visit?"

He said, "Sir, what you don't understand is we're brothers."

The commandant said, "What?"

He said, "No, we're brothers. I'm his brother. I'm his family member. In Christ, we're brothers."

Terry said the commandant looked at him long and hard and said, "Okay."

He said he remembers walking into this room and the prison door was shut behind him and there was a room full of black people, political prisoners, and their family, who were absolutely astounded. What was this white man doing here? Was he, in your language, CIA, FBI? Banana came out and they hugged each other. Terry would visit him regularly and take food to his family regularly. But, as time goes, he was let out of prison when Mandela was released and lost touch as we do.

March this year, Terry and I were in Durban together. There was this young man. Radiant face. Jesus lover. He said, "I was the boy who sat in the corner who hated white people. But, a man came to my house and loved my family. A man went to prison to visit my dad. A man went through the barricades, aware of the possible danger that it would cause him. But, he came and I could hate white people no more."

You know what's amazing? That man is one of five now with the man who now leads the church Terry and I planted, who are at the forefront of racial reconciliation in our city, because Terry visited his dad in prison. God will do amazing things when we humbly obey Him. Not only is there prayer as a primary resister, proclamation with integrity true to the text, but the practice of being a Jesus apprentice – as John Mark says so wonderfully. Lastly, excuse me being tender, but those are tender things. That's why I'm so passionate.

Protest. I grew up under a culture that forbade protest of any kind. The quoted to us Romans 13 all the time. "Submit to your government. Obey your government." Over and over ad nauseam. Forgetting the fact that in Proverbs 31:9, it says, "Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and the needy."

Meryl told me this morning, as we were processing the message together of Acts 5, when the apostles got arrested for the first time – if time allowed, I'd read the passage to you. But, here they are in prison. Interviewed, beaten, forbade from being able to go out there and preach again. And isn't it amazing – actually, let me read this verse to you, because I want the word to speak. I'm so sorry I'm tender. But, I'm fine now. I'm not tender anymore. I'm angry now. No, I'm joking.

Acts 5:17: "Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out."

And the angel said, obviously of the Lord from divine are summoned, **"Go stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life."**

"Go and break the law. Go and break the law."

In the middle of the 90s, protests became more and more the ways in which the oppressed could declare their intent. And I remember with Meryl one morning sitting and saying, "There's a protest march in our city."

They estimate twenty to thirty thousand people, predominantly made up of the ANC, the African National Congress, who were all schooled in Eastern Europe, the leaders were. The ANC were accompanied by the South African Communist party, which to us in the 80s was the ultimate enemy. And the PAC, Pan Africanist Congress, who were the ones who toyi-toyed with fists, "One settler, one bullet."

And I said to Meryl, "I have to go and march."

And she said, "Babe, are you sure?"

I said, "One day my kids will ask me, 'Dad, what did you do during those days?'"

What will you do when the fundamental human right of dignity and value was erased by a political system, for me, crafted out of Hell? So, I made myself a banner: "A pastor against Apartheid." And with a few friends – because you never do those things alone. We call it "team," it's actually fear. And we went and stood outside of the big church on the edges of downtown where they're having a combined faith service. I didn't want to worship with people of other traditions or religions. Rightfully or wrongly, I don't know. But, the advantage was as they came out, led by Desmond Tutu, singing their protest songs, we joined in pretty close to the front.

So, like Martin Luther King, those leaders took up the front of the street and we kind of came in probably about the tenth line. Twenty or thirty thousand people. I don't know. Now, I was military trained. I was an infantry officer. So, we knew how to handle riots if it went bad. And as we came down West Street, I looked down at the end of the road and there were some of the men I trained who were on the machine guns with the dogs. And I remember thinking, "If this goes bad, I'm dead."

As we went down West Street, I kept on the side and I said to the guys with me, "Let's keep on the side. Because, if the guns go, we head down the side streets."

I remember the intelligence community. I was an intel trained officer. I recognized some of them with their cameras. And, because we were white and there were so few whites marching, they filmed us at length. I had just come first nationally to become a captain in the South African Intelligence Services, and I never got promoted because I got called in after the march.

They said, "What, Lieutenant Wienand, are you doing?"

And I said, "Sir, I cannot sit down and keep quiet any longer. This is against the very essence of creation and redemption."

The more humorous of it is as we started marching and they started toyi-toying, I don't know if you've seen it. It's kind of a very unique African movement. They started singing their songs of liberty. And the ANC sang their songs. Ironically enough, it was a hymn. The South African Communist party was singing their songs and as this wave of 20,000 people moved down the high street, I looked to all the businesses, the white professionals, and I saw the horror of their face and I thought, "Now you understand."

The more humorous part was I sand in tongues at the top of my voice. I thought, "They will have no idea what I'm singing." I said, "These aren't songs of faith, they're songs of fear."

And me and a few other mates went down singing, basically, songs of freedom. Mandela was released. The man who stood an arrogant, audacious, elitist racist who led the country, God removed just like Nebuchadnezzar. And God raised up a man called F.W. de Klerk who released Mandela and he was branded a traitor. I listened to radio shows where he came on and one caller after another said, "You know that you are a traitor."

A "verraaier" is our language. Okay. Sorry. These are deep things. There is a deep calling to deep. There is a depth that God calls us to where three things, as I land. The first is this: where we surrender the desire and the wish to please. Ladies and gentlemen, if we're going to count for Christ, we cannot be held captive by the pressure to conform and the power to please. The idol of applause has to be leaked from us. I'm not a hero here. I tell these stories reluctantly. John Mark has asked me to. I didn't go to prison. My family did not fear for my existence. But, some of my comrades in kingdom arms did. Some of them never came home. This is an incredible book, but it does require us to die for the need to please.

I remember my father's deep displeasure when he knew that we let the maid sleep in our guest room. "What are you thinking, Chris? There's a room at the bottom of the property for her. Why do you put her in your guest room? Do you know what this is going to do to the country?"

"Yes, dad. It's going to give people dignity. It's going to restore their value."

Secondly, not only do we need to be free of the pressure to please, but we need to discern the appropriate response. Can I ask you, dear, dear fellow sojourner, to fill your toolbox with the various responses that may need to come our way? We've been here 20 years. Love America. So incredibly privileged to be here. But, I have been astounded at the transition – cultural, contextual, political, economic – over the last 20 years. I don't know what it will require of us over the next years, but can I ask that we are ready? Joseph Korbel had a little suitcase at his front door, ready for any eventuality. Can we develop a toolbox of readiness for any divine assignment, whatever it might look like?

And thirdly, can we ask God to give us strength and courage for immediate obedience? For immediate obedience. When they opened up the jail and let the apostles out, the angel said, "Go, now. Now. Go and proclaim to them what the full message of this new life really looks like."

My appeal to you – John Mark's going to join me and kind of land this time – is that we develop a culture of immediate obedience. Holy Spirit, speak to me. And, as You speak to me, I will respond immediately. No matter what You say, no matter how You say it. Yes. Yes.

Would you pray with me, please? Excuse my emotion.

Sovereign Lord, thank You for the heroes – men and women, boys and girls – who have put their hand up in divine obedience, just as Daniel was appalled, perplexed, astonished, amazed, fearful to declare to the king what was about to happen. I believe You're raising up a generation of men and women who are Daniel-esque, living in exile; a creative minority who will say "yes." It may not be our story in South Africa at all, but it will be a community of men and women who will be strong and courageous and desirous to have immediate obedience.