

“Plastic Sacks and Gucci Bags” // 2 Corinthians 4:1–18 // *God’s Power in Broken Vessels* #6¹

Announcement + Prayer: Legacy Offering Next Week

Hey Summit family—before we jump into the message, I need to remind you of something really important. **Next weekend, December 11–14, is our Legacy Offering Weekend.** That’s a weekend we do a special end-of-year big offering push. During that weekend, every dollar you give goes directly into special projects in our five Legacy Lanes—the five lanes being international missions, church planting, local outreach, leadership multiplication, and Triangle gospel expansion. 100 percent! We have projects in these lanes like Bible translations for unreached people groups, a facility for ministry on local college campuses, and some outreach opportunities to our local prisons.

I’ve told you that I feel like my job as your pastor is to vet which ministries in these five lanes give you the best EROI—eternal return on investment—so that you can be confident that your generosity gets maximum return for God’s kingdom. That’s my job, and on that weekend, 100 percent of what you give goes to those ministries we’ve vetted and selected. On that weekend, you’re not giving TO this church as much as you’re giving THROUGH it to the work of God’s kingdom.

So, let’s do it big this year, can we?

Here’s my ask: **Will you spend some time this week praying, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”** We believe God is going to use this offering to open new doors for the gospel.

And so, let’s take a moment now to pray toward that ...

¹ Sources consulted: Eric Mason, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 2 Corinthians*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2024); Gary Millar, *2 Corinthians for You* (London, UK: The Good Book Company, 2020); Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians* (London, UK: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004); Joe McKeever, “[A Long Obedience](#),” article posted August 10, 2004; Skip Heitzig, “[Expound: 2 Corinthians 4](#),” January 25, 2023, Calvary Church; Dr. David Jeremiah, “[Slaying the Giant of Failure](#),” February 27–28, 2023, Turning Point Ministries; Tim Keller, “[Christian Hope and Suffering](#),” May 16, 2004, Redeemer Presbyterian. And others as noted throughout.

Introduction

If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, open them with me to 2 Corinthians 4, and let's stand for the reading of God's Word, can we? You listen as I read:

~~4:1 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.~~

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.

~~13 Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," we also believe, and so we also speak, 14 knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.~~

~~15 For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.~~

~~16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not~~

to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

I read an amazing little spy story recently: Just after the end of WW2, as the Cold War was really starting to heat up, the British Ambassador in Washington needed to get some urgent piece of communication back to London. He didn't want to use the phone lines because he suspected they might be bugged. There was this diplomatic box that traveled every day back and forth between London and DC, but the information he had was so sensitive and so critical that he didn't want to put it in a place that the Soviets might target for some kind of theft. So he put some of the most classified, top-secret material in the world in a plain envelope and sent it through ordinary mail.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul tells the Corinthians not to let the unremarkableness of the gospel envelope cause them to miss the importance of the contents.

Vs 7, he says: **But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**

It's very important to understand the question Paul is trying to answer here. Some of Paul's critics had said: "Hey, Corinthians: Paul's troubles are proof that God's power is not really on him. If God was really with him," they said, "he would prosper."

You've probably had a similar thought at some point: If God was really pleased with some person, if he was really honored by that ministry, things would go better for them. Look at how difficult things are for them; they aren't *#blessed*. Or maybe you've had that thought about yourself—if God's favor really was upon me, things would be going a lot better.

It's one of the oldest deceptions in the book. It's the substance of what Job's friends had said to him: "Job, if God was really pleased with you, you wouldn't be having all these problems."

"But to the contrary," Paul says, "my sufferings are a confirmation, not a rebuttal, of God's hand of blessing on me." And he ties this claim into the very nature of the gospel itself.

- You see, God saved us, Paul said, not through prosperity but through suffering.
- The greatest act of God involved an unjust cross and unfair suffering. For Jesus, the way to glory led through the cross. His humility led to his exaltation; his weakness led to triumph.
- For Jesus, the way up was the way down.
- And that's how it works for his followers too, Paul says: The way up is the way down.

Martin Luther said that a lot of confusion in the Christian life comes from substituting the **"theology of glory" vs.** (for the) **"theology of the cross."**

- “The theology of glory,” Luther says, expects to find God in strength. The theology of the cross knows he is found in weakness.²
- The theology of glory says: “God’s favor is proven by visible success.” The theology of the cross says: “His favor is hidden in apparent failure.”
- The theology of glory looks for God in the spectacular; the theology of the cross finds him in submission.
- The theology of glory presents the Christian life primarily as a ladder to climb; the theology of the cross presents it as a cross to die on.

This whole chapter is an explanation of the theology of the cross. Again, our key verse is **verse 7: “We have this treasure in jars of clay.”**

- By the way: In those days, “clay jars” were considered the “cheap” containers. If you had something nice, you’d put it into a stone, bronze, silver, or even gold pot. Clay jars were what you used as toilets. If you were a thief breaking into a house and you saw a clay pot, you’d probably avoid it.
- For us, it would be like this. Two ladies walk in (Target **bag** vs. **Gucci Lady Diana bag**. This bag retails at \$4,660. It’s not mine or Veronica’s; no, it’s John Muller’s—it’s what he keeps his hair ties in. Just kidding. I borrowed it from a friend who got it as a gift and she let me borrow it). Two ladies with two bags. Which bag probably contains important items? Which lady has status? (Diamond ring in plastic bag)

These are the kinds of vessels God puts his power into, Paul says, and why, vs. 7? “... **to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**”

Let’s let Paul build this out a little bit. Drop back to verse **6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

- When God created the universe, how did he do it? Was the secret of God’s success in creation that he started with some really amazing ingredients? Was God the Father like Papa Johns, who says, “The secret to our pizzas is that we use only the finest ingredients?” Was God like, “Better ingredients; better creation; Papa God”?
- No. In creation, God started with NOTHING and spoke all this beauty out of nothing with just a word. In the same way, Paul says, when God brings salvation to someone, he doesn’t start with the amazing talents of the witness or the innate goodness of the hearer. Just like God spoke into dark nothingness and said, “Let there be light,” so he speaks into the darkness of our spiritual hearts and says, “Let there be spiritual light.”
- Make no mistake about it, Paul says: Lost people are under supernatural bondage. Vs. 4, “... **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**”
- No talent in the preacher can overcome that kind of blindness.

I’ve heard evangelism described like people are out there drowning in their sin, and along comes someone like me in a rowboat, with a lifesaver called Jesus, and I say, “You need to be saved! Who wants to be saved?” And the drowning person says, “I’m dying over here; I got no options; I need that!” and so I throw out Jesus-the-lifesaver to you, and you grab hold of him. But the real picture of conversion is that we’re all facedown in the water—no breath, no pulse, already dead—but then God’s Spirit shines in our heart and breathes into our lungs, and just like creation light burst into the darkness of nothingness, spiritual life comes into us. **The hymnwriter Charles Wesley said it this way:**

² Paraphrasing *The Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 21

- *Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night; thine eye diffused a quickening (means: life-giving) ray; I rose, the dungeon flamed with light! My chains fell off, my soul was free; I rose, went forth and followed thee!*
- Oh friend, do you remember when that happened to you? You aren't sure what had changed, but it just made sense. The gospel made sense. Who Jesus was made sense.

That kind of power, Summit, doesn't come through human ability.

- Summit, listen: I work hard on these messages, but I am very aware that when you come in here, you don't need a man of eloquence and learning who can persuade you or entertain you.
- You need someone anointed with the power of God, and that kind of power doesn't come from working on my flesh all week; that kind of power comes from the prayer closet. And what drives us to the prayer closet is not our worldly success but our worldly sorrow.
- As with Jesus, the power of resurrection only comes through the pain of the cross.

So in **vs. 8**, Paul gives us a kind of resume, except this resume doesn't brag on all his accomplishments like ours would: He says, "I'm afflicted"; I'm "crushed"; I'm "persecuted"; I'm "struck down"; I'm "always carrying about in my body the death of Jesus." These are the proofs that I am anointed by God, because in these, the pattern of my ministry resembles Jesus'. And just like with Jesus, God is bringing resurrection power through these weaknesses.

In vv. 14–18, Paul gives specific comfort to people undergoing suffering. You see, I know that some of you have wondered why things are for you the way that they are; why the pain; why certain unanswered prayers; why certain things haven't worked out like you thought they should. **Vv 14–18** is Paul's answer to you. Paul says, *"I can't tell you everything God is doing—no one can. But I can give you **four guarantees**."*

#1 is in **vs. 14: knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.**

(1) Just like God raised Jesus after the cross, he'll raise you, too (vs 14)

And of course he means in eternity. At the final resurrection. But he also means here on earth too.

You see, the resurrection wasn't just pie in the sky; it was something that happened on earth. God physically raised Jesus from the dead here on earth, and Paul knows that in the same way, God will bring earthly benefit through our suffering.

King David said, "The dead can't praise you on earth; they can't glorify your name now. I expect to see your goodness in the land of the living. I expect goodness and mercy to follow me all the days of my life."³

³ Ps 27:13; 23:6; 30:9; 115:17

This is the promise of resurrection: God is working life and goodness through your pain. So hang on, friend. Your suffering is not in vain. I'm not saying you'll always be able to see or understand it; I'm just saying as sure as you know Jesus got out of the grave, you can know he's bringing victory and resurrection through your suffering too. So don't give up.

I've noticed I have a bad habit when watching sports. I'm a "to the bitter end" guy. Which means even when it's *painfully* obvious my team has lost, there's some delusional optimism that kicks in. It'll be the fourth quarter, we're down 34, the starters are on the sidelines wearing parkas, the announcers have totally stopped talking about this week's game and are now talking about next week's matchups, but I'm still sitting there thinking, *"Well ... maybe if we get a quick turnover, then hit a couple of onside kicks in a row, and the other team suddenly forgets how to play football ... we might still pull this off."* It's delusional, I know. But I can't give up. And I think I am ruined because of a handful of games I've seen:

- Like the 2017 Super Bowl, Patriots vs. Falcons, where the Falcons are up 28–3 at the end of the 3rd quarter, and the Patriots come back to win it 34–28.
- Or that 2018 UVA vs. Louisville basketball game, where Louisville was up 66 to 59 with 17 seconds left. 17 seconds. I checked it later, by the way; Vegas odds at that point gave Louisville a 99.9 percent probability to win. If you'd have placed a bet right then—which you shouldn't, by the way, because sports gambling is stupid—you'd have gotten 1000-to-1 odds. But somehow, UVA pulled it off and won. It was one of the most incredible things I've ever seen. Veronica was in a good mood for like six straight weeks after that.

But the bottom line is, because of those games, no matter the score—million-to-one odds—and I'm like, "So you're telling me there's a chance!"

That's probably dumb in sports, but Paul says, "When it comes to Jesus, you can be a 'to the bitter end' guy, because the comeback is guaranteed." Friday's bitter. Saturday's bitter. But on Sunday, the Sweetness himself walks out of the grave. Maybe you're in a "Saturday" of waiting; hang on, Sunday is coming: (1) Just like God raised Jesus after the cross, he'll raise you, too (vs 14).

2. Jesus uses our suffering to bring others to heaven (vv 14–15)

Notice the end of vs. 14. He'll bring us with you into heaven. Just like Jesus' suffering produced life in us, so our suffering produces life in others.

Look at vs. 15: For it is all for your sake (i.e., all this SUFFERING is for YOUR sake), so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Paul says, "Why am I suffering?" "It's for your sake." **Why did Jesus suffer?** For my sake. Why do I suffer? For others' sake.

It's one of the **simplest but most difficult truths** in the New Testament: Life in the world only comes through death in the church.

- In John 12, Jesus compared the coming of spiritual life to the world to a seed. It's a fascinating story; here's how it went down: John 12, a group of Gentiles come to the disciples and say, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus!" And the disciples come and relay this message to Jesus.

- Now, this was a rather substantial moment in the life of Jesus. You see, up until this moment, he'd spent all his time among the Jews, but his ultimate purpose had always been to come for the whole world, not just the Jews, and now the world—the Gentiles, the non-Jews—are coming to him. But instead of rushing over to them and saying, “Guys, I’m so excited about this; this is what I’ve been waiting for”—instead of that, he turns to his disciples and says, “Unless a grain of wheat ...” It’s a rather odd analogy when you think about it. How many of us think of a seed going into the ground as “dying?” I think of it as just beginning to LIVE. And yet, when a seed goes into the ground, it is dying, in a sense. It’s life as a seed dies. Its shell has to crack open. But see, when that happens, all kinds of life comes from it. 100-fold, 1,000-fold. Think of an **acorn**: This can produce an oak tree so big it can blow your mind! But it first has to die as an acorn.
- The message is clear: If life in the Gentiles is going to come—if they, the Gentiles, are actually going to see and know me, it’s going to come through *your death*. **Life in the world only comes through death in the church.**
 - Spiritual life among your friends, your family, your sons and daughters, among our community, among lost nations of the world, comes only through death in you.
- By the way, I have this statement, **(PIC)** “SIR, we wish to see Jesus,” up here in front of me when I preach. It’s a reminder to me that (a) what you need to see is Jesus, not some middle-aged preacher, and (b) the way you’ll get him is not through my prosperity, but through my perseverance in suffering and the power I learn through weakness.
- And when I suffer sometimes—not that my suffering is anywhere close to the Apostle Paul’s—but when I suffer, I say, **15 For *it is all for your sake*, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.**
- And that adds meaning and joy to my suffering. I asked you this a few weeks ago: Who is your suffering for? Whose “sake” is it for? Who needs you to be faithful in it so they can learn from you? You probably don’t even know the full extent of it yet—but it’s FOR somebody.

OK, #3, Jesus not only uses our suffering to bring others to heaven ...

3. Jesus uses our suffering to bring heaven to us (v 16)

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

The outer man is wasting away. And all God’s people over 40 said ... I’ve talked enough about this, right? Forget persecution for a minute; age is not kind to your outer man. I heard someone say recently that growing old is like watching a rich person slowly become poor. You start out with this rich bank account of good looks and physical prowess, and every year, it decreases a little. You can slow it down, but you can’t stop it.

For Paul, he’s referring to more than just growing old, of course. He had his health stripped away through beatings and starvation. He spent some of his best years in prison. His “outer” reputation was trashed by people who were jealous or resentful of him.

And yet, he says, while this is happening, my inward man is being renewed. Here’s an important truth you have to understand about resurrection power: It happens on the inside first.

Way back in 2004, there was a show on MTV called *Pimp My Ride*. (PIC). Anyone remember it? To be clear, it was a show about CARS, not about pimps. It was hosted by the rapper **Xzibit**, which is what made it cool. They would take someone's old beater and transform it into a tricked-out car with a new paint job and amazing wheels and a cool sound system and hydraulics and the whole nine. It sounds really dumb now, but I promise, it was a whole thing back then.

But one thing they almost always did: They'd always start with the inside of the car and transform it first. Somebody asked Xzibit one time why they did that, and he said that it was because if the owner saw them strip the outside first, rip it apart, they'd get discouraged. He said, but when you've already got a remade interior, then you know that whatever's happening to the exterior is gonna match up with the quality of what has happened on the interior. Who knew that Xzibit was such a theologian? Apparently, you see, God does the same with us. He renews and glorifies the inside, and that comes with the promise that one day, he'll do with the outside what he's done with the inside.

But for you, that happens later, in your physical resurrection. Can you wait for that? And can you focus on the thing that God is working to beautify now?

If we peek ahead to chapter 5 (5:1), we see that Paul calls our bodies a **tent**, a temporary dwelling. I know this will cause me to lose respect with some of you, but I don't really like camping. I mean, I love spending time in the woods, genuinely; that's what I do on my day off—I love hiking. But sleeping in an un-air-conditioned piece of plastic on the hard ground, with no running water? Civilization has worked too hard and we've come too far to voluntarily go back to that. That feels like an insult to our forefathers. But in those wretched times when I've actually had to stay in a tent, and I wake up in the morning feeling like I got trampled by a pack of stampeding elephants, I remind myself, "This is not my real house. My real house with AC and electricity and running water and dimmers for my lights and a refrigerator and a toilet you can flush is just a night or two away."

Paul says, I'm staying for a few nights in this ratty plastic tent, but one day, I'm going to my permanent home. And it's way better.

Some of you spend so much time on this (the external body) and you ignore the one thing God is trying to beautify (mind and heart)!

You exercise and count your calories and measure your macros and tighten, color, nip, and tuck. You spend so much time on an outer tent that is perishing and pay almost no attention to that thing God is bringing resurrection power to renew.

I'm not saying don't pay any attention to this jar of clay; I'm simply saying focus your energies on the things that matter. Better to limp across the finish line with a body falling apart and a soul full of the glory of God than sprint into heaven with an in-shape corpse and a dilapidated, shriveled-up spirit.

I'm not saying don't exercise—I'm saying put more energy and time into the renewal of your inner man than you do the maintenance of your shriveling outer man.

4. One day, our suffering now will seem light and momentary (vv. 17–18)

17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

At first, what Paul says sounds almost insensitive: light and momentary? You're calling my divorce, the death of my child, this chronic pain I've struggled with every single day of my life, you're calling that *light and momentary*? Or the fact that I'm single, or single again, and all I've ever really wanted is to be married? You're calling that "light and momentary"?

Paul says, "Yes." Let me remind you that Paul was not one unacquainted with pain. Paul is not some college-aged macho guy saying, "What doesn't kill me makes me stronger, so bring on the pain" because he's never really experienced any real pain. Paul had been tortured, betrayed by friends, falsely accused, imprisoned. He had some apparent chronic condition in his eyes that caused him great ongoing pain that he begged God to heal, but God never did. He'd been the subject of racial discrimination; he'd been marginalized and maligned. He'd shed a lot of tears; very few of us have suffered like he did.

And yet, he says, all of it is light and momentary *compared* to what is coming. He's putting our pain on the scales opposite the glory and joy that God is revealing through it. What God is going to bring through this pain is going to be so incredibly beautiful that we won't hardly be able to remember even the worst moments of pain.

In his other letter to the Corinthians he said, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor is the human heart able to conceive, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

In other words, if you can see it, describe it, or imagine it, it's not glorious enough. I don't know all that he's doing up there, but it's going to be so awesome that when you experience it, the worst of our pain here is going to seem like one bad night of camping.

I mean, church, think about it! God created all the beauty of the world and the stars and the planets and the oceans with just a word of his mouth in the space of seven days. And look at how beautiful it is! And yet, to prepare what's coming there, he's using the blood of his Son and 2,000 years. He created this world with just a word; to create the new heavens and earth, it took the death and resurrection of his Son and a few thousand years. I'm telling you, we're living in a garbage heap compared to what's coming.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, a Russian novelist and one of the greatest writers of the last 200 years, and a man who spent years in a prison in Siberia, so he knows about suffering, said this through one of his characters, Ivan, in *The Brothers Karamazov*: "I believe like a child that suffering will be healed

and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage ... that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, for all the blood that they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened.”⁴

OK ... sports analogies, Dostoevsky, and *Pimp My Ride*—I don't know how to try any harder to become all things to all people.

Let me leave you with two takeaways from this chapter:

A. Don't lose heart! (vv 1, 16)

Paul says this twice—once in vs. 1 and then again in vs. 16. That's his purpose in writing this chapter: Don't lose heart when you suffer; don't lose heart when you struggle. It's the way of the gospel—God uses the cross to bring about resurrection.

Again, I'm not saying you'll always see God's purpose; nor am I saying that if an act of injustice is happening to you that you should just accept it and submit to it as part of God's plan. God never intends for you to stay in abusive relationships when you have the power to get out of them.

Rather, I'm saying that even in the worst pain, when you've tried all you can to get out of it or make it right and you can't, you can have the assurance God is doing something beautiful in it. Honestly, maybe the best way to communicate this truth is through stories and testimonies, so let me give you a few:

First, I got this note from someone in our G4 ministries recently. G4, if you forgot, is where people who have been broken—through anxiety, depression, infertility, betrayal, addictions, bereavement, prodigal children—come together to find how Jesus really meets you in that spot from others who have walked through or are walking through those same situations. Here's what one of our leaders wrote:

- *A few years ago, I discovered my husband was cheating on me. I was overwhelmed with a pain and suffering I had never experienced. I entered a long season of depression, anxiety, and despair as my life unraveled. In those darkest of days, I wandered into G4 and The Summit Church and the Lord met me there. He was ready for all the ugly, even when I was angry and disappointed with him.*
- (She goes on to talk about how God used the experience to teach her about his faithfulness and his healing.) *And now God has equipped and called me to walk alongside people in similar times of pain,” she says, “to tell them God is faithful and he yet has a beautiful plan. To be clear, I would never have chosen this path for myself, but I now see that it's all part of God's plan to turn me into an instrument of redemption.*

⁴ From Ivan, Book V, Chapter 4, “Rebellion.”

That's the first one.

JRR Tolkien is another one of the greatest writers of the last two centuries. You wonder, “How did he learn to write with such depth of insight, such imagery that could inspire and move people? Was it just crazy talent?” No, Tolkien had a tragically sad life. His father died when he was 4 and his mother died when he was 12. By the age of 25, all but one of his best friends had died in WWI. He handled it by writing stories suffused with what he called “hope beyond the walls of this world.” He became a very committed Christian—in fact, he’s the one who personally led C.S. Lewis to Christ. My pain, he said, forced me to find the beauty of heaven. In one story he refers to “tears” as “**the wine of blessedness.**” Tears that bring God’s presence to you.

(Hold up **KINTSUGI** POT ...) I’ve been telling you about this for years; I finally found one I could buy ... this is that painful chapter. This is that betrayal, that disappointment. All places that God poured into me the gold of his presence.

So, that’s your first takeaway: In your suffering, don’t lose heart. Remember how the gospel works.

The second is in vs. 7:

B. The weakest of you can be used by God (vs 7)

Look at vs **7: But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.**

Because salvation is about what God does, and not what you do—the weakest saint can be powerfully used by God. It’s not about the quality of the vessel; it’s about the contents on the inside.

Jesus himself made this point: Quick trivia question. According to Jesus, who was the greatest, most powerful preacher ever to live? Who? His name starts with J/rhymes with “On the Baptist” ... Jesus loved JtB/podcasted/he wore WWJtB.

And yet, he said in Matthew 11, the one who is *least in my kingdom is GREATER than John the Baptist*. What does it mean to be least in Jesus’ kingdom? Well, it would mean you have the least talent. You have the least potential. You know the least about the Bible. You have the least engaging personality. You are the kind of person who walks into a room and no one knows you’re there. Your boss says to you one day, “Are you new?” And you’re like, “I’ve been here for 9 years.” I don’t know, but “least in God’s kingdom” means something, right? Think about *THIS*: Someone *IN HERE, RIGHT NOW* is the least of the kingdom of heaven in here. Right? I’m not trying to be mean, just saying that mathematically that has to be true. Someone has to be at the bottom of the pile. That’s how math works. Right now, you’re sitting there thinking, “I think it might be me ...” And Jesus is like, “Well ...”

See, friend, even if that's true about you, you have more potential in ministry than JtB. Why? You have something JtB never had. Firsthand knowledge of the resurrection and the Holy Spirit permanently fused to your soul—you have that incredible treasure in that unimpressive jar of clay, and that means from this point on, it's not about your ability to do great things in God's kingdom, but your availability for him to do great things through you.

That's what we saw with the story with Luke and John, the two college students who saw this massive salvation wave in South Asia, right?

I remember experiencing this in college ... Amy

Question: **Where is God telling you to obey this weekend?** Where do you need to trust him and obey?

Where do you need to trust him in pain?

I want to invite you to come up here and ask for prayer, help. Sure, you can do it there in your seat, but there's a unique humility expressed in coming up here and praying in the presence of God's people. God meets people in a special way in a moment like that, so I'd invite you to come and pray for strength.

If you want to pray with someone, they'll stand off to the side. Or if you have questions about your relationship to Jesus, or want to start one, they can help you with that. Just say to them, "I'm not sure I've ever personally received Jesus as my Savior and been saved," and they'll take it from there. So, if you want to pray with someone or want to inquire about a relationship with Jesus, go there. Otherwise, just come up here and pray.

Let's stand, our worship teams will come, you come now and pray ...