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What's up Traders Point family? I want to welcome those of you who are tuning in at Traders Point online, wherever you may be watching from around the world. We've got a few staff here in the room at Northwest.

So, good to be with all of you today. I really cannot wait until we can regather physically again as a church, but until that time we will continue to be here for you online as we, together, continue to be the church right where we are.

I think that is one of the things God has reminded us of. He has been at work and continues to do some amazing things in and through these challenging times. So many of you in our own church family are just living beyond yourselves, demonstrating compassion and joy to as many people as possible.

In fact, I want to celebrate something today. We have a brand new watch party kicking off today. At the 11:00 hour, Chase and Marina are hosting a new watch party today. Guys, I just want to welcome you. I'm glad you guys could tune in. Thank you for accepting their invitation.

I just want to encourage our whole church family, during this time, to just be gathering together in group—watch parties, backyards. When you can worship together with other people it is so good for your soul.

I also want to celebrate one of our group leaders Downtown. This is Shey and Cadence. Shey is one of our Downtown group leaders. She leads a small group of teenage girls in our student ministry. She has done an amazing job of just encouraging these girls during this difficult season. Cadence is a volleyball player, so Shey got together with her this past week to help her get ready for volleyball tryouts. I just loved seeing that.

I just want to remind you, if you are not in a group we would love to get you connected to a group. If you somehow maybe have taken a break from group during the summer months, I totally get that. But I want to encourage you to re-engage with your group as we enter into the fall season.

Lastly, I just want to celebrate this. Last Sunday, after all the services, we had 19 people profess their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Isn't that amazing? We celebrate that stuff around here. I want you to know that the invitation is never closed. So, if you are contemplating that and want to talk with somebody about that, we would love to come along beside you, walk with you through that decision, and setup a time for you to be baptized.

Well, I don't know how many of you remember this movie from a while back called The Perfect Storm. Do any of you remember this starring George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg. They played fishermen in the northeast. Actually, the movie was roughly based on true events.

They ended up going out on a fishing boat on the open seas in the Atlantic. They were confronted by three raging weather fronts which unexpectedly collided producing one of the fiercest storms in modern history. They were right in the middle of it.

I don't know about you, but when I think about that movie or look at that movie poster, 2020 sort of feels like that. Whenever you think about this year, we are facing really three raging weather fronts—a pandemic, racism and civil unrest, and political division.

Now you take any one of those three and it would make for a challenging year. But we are navigating all three of those things. And what we have just come through, and what we are continuing to navigate, it's not for the faint of heart. Like, it's a thing and it's really challenging. It may be, perhaps, one of the greatest crises any of us will ever face in our lifetime.

I want you to know right now that if you are feeling uneasy or uncertain, fearful, anxious, frustrated, maybe even angry, I just want you to know that's normal and you're not alone. And right now, there is a bit of a battle going on inside all our minds, regardless of who you are and your perspective. We've got all these questions. What do you believe? And who do you listen to? How are we going to navigate through this? And what do we do?

And I don't know that anybody has solid answers to any of those questions, but here is what I do know today. This is what I want to share with you as we kick off our time together. Right now, someone is looking to you to provide direction and a sense of hope in the midst of this storm.

I know it's easy for some of you to go, "Not me." Maybe you kind of give yourself a pass on this. I don't care how young or old you are. I don't care what you do for a living, or if you're on social media, or if you have a following. Someone, right now, even if it's just one person, is looking to you—your example, your speech, the way you live your life, to provide some direction and a sense of hope in the midst of this storm.

I don't know. Maybe it's your spouse or your kids. Maybe it's your grown children, and they need you. Even though they are out of your house, they still need you to speak truth and hope into their lives.

Maybe it's a small group. Maybe it's your roommate. Maybe it's your employees, your co-workers, your neighbors, or your life group. And don't we all... I want you to think about that one person right now who maybe comes to mind when you think about the fact that maybe they're not handling all of this very well right now.

And that's putting it nicely. Maybe they're kind of freaking out a little bit. Maybe they rattle off stats and headlines of conspiracies. Maybe they're reposting sensational stories on social media or dropping inflammatory statements into the comment section.

We all know somebody like that. And in those moments, you and I have a decision to make. We can't do anything about what they say or what they think or what they post. But we do have something to say about the way we are going to conduct ourselves. And we have to ask ourselves, "Am I going to influence them, or am I going to allow them to impact me? Am I going to contribute to the storm we are all in, or am I going to help calm the storm?"

The greatest gift a leader can give during times of crisis is a non-anxious presence. Now, that doesn't mean you have all the answers, because I'm quite confident that none of us do. It doesn't mean we have absolute certainty about where we are headed, because none of us have it. But what we can have is some clarity. We can add to the hysteria, or we can be a calming presence in the midst of the hysteria.

I'm reminded of something it says in Matthew 5:9, "*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" Would you not agree, both in the room and online, that we need more peacemakers in our world today? Don't we? We need some peacemakers, some people in the midst of the storm who will be a calming presence.

Now, I don't know what comes to your mind when you hear the word peacemaker. Here's what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that you just roll over on your convictions. It doesn't mean that you don't speak up. It doesn't mean you aren't wrestling with some fear and anxiety of your own. It doesn't mean you have concrete answers or solutions. What it does mean is that you can have some clarity in the midst of uncertainty. What it does mean is that you have hope in the midst of the chaos.

You see, I would never wish this crisis on anyone, but at the same time I do see it, in a sense, as a gift. Here's what I mean. I'm reminded of this parable, a story that Jesus told. If you grew up in church, maybe you are reminded of it. Even if you didn't grow up in church, you've probably heard of this story before.

It's the story of the wise and the foolish builders. And Jesus said, "There were these two people building a house. One person was building on sand, and another person built on rock. And you couldn't really tell which one was stable just by looking at it until the storm hit. "And then the storm hits, and you can tell on what it was being built."

Well, guess what? The storm hit. And those of us who might be panicking and freaking out a bit, may that be a red flag in our minds to say, "Maybe this is a gift that God is giving to me by his grace."

He means to say, "You've been building with poor materials. You should have been building on rock all along." Here's the thing. It's not too late. It's not too late to start building on solid ground.

Listen to me. I want to talk to the followers of Jesus right now. I know that not all of us who are tuning in right now are followers of Jesus. I'm so, so glad you are joining us and feel welcome here. But let me talk to the followers of Jesus. The rest of you can kind of listen in on this.

As followers of Jesus, right now we should be some of the most stable people on the planet. We should be some of the most hope-filled, calm, resolute people walking the face of the earth. This should be a season where we are a calming presence in the midst of the storm, not adding to the confusion and hysteria. Unfortunately, that's not always the case.

You look back at history and you see that it was Christ followers in the midst of pandemics and plagues, the way they lived their lives, the way they served others, the things that they said that actually propelled the cause of Christ forward.

And now we've got another opportunity. We should be some of the most hope-filled people on the planet right now.

So, today we are wrapping up our summer message series called *Good News*. If you are just now joining us, we have been studying through this letter in the New Testament that a guy named Paul writes when he is faced with a perfect storm of his own.

Here is the deal we've been seeing each week. As we've been reading what Paul writes about, this isn't necessarily something we don't know. Likely, we already know what Paul is telling us. Most of the time we just simply need to be reminded of what we already know, not necessarily

exposed to brand new information. Just because we know it with our head doesn't mean it travels down here to our heart. And then it gets translated out into the way we live our lives.

So, Paul is calm, cool, and collected even in the midst of the storm. And he writes these words. I want to look at verses 4-9 together. If you've got a Bible or a Bible app in front of you, it says this starting off in Philippians 4, verse 4:

*"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."*

So, two things I want to point out to you. He says, "Don't just rejoice in the Lord when things are good, rejoice in the Lord always." And then he repeats himself. Those of you who are parents in the room, you know that you repeat yourself when you're not fully sure your kids are paying attention to you, because they've got selective hearing.

He goes, "Hey, I know this isn't something you necessarily want to hear. Maybe you're focused on this issue over here. So, rejoice in the Lord always. And I'm going to tell you again, rejoice."

Then he says something really interesting that I've never noticed in these verses before. I've read this a bunch. He says this:

*"Let your reasonableness be known to everyone."*

Reasonableness. Now, some translations say gentleness. This is the idea that you're going to have a level head, you're going to be humble, patient, and you're going to be calm. You're going to be loving.

He says, "Let your levelheadedness..." let that be evident to whom? He didn't say, "Just to the people who agree with you." He didn't say, "Just the people who look like you, act like you, or live like you, or vote like you." No, he says, "Let it be known to everyone."

You go, "I don't know if I have anything in common with that person, but they are reasonable. They are gentle. They are calm. They are loving."

And then he says this, and this is where you find the power to do that—in verse 5:

*"The Lord is at hand."*

In other words, God is closer than you think. We have access to the Holy Spirit. We have access to God. That's what gives us our hope, peace, and reasonableness. And then he says these powerful words in verse 6:

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."*

Anything? Even pandemics and protests?

It's just a simple thing. When you begin to feel fear, worry, and anxiety, don't let that turn in on you. You turn it up toward him through prayer and supplication.

And he says, "You just let your requests be known to God. Don't be anxious about anything."

Isn't that easier to say than it is to do? And notice there is no asterisk there. There is not footnote or exception to that. "Don't be anxious about anything except of course politics, protests, paranoia, pandemics, panic, pain, pandemonium, or killer pandas." In that event, by all means be anxious, especially the killer panda part. That freaks me out.

No, no, no, he says, "Don't be anxious about anything." And then look at the result in verse 7:

*“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Don't you love that word peace, especially now. This surpasses all understanding, which means you will not understand it. It's a feeling that you have. It's something you receive by faith. It's something you put your trust in when you say, “God, I trust in the peace only you can provide.” And this peace will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus.

I'm reminded of Proverbs 4:23:

*“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”*

Do you want to know how your life is going to turn out five years from now? Pay attention to your heart now. Whatever is happening in your heart, whatever you allow into your heart, that's the direction your life is going to go.

And we see that it all kind of begins with the thoughts we think in our head. Because he finishes up the passage in verse 8:

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

You see, we're not going to get this right away. This all takes practice. And there are all kinds of thoughts that pop into our heads. We can't necessarily do anything about that. You can't control what the person you are talking to is going to say, what that's going to produce in your head. We can't control the headlines, what we see on social media. But we can control where we allow that to go in our heads.

And Paul says we are not just to be reacting to all the things happening in this world, we need to proactively fix our thoughts. This is the idea of discipline and focus. “I'm going to fix my thoughts on what is true, right, and noble.”

So, here is the principle I want to give to all of us today. I want you to write this down, think about it, pray about it, talk about it in your families or life groups. Here is the principle:

What we dwell on in our head eventually determines the condition of our heart.

What we choose to dwell on, and I'm not talking about thoughts that pop in, I'm talking about thoughts you allow to sit there and marinate. What we dwell on, what we spin on.

Psychologists have a term for this. They call it ruminating.

And it's sort of like this idea, if any of you ever grew up on a farm and were around cattle or livestock. They would eat the grass, they will swallow it, regurgitate it and eat it again, regurgitate it and eat it again. It's super-gross, because it is. But we often do it with our thoughts.

We get something and chew it up, chew it up, chew it up, regurgitate it out, chew it up, chew it up, chew it up, regurgitate it out. And I'm just spinning. It's not getting me anywhere. It's not helping. In fact, it's just adding to the unsettledness in my own heart, the fear, frenzy, and hysteria.



As Christ followers, we do not need to contribute to this. Jesus says, "In this world you are going to have trouble," and you just fill in the blanks with everything that gives us trouble. He says, "But you take heart. Find courage. I have overcome the world."

So, there are all kinds of things that can cause us to be unsettled, but then we very quickly have to choose to do something with that. And Paul invites us here, "Let that go to God. You present those requests to God, and then you trust him."

So, 23 years ago I was a junior in college. This was 1996, and I was going to Bible college. There were a bunch of interesting characters to meet on the campus of a Bible college.

There was one guy, I'll never forget this. He was really bright, articulate, and knew his stuff. He even spoke with a bit of a British accent. Those of you who know me well know that I have a little bit of infatuation with a British accent. I think it sounds so amazing. I wish I could preach with one, it would make all my sermons infinitely better. I've even given Siri a British accent. I'm all about it.

So, this guy, he was really, really bright, and I remember there were lots of conversations on the dorm floor. He had a particular belief that the end of the world was going to come before the year 2000. This was 1996. And he was convinced that Jesus was going to return before 2000.

He had all the Scriptures. He had all of his evidence. He even believed that Prince Charles was the antichrist. He had all his reasons for that. I remember we would stay up late into the night eating Taco Bell, and we would have these conversations.

He was pretty convincing. I've got to tell you, there was maybe a two-week period of time where it freaked me out a little bit. Here was my heart response to him laying out that he thought Jesus was going to come by the year 2000. It was fear.

It wasn't affection for God. It wasn't hope. It wasn't like, "Oh God, I trust you." It was fear. Like this whole speculation around that. I'm just going to be really transparent with you. I was praying to God and I was like, "God, please, it's not like I don't want you to come back, it's just that I don't want you to come back by the year 2000.

"Because, I want to get married, I want to do what married people do, if you know what I mean. God, I want to have a family. I want to travel a little bit. And it scared me. Here we are 23 to 24 years later. He didn't come. I want to clear that up.

And here we are again. I've had a number of people come up and say, "Do you think these are the end days? Do you think Jesus is coming back this year?" Here is the honest answer. The honest answer is I don't know, and Jesus was pretty clear that he didn't want us to speculate it.

In Matthew 24:36 it is very, very clear. He said, "*He is coming at a day and an hour that you do not expect.*" Even Jesus one time would say, "Hey, listen. Only God the Father knows. I don't even know."

I don't know if Jesus literally meant that, that he literally doesn't know, or if he was just trying to make the point to say, "If I don't know, you shouldn't speculate it," because often speculation just leads to fear. And God does not want you to follow him out of fear.

1 Peter says, "*His kindness is what leads us to repentance.*" God wants you to follow him because of his great love for you, his grace for you. Here is the deal. When we're speculating

about the end times, which Jesus said will come when you don't expect it to, and most of the times, throughout the generations, we expect him to when the wheels are falling off.

He says, "No, you just be ready. You just look forward to that day with great anticipation. That God will one day return to make things right, everything that has gone wrong through our own sin, rebellion, and pride." And it's not a scary thing at all. He is a loving Father.

I don't know about you. But when I was a little kid and my dad was away at work and I would get into trouble, my mom would say, "Just wait 'til your dad gets home," it did not increase my affection for my father. I didn't want him to come home; because I knew when he would come back he was going to punish me.

It's the same deal today. We serve a good, good Father. And he doesn't want you to be afraid, he wants you to anticipate his joy and hope that can be found in Jesus even in the worst of times.

And God has seen us through some pretty dark days in our past. In fact, I was reading this last week about the year 1919. I just want to read an excerpt out of this. This is a little over 100 years ago. Listen to this description.

It says, "In 1919 World War I was over, and most Americans were eager for peace and security. But 1919 would prove to be anything but. Revolution and unrest ran rampant across Europe and North America. The flu pandemic continued from the prior year, with the third brutal wave in the spring.

"Terrorist bombings rocked seven U.S. cities in June. The first in a series of red scares began when the government passed an act that blacklisted anyone thought to be involved with Communism. Race riots rocked the nation and hundreds of workers went on strike across the country."

It goes on to describe that the presidential election that year was super-divisive and Warren Harding got elected by about 60 percent of the vote. And the article concludes with this statement:

Many historians today summarize 1919 as rivaling 1968 as the worst year in twentieth-century American history. Something tells me 2020 might give those two years a run for their money.

And I only share that with you to say God has seen us through some dark days in the past. And listen to me. He will see us through this as well. The question for us right now is on what foundation have I been building? Is it sand, or is it solid rock?

I don't know what your answer is to that question. And you might say, "I'm afraid that maybe I've been building on sand." It's not too late. Listen, now is the time to begin building with solid materials. And if that's God's gift to you in this crisis, then 2020 is going to be a pretty great year.

You see, right now we are under an incredible amount of pressure. And here's what pressure does. Pressure squeezes us. Pressure reveals some things that are in there, that maybe you and I need to be confronted with in our heart and in our mind, that we can then give to God.

You know, when my wife Lindsay and I were dating, I did my absolute best to treat her like the queen that she was and is. I wanted her to feel loved and special. I would open the door for her. I would write her letters. I would buy her gifts. And I would always speak sensitively to her. I can't hardly remember in our dating years losing my patience with her.

But in the first year or so of our marriage I did, unfortunately, a couple of times. And one big one, it was the worst one yet. It was in our first couple of years of marriage. We were living in California at the time, and didn't have kids yet.

Her mom and sister came out to visit us. We took them to the Bay area, San Francisco, to visit one day. And this was before the days you had a GPS system in your car or maps on your phone. And I'm trying to navigate around the city. I know this is going to be a shock to all of you, but I got lost. I just didn't know where I was going.

I didn't want to ask directions. I didn't want anybody's help. I wanted to figure it out on my own. I kept getting us lost. And I'm getting frustrated. And my sweet wife, she just wanted to help. She said something. She was just trying to offer a suggestion, "Well maybe you should turn over here."

Instead of just receiving that from her, I snapped at her. It wasn't one of my finer moments.

It was one of those deals. Have you ever had this happen? When you say something that you know you shouldn't in the tone you know you shouldn't say it in, and everybody just gets quiet? That's what happened.

I immediately knew I had embarrassed her and hurt her feelings. Not only was it bad enough that I said it to her, but I said it in front of her mom and her sister. I could feel her mom and sister in the back seat staring at me with judgmental eyes.

And I knew what they were thinking. They didn't even have to say it. "We knew she should have married Barry from high school. Barry is a doctor now, quite successful. Instead she married preacher boy with love handles. That's who she married." Right?

And in that moment the pressure I was under revealed some things in my character I knew I was going to have to deal with. But you know what pressure can also do? Pressure and heat also produce diamonds. Pressure and heat also produce precious jewels.

You see, it's all in our perspective. It's all in how we're going to turn our thoughts. And right now, we're under a tremendous amount of pressure. Maybe some things are getting revealed that could be a gift from God to say, "Here are some things you need to work on in your own spiritual and emotional life," for our good.

This is a pivotal season now in all of our lives. And there is a lot of disappointment and pain. So, can I just take a second here just to say that I'm so sorry? I know this year has been incredibly difficult and painful, and we're just a little over halfway through it.

I'm so sorry you've been disappointed. I'm so sorry that maybe you lost a job or you've lost income. I'm so sorry that the trip you were really looking forward to was cancelled or postponed. I'm really sorry your graduation didn't turn out the way you wanted it to. I'm so sorry the season got cancelled. I'm sorry you felt the sting of racist words and comments.

The pain is very, very real right now. But now, you and I have a decision to make. The decision is, "Am I going to guard my heart and my mind? Am I going to allow the peace of God that surpasses all understanding to enter in?" And that's a decision you and I have to make right now.

Am I willing to lean into this and grow from it, to grow emotionally and spiritually? To grow in my marriage and my relationships? To grow when it comes to my employees and my coworkers? In my personal finances? In my witness to the world?



The world right now is taking note of how Christ followers are handling this and conducting ourselves.

As a result, on the other side of this thing—and we know there is another side of this, there will either be a whole bunch of people whose lives will be forever changed by Jesus, and their story will be, “Let me tell you. Back in 2020, when we were going through it, there was somebody who was reasonable. There was somebody who was gentle in spirit. There was somebody who wasn’t adding to the hysteria and the storm. They were a calming presence. They were Jesus with skin on to me. And that became real.” Or there will be a whole bunch of people, unfortunately, who will be more disillusioned with the Gospel of Jesus Christ because of the way we conducted ourselves.

When this season is a story we tell one day, let’s make sure our stories are worth telling. Let’s stand out from the rest of the world, and conduct ourselves in a way that is compelling. Jesus would pray it over us in this way in John 13:

*“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other.”* What kind of love? *“Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”*

And right now, more than ever, the world is looking for someone to provide direction and a sense of hope in the midst of the storm. And 2020 is going to go down in the history books as one of the most difficult and challenging years of our lifetime. Yet, if we can allow the wisdom of Philippians 4 to guide our lives, we can also look back and say, “That was also the year everything changed for me. That was also the year I started building on solid ground.”

Friends, don’t let the chaos of this year create more chaos in your heart. There is a God who wants to give you a peace that passes understanding.

I just want to finish up by reading Psalm 1 to all of us who are hearing:

*“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”*

Listen, I want to be like that tree that is planted by streams of living water, strong and secure and producing fruit in its season. Right now, this is an off season. But this is just the time for our roots to go deep so that one day God might produce some things in our life that are eternal.

Right now, if there is anybody who is watching or listening to this, and you’re not quite sure where you stand with God, I want you to know that today you can be crystal-clear on it. You can be saved by grace through faith. You are saved by Jesus’ sacrifice for you on a cross, his righteousness, not yours.

And there is a loving Father right now who says, “I don’t want you to speculate in fear, I want you to respond to my kindness, my patience, and my grace.”

So, today if you are ready to cross that line of faith, listen to me. You don’t have to have all your beliefs in a nice, tidy order. You don’t have to have all your life cleaned up yet. It’s just

simply a profession of faith in who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for you. Then you are ready.

Today, I just want to lead you through this prayer. If you could just bow your heads, close your eyes wherever you happen to be. I just want to lead you through this prayer, that you can make your own.

Father God, I just come to you right now. I want to release my anxiety, fear, and frustration to you. God, I'm uncertain about what the future holds, but today I just trust you. I trust you are God. I trust Jesus is your Son. I confess to you my sin, rebellion, and pride that I've tried to live my life my own way.

God, I want to respond to the patience and the kindness you have demonstrated to me through a cross. So, today I step across that line of faith. I openly confess that I want Jesus to become my Lord and my Savior. God, would you meet me right where I am, and begin to give me that peace that surpasses understanding?

God, would you produce fruit in my life in season, as I plant my roots near streams of living water? I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

I just want you to know right now that if any of you around the world prayed that prayer, wherever you are, I just want to say congratulations. We want to give it up for you. I know that takes a lot of courage and strength. You may have some apprehension in doing that, but I just want to say, "Way to go."

And, let us know in the chat. Follow up with us. We would love to be in contact with you just to walk with you through that decision and help you get connected so you can continue to grow, and to set up a time for you to be baptized.

Right now, we're going to conclude our time with the worship team coming out. We're going to sing together, to declare to God some truths about who he is and his character. I just want to ask you, wherever you happen to be, if you'd just stand we're going to lift up our voices and sing to God in this time together.