

You know, we're in the middle of this series called MIRACULOUS and if you've been tracking with us Pastor John has brought us through two separate miracles so far. Do you remember what the one was two weeks ago? It was the leper, where Jesus healed the leper. The last one last week was the centurion's servant, and Pastor John walked us through that. This one, this is actually the third of a triad in Scripture. If you read commentaries there's like these three miracles go together trying to make one big point.

Matthew's making a big point, we're in Matthew 8 and we'll be looking at specifically 14-17, but before we go there let me give you some context because if you're anything like me, when you read Jesus doing miraculous things in Scripture my ears perk up and I say, "Does this apply? Does this apply to my life now? Is He able to heal? Is He able to do miraculous things continuously or was that just Old— was that just back in the, back in the early church? Does it apply to my life?" Because part of my story—if any of you know me, many of you do and many of you see my little boy, I like to call him The Mayor because he just loves so many, many of you. I've got a disabled boy named Trey, he's 17 years old, and if you see him walking around the Café he just loves coming up and meeting people, he's such a such a doll, such a wonderful, little part of my life—big part of my life—but, let me share this story.

You could see how intimate the idea of Jesus healing could get for me personally. So we didn't know there was anything wrong with Trey when he was first born. It was a fairly normal birth, he had a little heart flutter so we had to induce just a couple weeks early but he came out fine and everything seemed to be going well. About five months into it he stopped hitting his milestones and his pediatrician said, "You know, you need to go get him checked out." I thought she was crazy. I was like, "You're crazy, there's nothing wrong with Trey." I was actually talking to his cardiologist, who you think would know, and he's like, "Yeah, don't worry about it, he's fine. Don't worry about it."

So I'm trying not to worry, but we went through and we got a neurologist, we ended up getting some tests, he had an MRI, he was about a year old. He had a "minor" malformation—minor—he's only missing a portion of his brain. He was born missing his corpus callosum; so that's the part of the brain that connects the two hemispheres. You know, a normal brain, like each side is a super



Corpus callosum



computer—you guys have super computers going on in each half of your brain—and between the super computers there's high-speed Fios, you know, FireWire¹, whatever you want to call it, that connects your brain so it's able to communicate back and forth. He doesn't have that; he has like a little dial-up connection, but it's a "minor" malformation. Who knows what's going to happen.

It turns out actually, you guys remember *Rain Man*? Remember that movie *Rain Man*, they said he had autism, one of the things he had was a genesis of the corpus callosum, the same thing as Trey. We had no idea how it was going to turn out. Was Trey going to be a savant or was he going to be in a wheelchair? We had no idea. That's what happened with his condition.

¹ Fios / FireWire: High-speed methods of transferring information between digital devices.

So now, again, as I'm reading about Jesus healing it becomes that much more pertinent in my life. Up to that point there was nothing ever needed healing from in particular, maybe some warts, you know, that was about it. But that was about the extent of the healing I was looking for, nothing major. And so now when it talks about Jesus showing up and doing miraculous things I bet some of you are sitting there right now and you have your version of Trey, you're just trusting for God and you're hoping, we're hoping for Him to do the miraculous. God is still present. God fulfills. Jesus fulfills. I've got this little boy who's the closest male in my life and I love him and I'm still changing his poopy diapers at 17 years old and he's non-verbal, but he's got a smile that'll light up your life. There's the conflict, there's deep emotion as I read passages of Jesus healing as many of you, I bet many of you online are feeling the same way, and how pertinent is it in today's world and everything that going on—does Jesus heal? What is this all about?

But before I go on too far, I don't want to miss the big point of what actually Matthew's getting across here. Believe it or not these three miracles are not so much about whether or not Jesus will heal in your life personally. He will, but we'll get back to that. The big idea here is that Jesus fulfills and He fulfilled prophecy, He's present now that He will fulfill your life, and one day it will all go away and He will fulfill His Kingdom in the future. We have hope. We have hope. The big idea that Matthew's getting across, he's really making an argument here.

Let me put you guys in this situation: Imagine that you all are Jewish, imagine that you love your Bibles, you're conservative Jewish people even, or Orthodox Jews, and you study your Scripture. Imagine I'm trying to have a conversation with you, which just works by the way in real life, I'm trying to have a conversation with you about why Jesus is actually your Messiah and I say, "Hey, you know the difference between—if I read to you something out of my Bible—you'd probably have a pretty good sense where it's found, whether it's Old Testament or New Testament. Right? You've read your Scripture enough." You say, "Yeah, sure, I would."

So I open up my Scriptures and I read a passage to you. I'm just going to read a portion of it. Tell me online when you know who it is I'm talking about, by the way, and if you have a guess as to where it's coming from.

³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

– ISAIAH 53:3-7 (ESVUK)

Who's that talking about? [AUDIENCE: "JESUS"] I could go on. I could go on and I could keep reading. I get tingles just— I get goosebumps reading about this. Where is that at—in the Old Testament or New Testament? [AUDIENCE: "OLD TESTAMENT"] It's Old Testament. Does it sound like the New Testament though because it's so clearly about Jesus? Yes. If you read it to a person and you try to trick them, they're like, "Oh, for sure. Surely that was written after Jesus was born." It was actually written over

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SERIES: MIRACULOUS | WEEK 3 | 1.10.2021

700 years *before* Jesus was ever born. That was Isaiah 53. Read it this afternoon and get goosebumps with me at how clearly this prophecy is talking about Jesus.

That's the point Matthew's getting across. Matthew more than any other of the gospels repeats the word "fulfilled" more than any of the other ones. He repeats it 15 times. This triad of miracles isn't primarily put there by Matthew to tell you yes, Jesus can still heal your life and Jesus does miracles; it's there because Matthew's making an argument to Jewish people pointing back to prophecy over and over again that Jesus is Messiah and Jesus has fulfilled all things. Him fulfilling these prophecies is miraculous. He has fulfilled. He will continue to fulfill in your life.

So my little boy—He hasn't, the Lord hasn't done anything miraculous. I'll tell you a little bit more about Trey. Trey is actually Robert III, have you guys ever heard this? So his legal name is Robert but he's the third, Trey, it's more of a southern thing, sometimes people go with Trip. So he's even my namesake, Robert Emory Mittuch III, the last of the Mittuchs, by the way; I've had to get through that with the Lord. But anyway, I also have a sister, Mindy, and a few weeks ago I told you about that car accident that I had with the trailer.² This event, this next event, just happened a few weeks after that.

My wife and I are living down in West Virginia working with college students in Morgantown, and on the phone with my parents and my sister's over at the house and we're just doing a Sunday afternoon check-in, you know, just how's everyone doing. I get on with my sister, she had just had a baby about 5-6 months before. My wife and I were newly married. Hang up the phone, said, "So long." My dad immediately calls me back within like two or three minutes and he's just hysterical. My sister after getting off the phone with me, she goes, "O Lord, not now," and she falls over and falls on the floor, collapses—brain aneurysm. EMTs come, friends, 100% chance of death. She also was in cardiac arrest. Went to the local hospital, first doctors that saw her, 100% chance she's not making it. Preparing the family, my wife and I—this is pre-cell phone—so we're just, like, my dad always says to me, "Rob, come home now!" Click. That's how I'm driving home eight hours, that's all I know.

I get a note, I catch up to him at Westchester Regional Hospital in Upstate New York. She's there in a coma, she's unconscious, her heart was only beating at a few percentages, she had a brain aneurysm, she was stable but she's on the brink of death. My family was involved in this Christian prayer community of all these little churches Upstate New York, they all started immediately praying. They were going to put my sister in an ambulance and drive her down to New York City to go to St. Vincent's Hospital, which is like the big one for neurology issues. My mom flipped out and said, "You're putting her on a helicopter; fly her down to St. Vincent's." And so now the people from the church are praying and praying and praying.

My other sister has a boyfriend named Floyd. Floyd was a non-believer. Floyd, good Upstate New York name. Right? New York City name, Floyd. And he went with the name, too. He was the sort of guy that you did not want to meet in a back alley. He was BOOM! [SEE FIGURE AT RIGHT], bald-headed, you know, typical, like, he was a cage fighter. He actually legitimately did cage fighting, and right before I met him he had lost in the semi-finals and he said, "Oh, it was a technicality that got me out." But the guy who beat him ended up getting his arm broken by the champion.



He was BOOM!

² See Week 5 of JESUS IS KING series, 11.15.2020

And so this is like this crazy dude from Upstate New York, Floyd, and we're sitting in the chapel together as my sister is in the hospital and nothing's happening, but everyone's praying and he's seeing this and this is very weird to him. He has a casual understanding of Christianity. And I'm a young man at this point, like, maybe 23 years old, brand new in ministry. He asked me, he's like, "Rob, why doesn't" – or does. He said, "Why doesn't or does Jesus still heal people like I hear from the stories from Sunday school? Does He do that?" And I'm this, like, brand new out of college kid and I think the Lord gave me a point of wisdom here and I said to Floyd, I said, "Floyd, if you heard of someone getting healed someplace, how might you respond? Would you think it actually happened or would you think it was a trick?" Then I said, "What would be more miraculous to you—that or if somebody close to you, you saw their life completely change because they became a Christian? And you saw them going from a drug addict and a bad dad to them now having hope and giving up drugs and caring for his wife and kids and becoming—. And he's like, "You know what, Rob? That's actually more powerful to me."

The point is Jesus could be showing up—Floyd became a Christian, by the way, which is pretty cool—I wish my sister stayed with him, but she didn't. [HE CHUCKLES] Maybe I won't say that next service. [LAUGHTER] Anyway, so Floyd became a Christian and he was just astounded, he ended up walk—the point I'm making though is that whether or not you're dealing with a physical area that needs healing, Jesus is still here to fulfill your life spiritually and it's just as miraculous. Jesus isn't this God of like—it's called deism—where God just, like, starts the world rolling and then leaves. Jesus is here to be in your life and in your house today to perhaps heal you physically, but for sure heal you spiritually.

Matthew 8:14-17 That's what we're going to look at, we're finally going to jump into Matthew here. I've read for you Isaiah, but let's go to Matthew 8. Let's take a look, Matthew 8, we're looking at 14-17. It's pretty amazing, the more you more you get into it and the things that you see popping out. Let me just read it to y'all, but turn with me Matthew 8:14-17, this is the third of a triad of miracles.

14 And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. 15 He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. 16 That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."

– MATTHEW 8:14-17 (ESVUK)

First thing you notice here is that this is written not like a fairy tale. Most stories like spiritual stories and like sacred books don't have as much detail as this. You walk in and He's at Peter's house. Okay. First of all, did you guys know Peter had a house? This is the Apostle Peter, so Peter had a house.



Here's another one: Did you know that Peter had a mother-in-law? That means that the Apostle Peter was married. Just a little side note here—you know, Catholicism bases the papacy on Peter; Peter was the first pope and Peter was married. We won't go down that road too far, but just think about that for a second. This is just Scripture speaking for itself. I'll give you another huge miracle that I see in this Scripture, this is a tremendous miracle—Peter had a good relationship with his mother-in-law. Come on, that was a good joke, I thought

about that one for a long time. [LAUGHTER]

So he had a good relationship with his mother-in-law and we also see, like, very major details here. He [Jesus] touched the mother-in-law's hand, He touched her hand and she was healed and she rose from the

bed and she served Him. He's active. He's involved. The correlation for this story, another place that we find it is in the gospel of Mark, Mark 1, and Mark 1 is actually more chronological. Matthew isn't really that concerned with chronology, with staying in order time-wise, he's actually making an argument, as I said. Mark, if you look at Mark 1 you'll see he says "immediately," "immediately," "immediately," "immediately,"³ and what we find out about the context of this story is that Jesus, just prior to this, He was at the temple preaching and healing people. Jesus is in the middle of a long day of ministry. He was healing and teaching and now He's having lunch over at Peter's house. And then later on you go to see that He's going to continue to do healing and freeing people, casting out demons, because it's a Sabbath and people are waiting for the end of the day to bring a whole bunch of people to Him to be healed.

The reason I'm making this point is, again, Jesus is in the midst of a long day here on earth, people have questions. Are we going to stay all digital? No, we were made to have community and, plus, our Immanuel—"God with us"—came from Heaven, came from His lofty place of joy and comfort and relationship with His Father, and He condescended down into the world. Our Immanuel relationship is important. Jesus is here, your Immanuel, He is here with you. He could fulfill you. He could change your life. Perhaps He may even heal.

What else we notice in this passage is that Jesus healed his Peter's mother-in-law from a fever. It doesn't seem like Peter's mother-in-law was actually going to die here, seems like she was sick, a regular sickness, the flu maybe; maybe it was some sort of earlier version of the virus, but it doesn't like come across as she's gonna die. The example of the leper, he was gonna die. The leper was on the verge of death. The centurion's servant was paralyzed, very serious. So we start to get to see here is that Jesus – God – heals people who are, like, extremely sick, or He heals people who just have a cold. He does what He wants. God actually, Jesus healed with a word where He told the centurion to go tell his servant from far away; He heals with a word closely. He heals with a touch. Jesus actually heals the way He wants to heal.

What this tells us is that we often—and this is the big warning about Christianity and about healing—when you're approaching God with a question of will He heal we can't treat God or Jesus like He's a computer. With a computer what you do, and I'm not one of these computer programmers, but I'm, like, you gotta do your best to get the equation [syntax] exactly right, but if you get the equation exactly right you can get the computer to do what you want it to do. If I could just do the right exact coding, the computer will spit out what I want it to say and the function I want it to do. That's not how it works with God.



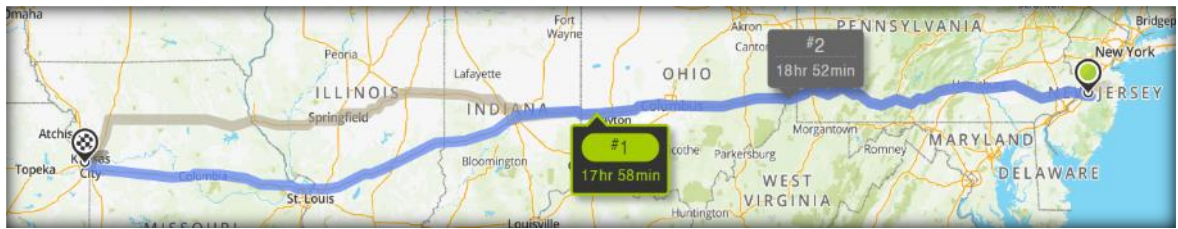
God is a relationship. We are not in control of Him—He is in control of us. He is so much larger than us and has an awareness and an understanding of the universe that we do not have, so we cannot play the game to think that if we just pray correctly and if we go to church and we give enough money, God will do like a computer what I want Him to do. Christianity is not witchcraft. What a witch does is a witch gets the right concoctions to put in her stew, whatever the heck you call it, say the right, you know, read the book with the, like, the right phrases and concoct the thing to make the spirits do for her what she wants the spirits to do. That's NOT how miracles work with God.

³ Mark Chapter 1 states "immediately" nine times – in verses 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 29, 30, and 42. Accessed at <https://classic.biblegateway.com/passages/?search=Mark+1&version=ESVUK#en-ESVUK-24241>

God is in control. Ultimately, you have to trust that God has your best in mind. It doesn't mean you stop praying and having a conversation with Him like Moses did and God might actually change His mind. There's nothing that's unsacred about saying if you pray to God, He might actually do something different. It's like asking your parents; you could ask them and you could help change their mind, that's fine, there's nothing wrong with that. Ultimately, God will fulfill His purposes. This is a relationship with our Creator that He's given us and we can ask Him great things, but you can't demand and expect that He's going to follow through.

You know, I bet you wondered what happened to my sister; I didn't tell you the end of the story. It was a miracle. That's about the biggest miracle I've ever seen in my life. The neurosurgeon, top neurosurgeon came in, like, they had they had to do a procedure where they put a thing up through her blood veins into her brain and made a scaffolding and broke it off. They thought she was going to need a new heart, she didn't. Long story short, the neurologist came in, and I remember this dude, I remember him, he had a gold chain around his neck and he was wearing his scrubs and he's like a typical New Yorker, again, but he's like, "I have no idea what happened. All I could say is I saw your people praying." My sister walked out of the hospital within like a week or two, and for years following when she would go back for her visits, all these top world-class neurologists would want to see my sister because it was unbelievable to them. Miracle. It was absolutely a miracle. Changed our entire family, changed my brother-in-law, everybody, it reached Floyd, but God doesn't always do miracles.

I've never seen God show up and miraculously heal my boy. I've never seen that happen. I have tried and tried to pray more. I've fasted for him for a long time. I've gone before the elders and had the elders anoint him in oil. One time I heard of a church and it was through a friend of mine who had a healing experience at a church out in Kansas City and I'm in Jersey and I got my little disabled boy who's like maybe two years old at this point, two or three, and I put him in the back seat of the



New Jersey to Kansas City, Kansas

car and I drove him to Kansas City, just me and my disabled boy in the hopes that healing might take place in this church that was known for seeing healing happen. Nothing happened.



I got to this point where I felt like I was on a cliff with my back up against this cliff and had no place else to go. I'm like, I felt like the Lord stabbed me in the back. I felt like He gave me this disabled son—and I was doing ministry, people, I was in ministry, I was a missionary and God still gave me this disabled son like nobody else that I'd ever seen—but I had no other choice. What was I going to do, become an atheist? I don't have enough faith to be an atheist! What was I gonna do, get mad at Him? That doesn't help. I'm mad at God? Yes. I got mad. Actually, to be honest, I yelled a lot at God; I swore at God a few times, too. But do I stay there? No. Like, what am I gonna do? Gonna go to drinking and drugs? No, that doesn't help; it's gonna make life worse. All I could do was take a step forward to the God who I thought betrayed me and just have to trust, even though I couldn't understand why He wouldn't heal my son. I just had to trust that He was bigger than me and that He

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SERIES: MIRACULOUS | WEEK 3 | 1.10.2021

loves me and He's active and He's got my best in store and my son's best in store. That's my only choice and that's my only thing that I could stand on today.

I cannot, I cannot explain—please do not try to give me a reason for why my son is disabled. None of them will do. The only thing I have to do is stand on the trust and hope and faith that God is good and in control and loves me and He loves you, too. And the Lord has changed me in drastic ways. I am not the man that I would be today if it weren't for Trey. And good has come from it, but ultimately good will continue to come from it.

So we have Matthew here, we see Jesus just active in people's lives—Jesus is active in your life. But then the last verse here, 8:17, points us toward the future:

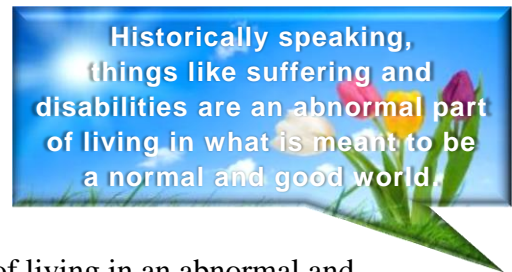
¹⁷ This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

— what I just read to you —

"He took our illnesses and bore our diseases."⁴

– MATTHEW 8:17 (ESVUK)

He *has* fulfilled all prophecies. He *is* Messiah. He *will* fulfill your life through His Spirit. He *will* change your life. One day He will fulfill all things in His Kingdom. One day. This is helpful to me as I think about my disabled son—the posture that we are to take. Are we living—listen—historically speaking and our default way of thinking as humans, tends to be that things like disabilities, things like suffering are an abnormal part of living in what is meant to be a normal and good world. Those are abnormalities, the world is actually supposed to be good and a good place to live, that's my expectation. And so when those things happen I really struggle because this is the way the world is supposed to be.



Biblically speaking, suffering and disabilities are a normal part of living in an abnormal and broken world. It changes your life when you think this way and you have a biblical mindset. When you're experiencing suffering just say to yourself, "No, this is a normal part of the world because, you know what, this abnormal broken world that I'm living in is not my home. And this is actually not where I was designed to be. One day it will change. One day. One day." This comes out of Romans 8. Take a quick look at Romans 8, Romans 8:20. I think we got it up on there [on the screen], let me see if I can find it, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Romans 8:20:

Biblically speaking, suffering and disabilities are a normal part of living in an abnormal and broken world.

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption [decay] and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

– ROMANS 8:20-23 (ESVUK)

⁴ Cited from Isaiah 53:4 (ESVUK): *Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

If you notice that it was subject to decay, the decay actually points to hope. It doesn't say in there, "so sin entered into the world, the world became an abnormal and broken place." Right? But what we're experiencing right now it says "birth pains." These are birth pains, not death pains, so every time you're experiencing suffering today it's actually pointing to the hope that you have that Jesus will ultimately fulfill His Kingdom and all creation. He will fulfill it all. The decay will go away. When I'm experiencing the abnormalities that are taking place in this world because of my son, that points to a future Heaven that I'm waiting for and I'm longing and I'm groaning for.

Why in the world—listen— why does God let suffering be in the world? He's ultimately not going to let there be suffering in the world; He's in the process of removing it all. This is not your home. Why – why is there so much brokenness in relationships? Why is there always conflict at work? Why is there conflict amongst us? Like kids, with our kids, why is it so hard to keep unity? Because it's a normal part of living in an abnormally and broken world because sin is here. Why – why are there natural disasters? Why are there kids being, like, sexually being abused? Why is there sex trafficking? Why are there racists in the world? Why are there terror groups? It's a normal part of living in an abnormal and broken world. You are not meant to be here.

Why is there a pandemic? Why are people dying of COVID? Why are there riots going on? Why is there all this freaking tension over the politics in the world right now? There's so much tension because this is a normal part of living in an abnormal and broken world—and this is not your home. Why do people die?

Why is there suffering? Why does God give people sons who are missing a part of their brain? Because this is a normal part of living in an abnormal and broken world. **BUT—Jesus *"took our illnesses and bore our diseases."*** It is not about this world. It is not about this world.

What Jesus did on the cross—people, if you're listening online and you heard what Lee had to say—we are a Christ-first church. Jesus' death on the cross came to heal everything—heal us spiritually, heal us physically. He came to fulfill His Kingdom. One day when we're sitting in heaven thousands of years from now this life will be a blip. A blip. And the suffering you're experiencing right now will change your experience in Heaven, I believe. Is there something about Heaven that I will enjoy more than many of you may never even experience? When my son speaks to me for the first time? When I'm running



with him and he's telling me the stories of all the things he couldn't tell me today? Is there something about Heaven? If this world were just a purely good and wonderful— if this was a normal and good world that we lived in, how much less would we groan and desire for Heaven?

If there's nothing else, I'm going to come through with the pandemic. If there's nothing else that this pandemic makes us as Christians stop feeling comfortable and coming to terms with this is a normal part of an abnormal world and I actually don't like this world, that there's nothing else that we as Christians say: Yes, I look forward to Heaven. I need Jesus in my house today. I look to

Jesus in the Scripture and I just can't get enough of it, and I can't help telling my friends and family that Jesus is here to fulfill their lives.



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SERIES: MIRACULOUS | WEEK 3 | 1.10.2021

Yes, He's a good God and He's fulfilled prophecy. Yes, if you don't know Him, you can know Him; come and talk to me at the Blue Wall afterwards. I would love to have a conversation with anyone out there who's saying, "I don't know this Jesus who Pastor Rob is talking about. I'd like to know Him." Come talk to me at the Blue Wall afterwards, immediately, stat, it's an emergency. And one day Jesus will change everything. He will fulfill all Heaven and earth and we'll look back on this pandemic and it will be such a distant memory, but we will be in bliss in Heaven with our Lord in the place that we were always designed to be. Amen?

All right. Let me pray for you guys. We're gonna sing some songs. [APPLAUSE] Lord, let us clap for Jesus, let's clap for Jesus. I love it. [APPLAUSE] Can we say, what do we say? Thank you, Jesus—is that what Lee got us going on? Thank you, Jesus. You do it as a prayer, nice and loud: THANK YOU, JESUS! Amen. That's it. Go ahead.

Scripture quotations marked (ESVUK) were taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version Anglicised.
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