



# **Message Transcript**

## **An Attitude of Gratitude**

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, as I stand here today, I'm amazed at all that you've done in the past 12 years. And Lord, I pray today that any word of encouragement that we give or any good thing that we see, that we've seen done would give you all the glory and honor and praise, that it would all go back to you. That would all be lauded to you, that, Lord, we would celebrate you here today because, Lord, you've done and begun an incredible work that we believe that you're going to continue on. And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the word of the Lord, who will believe what it is, he is specifically saying to you and who will, by faith, put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, amen? Amen.

About 12 years ago in 2010, my wife and I, Kimberly packed up our car and we moved out to Denver. And I remember coming from central Illinois, I remember being in the car in front of Kim and looking at her in the rear view mirror and giving her a call on the phone. And we just began to pray. We didn't know who we were going to meet. We didn't know how it was going to work out, we didn't know what God was going to do. My wife had our three year old in the car, who is now 15, and our one year old in the car, who's now 13. And we just began to pray and we began to say, "Lord, if you could just do anything, if you could save some people, if you could help us get the gospel out, if you could help us establish a church, if you could help bring the resources that we need, we will honestly, Lord, give you all the praise."

And I just want to let you know that today is worth celebrating. It's worth celebrating what God does. One of my favorite things to do and my calling in life is to open up the word of God and exposit it and thunder it and tell you this is what the Lord says. Here's what you're called to do. But I also think the scripture gives us mandates at times to pause and to celebrate the things that God has done. And Joshua, in chapter four, after Israel had finally crossed over the Jordan to go into the promised land after their 40 year camping trip that they had, as the priests had gone in the water and 2 million people crossed and God pushed back all the water, God told Joshua, tell the men, tell 12 men to go in and get a stone. And they brought these 12 stones out as a stone of remembrance.

And he said in Joshua chapter four, "Someday when your sons and your children ask their fathers, 'Dad, what do these stones mean?' You tell them that the Lord had Israel cross on dry ground." You make sure you tell them about the power of God. You make sure you tell them about everything that God had done so that they will know that the God that you're talking about today is the God who worked miracles among them. We're going to see the same thing as we jump back into the Book of Exodus in the coming weeks when they are delivered from the people of Egypt. And when children ask their dads, "Hey, tell us about the Passover. What does this mean?" You're going to say that God had the power to deliver Israel completely, that there are times where God says, Hey, let's pause for a minute. Let's talk about God's power. Let's talk about what he's done. Let's talk about who he is. Let's celebrate the fact that God is in our

midst doing some incredible things. And that's the very thing that I want to do today.

I want to step aside from the Book of Exodus today because today is our 12 year anniversary, and to give God praise and to give him honor for all that he has done and all that he is continuing to do. I also want to do something before I start my message. And it's important that I let you know that we do this because the Bible says to give honor where honor is due. And I'm not doing this today because I'm in trouble and I'm not doing this today because I'm trying to score points, but there is somebody that is a member of this congregation that's been a member from the very beginning.

The person that I'm the closest to, the one who has prayed the most, who has endured the most, who has gone through all the challenges the most, who has celebrated the most, the one who has spoken into my life the most and the one who I've given my entire life to, the one that I am one with. And I think it's remiss because you see me on the platform, you hear my ministry, you don't know the ministry that my wife has to me. And you don't recognize that if I didn't have my wife, I wouldn't be doing the ministry that I'm doing. So what I wanted to do today is to have you honor my wife for all of her service to me and to our church. Thank God for you.

Thank you, thank you. She's been a faithful servant. I know when we launched the church, she spent time for the first year with all the three and four year olds. I know she led women's ministry, not getting paid for a number of years. She's served me, she served our people she loves, she's kind, she's everything. And thank you so much for your service. Thank you for doing that. And today I really want to use, as our text, while I love being expository and really expositing the text, I wanted to go back to a

familiar passage for us as, really, the framework for what I want to say, which is why I thank God for BRAVE, why I thank God for you. I want you to hear from my heart this morning about why I'm so encouraged to be able to pastor you in this time in this season and why it's an honor to do that.

And Paul loved all the churches that he helped plant. He loved them all, but he had a special relationship with the church in Philippi. And early on in that letter, we hear his heart for the Philippians as he writes that letter in Philippians chapter one. If you have your Bible you can open up and see it as he writes to the elders and the deacons and wishes them well, he then begins to pray like this and you hear his heart. He says, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all in view of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." Can you hear his heart? Can you hear his attitude of gratitude? Can you hear what he really feels about the people?

For Paul, the Philippian church, it's not just a church he's going to read about. It's not just a church he's going to write to. It's not just a building or an edifice. He's writing to people that he absolutely loves and this is his heart. And I share that heart for you. I want to give you three truths about my heart for BRAVE Church today. And the first is, I thank God for a church that praise together and participates in the gospel. I praise God for that. I thank God for you, for a church that prays together and participates in the gospel. He says, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you." In every prayer, I pray for you. I pray with joy because of what your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. As Paul is praying, he's also praying for them because he knows

that they're praying for him as well. They're a praying church.

The foundation and bedrock of BRAVE Church has always been and will always be a foundation of prayer. You say, "Well, when did that start?" It started all the way back in central Illinois when we knew we were going to be moving out here. We prayed. We gathered about 10 people and asked them, "Would you pray with us?" We prayed on Wednesday nights for an hour. And what did we pray for? We prayed for everything we would ever need. We prayed that God would give us favor. We prayed that God would introduce us to people. We prayed that we would have the resources we needed. We prayed that we would find a worship leader. We prayed that we would find a drummer. We prayed we would find a bass player. Just so you know, the drummer gave his life to Christ on the very first Sunday. And the bass player, who knew the Lord, is now in heaven. He went home to be with Jesus about two months ago.

We prayed these prayers. We saw God answer. We prayed for where our location was going to be. We didn't know when we moved out to Denver, the difference between North Denver, South Denver, East Denver, West Denver. We just knew we were called to come and God opened up at Cherry Creek High School for that to be our space. And he opened up office space. But all those things were continuously bathed in prayer. It wasn't a one time, God, I hope you do this. It was, we're seeking your face. This is what you want to do. I remember, we had seen Cherry Creek High School and the first day I walked in, there was the last day of

school and there were papers everywhere. There was a dead mouse in the auditorium. I remember telling my friend, "I'm not feeling the vibe here." And it was about a month later we were back out in Denver and we had another meeting to go see it and we were jogging and I said, "Let's just pause and pray."

And I said, "Lord, it's presumptuous of us to think we know where you want us to plant a church." At the time, I just wanted to have somebody give us Park Meadows Mall because I thought that'd be a good spot. And we went back that day and it was clean. The dead mouse was gone. The price was right. It was the one place that they said, you can continue to meet. We won't have you meet some weeks and not others. It was off the highway. There was excessive parking. We moved in and God's done an incredible work. You may have seen in that video our 19-seat auditorium we initially had. That was in the apartment that we lived in. Seven seats in the front, six seats in the second row, six seats in the third row. We couldn't fill it. We didn't have enough people to fill the 19 seats.

I remember when we had to bring in extra chairs, calling back home and saying, "You'll never believe it. We outgrew our space." I was so fired up about all that God was doing. But we've always been a church that's prayed. Even when we launched our church, we tried to find different dates to pray. Do we pray Sunday after church? Do we pray Sunday before church? Do we pray Sundays in the evenings and coordinate that with student ministry? Do we do it on Wednesday nights and coordinate that with Awana? We did all these different things. We did it Saturday nights. We did it all the time. And finally, I got to a place where I said, "If it's that important, let's pick a date

and do it." We wouldn't change our services and say, "Well, some days we meet on Sundays and some days on Thursday nights and some days on Wednesday morning." We wouldn't do that.

It's so important we picked a time, so we picked first Tuesday. The first Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to eight, we gather as a congregation and we seek the face of the Lord and pray. And I'll tell you, like I tell you every single week, it's the most important meeting of the month. Routinely now, between here and our Westminster campus, on the first Tuesday of every month, we have more than a thousand people that gather for the sake of praying and seeking the face of God and worshiping his name. Is that awesome?

If somebody would've told Kimberly and I when we were back in Illinois, "You'll have a church someday that your passion where a thousand people will come out once a month just to pray and that's it." I would say, "We'll walk there, sign me up. Where do we go?" That's always been the bedrock. Prayer for us is not an afterthought, it's the forethought, it's the thought. We don't plan things and then ask God to bless it in prayer. We pray and ask God to show us what he's doing. As a staff, we pray every week for an hour. Three times a year, the three busiest weeks we have, Christmas, Easter and the kickoff that we have in the fall, we spend from nine to noon every single week just praying and seeking the face of God. It's mandatory. If you don't want to pray, you don't want to be part of this church because prayer is the fuel for everything.

Any good thing that's happened in the history of the church has always been birthed out of prayer. And I'm thankful for a church that prays together. I'm thankful for



a church that not only do I know I'm praying for you, I know that many of you are praying for me and our family and for the messaging and for BRAVE to have influence in the gospel. What about preaching? I remember when we first started the church, many of you weren't here, but when we first started the church, nobody brought a Bible to church and nobody liked singing at church. Most people stood with their hands in their pockets. Nobody had a Bible and they were staring at me as if I was supposed to present something to them. And now we're in a place where people come and they worship the Lord. And now we're in a place where people come and want to hear what God has to say.

And as preaching has grown over time, my love for preaching the word has grown even more. Prior to being your pastor, I did full-time evangelism. I traveled around. I did crusade evangelism, I did camps, prisons, retreats. Everything you can think of, I preached at and shared the gospel and saw many hundreds, if not thousands, of people come to Christ. Saw it all the time. But I remember one year there were two churches I was preaching in. One, I was preaching on a Wednesday night through the Old Testament, another one I preached on the weekends 20 times. And at the end of the year after doing all the evangelism we'd seen and thousands of people come to Christ, I asked my wife, "What do you think I enjoyed the most this year?" And she said, "Preaching in the church." And I said, "It was, and I don't know why."

And with her insight, she looked at me. She's like, "I like it better when you

preach in the church, because when you preach the gospel, I've heard every story you ever tell. You only have about 20 messages. But when you preach in the church, you're forced to create new content and let God speak and it's way better." And God was birthing something in me and I could tell you this, I get invited to speak in a lot of places and one of the things that I felt when I moved to Denver and became a pastor that would be limiting to me is influence in preaching. Like I'm not going to get a chance to go out because I've got to be in church. I turn down opportunities to speak all the time because if there's any place I can be, it's right here in this pulpit with this group of people preaching the word of God to you. This is where I want to be. Amen.

And our influence in preaching has continued to grow. God continues to put us on the radio and do things, which you'll hear about in a minute. Evangelism as we've talked about, huge. I mean we pray for people to get saved all the time. We had two people get saved in our very first service and we've seen God saved people week in and week out all the time. Sometimes we hear the stories, sometimes we don't. We haven't had the staff that's been able to communicate all the things to you that have happened. You don't get to hear the stories of people that get saved through the radio or the Mormon lady that writes us a letter that says, "I was listening to your broadcast on KRKS. I realized I wasn't a Christian. I gave my life to the Lord. I lost my husband and my family because we were Mormon and everything's changing my life. But praise God, I have Jesus." You don't hear all those stories.

We're going to do a better job because our staff is growing and has the ability now to do some things we haven't done before. So you'll see, but there's ongoing

evangelism happening in our church all the time. We started Alpha Ministry a couple years ago. People are coming to Christ through Alpha. We started High Five, which was a kids camp a number of years ago where thousands of kids have come through and hundreds of them have given their lives to Christ. Other families have come as a result of that. We are not going to stop sharing the gospel. What are we going to do? We're going to continue to step on the faith pedal and share the gospel more and more. Because the greatest news on the planet is that God loves sinners so much that he sent His only son to die so that we who repent and believe can have life in His name. Amen. That's the good news.

And then how about worship? I told you people used to come with their hands in their pockets. And I know if you're up in Westminster watching, you're watching Pastor Kyle kind of nod like I was there. He knows. God's brought us more gifted staff. When we used to do prayer nights, there were times I put a guitar around my shoulder for the 20 or 30 people we had. I led worship. It wasn't as good as what you experience here and now. But we've grown not only in our ability to play music but to want to worship God, to raise our hands, to tell him that he's worthy, to give him all our adoration because He, and He alone, is worthy of all of our worship and praise. And then we continue to reach out. We continue to do things.

Yesterday, just so you know, we as a congregation gave away over 400 Thanksgiving meals to people in need. Praise God. Amen. Praise God. That's you that did the work. And by faith, I'm believing next week when we collect all the Operation Christmas child boxes, this year, for the first time, we'll have over 5,000 that will take

the gospel literally to all different places in the world for people that have never heard about Jesus that you will see in heaven as a result of your investment. And friends, this is just the beginning. Paul told them, "I thank God in my every remembrance for you." In all my prayers, for all of you, I always pray with joy because of what, your partnership in the gospel, your partnership in the gospel. From when, from the very first day until now.

Do you know when I'm out and about now, it's very common for me to hear something. I'll go to the doctor, he'll find out that I pastor BRAVE Church and he'll say, "I had three people from your congregation just in here today telling me I need to go to BRAVE." Or I'll be at Target and somebody will tell me about how they got invited to BRAVE. And it's because that you're so passionate about Jesus and you're telling people about Jesus and you're telling people about where you're hearing and growing in Jesus that other people are hearing about what's going on. It's hard to be out and about where somebody hasn't heard about the influence that God is doing through you at BRAVE Church and that is to His glory. And we can give Him praise for that. Amen. That's what's going on.

So I thank God for a church that prays together. I thank God for a church that partners in the gospel together. This church doesn't view me as, well, Pastor Jeff, you're the only person that shares the gospel. We'll bring people to church. You're living it, you're sharing it, you're speaking it, you're demonstrating it, you're doing it. And God is using you as his witness. He's using us as a collective witness in this time and in this season for His glory. Amen. I thank God for a church like that. I'm fired up

for a church that will allow me to stand here and preach the authority of God's word week in and week out and not have to wonder, are you going to be okay with it? I love that you are a congregation that can hear and wants to hear what God has to say even if it goes 180 degrees against the culture that's saying everything else. I praise God for you.

Secondly, I thank God for a church that not only prays together and participates in the gospel, I thank God for a church that stands together and believes that the best is yet to come. I thank God for a church like that. I thank God for a church that stands together, partners together. We're not going anywhere. We're here and we're believing our best days are ahead of us. Notice what He says. "For I'm confident of this very thing that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Paul says, "I'm confident of this." If you've repented and trusted in Christ and the Holy Spirit resides you, I'm confident of this, that what He started in your life, He will bring to fruition. What He's begun in you, He will continue to grow.

The visions that you have on your heart and the dreams that you have, He's going to see established. And ultimately, one day when you meet Him, Jesus is going to present you faultless before the Father with exceedingly great joy. I am totally confident of that and I thank God to be part of a church where so many people are yearning for the return of Christ. That so many people are wanting to live their lives in such a way where heaven and hell hang in the balance with so many people and say, "We want to give our greatest effort, God, to love you and to reach as many in our

generation for your glory." I love a church like that. I'm thankful for a church like that. We're a church like that. Amen. That's who our God is and that's what He's doing through you. But notice what else he goes on to say. It's very personal. I feel the same way, for it's only right for me to feel this way about you all because I have you in my heart.

See, pastoring is not just a work where I stand here, pastoring is people. And I know so many of you and I love you all. God made all of you different. He made all of you with uniquenesses. He made all of you with strengths. He made all of you with weaknesses just like He made me. But as God has grown my gifting, He's used you to grow my gifting. And as He's grown your gifting, it sharpens me. We're mutually helping each other in the process of the gospel. I have you in my heart. I love this church. I love this place. Paul says, "Because I have you in my heart since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you or yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." God is my witness. God knows how much I love you. Paul says, "When I was in prison, you stood by me."

I haven't gone to prison, yet. But even during COVID, there were so many that stood by and said, "We're praying for you. We'll be here for you. We believe in the church. We believe in what's happening." And what's he mean by the defense of the gospel and the confirmation of the gospel? The defense of the gospel really comes from the word apologia, which is where we get our English word, apologetics. It really refers to the ministry of answering critics, being able to defend our faith. In every

generation there will always be people that say, Jesus Christ is not the only way. Jesus Christ is not God. How can you really believe that in a world that has so much evil? Part of our witness is defending the fact that the Bible spells out that Jesus is the only way, that He is the truth, that He is the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him.

In every generation we will always have critics. And part of the gospel is our ministry to them is to show them that there's solid answers for all the things you're asking if your heart is soft enough to be willing to repent and believe in Jesus. But then there's another part of the gospel too. It's called the confirmation of the gospel. The confirmation of the gospel is for those of you who are believers, who hear the word of the Lord, who are ministered to in worship, who are in community with others who are growing, that your faith as a result of the ministry that's taking place in the church, is actually growing. That where you were with Jesus is not where you are with Him now. You've grown because the gospel's been confirmed in your heart, which means both things should be going on in a life-giving church.

There should be people that are getting saved and there should be people that are saved or were saved when they come. But now, as a result of being part of the community in that church, their faith has escalated and grown in a way that it wasn't before they were part of that church. Let me give you an example. How many of you since coming to BRAVE have become a Christian, have been born again? You may have thought you were one or you knew you weren't one. But now that you're here, you know that you're a Christian. Just by show of hands. Could we give God praise for

that? Look at all those hands. But how many of you, when you came here would say, I was a Christian when I got to BRAVE, but now after being at BRAVE for the last three months, three years, however long I've been here, my faith is on fire or grown in a way that it hasn't been before. Amen. Can we give God praise for that as well? That's what it means to defend and confirm the gospel.

In life-giving churches, there should always be people who are coming to know Jesus Christ. That's evidence that the spirit of God is alive in that church. In a place where the spirit of God is alive, there should be evidences of people who have been Christians who are saying, I'm being challenged to grow and take another step of faith. I didn't know how to do that before and I'm growing, and both are equally important. So who do you target? Do you target non-believers or believers? We target believers. Why? Because the gospel's for believers. I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of salvation for everyone who believes. Well, they don't believe yet, but that's why we're preaching the gospel so that they will. It's all about faith. It's all about growing people. It's all about helping them grow in their faith. And we've always been a church that has stepped out in faith. That's why my heart longs and yearns for you.

We have people in this church that have taken the gospel all over the world. We have two different groups. One just got back from Tanzania, one just got back from Mexico. These things happen all the time. There's things going on in our city, they happen all the time. There's things going on in Westminster that look a little different than Inglewood that look a little different than Castle Rock that are going on all the time. Why? Because you are the witnesses of Christ. There's hospital visitations that



are going on all the time. There's groups of ministry that are going on all the time. There are prayer ministries that are happening all the time. Why? Because God is at work and alive in His church. And I thank God for a church like that, that stands together and believes that the best is yet to come.

Friends, no matter where you are, no matter how hard it is in your life, if you're a Christian, your best days are ahead of you. Your best days are ahead of you. How do you know? Because Jesus is coming back. Your best days are ahead. I promise you. Eternity is ahead. No matter where you are, you can look forward to that. Amen. And I also believe we'll see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

When we moved here, we stepped out in faith. We moved here in a down economy. We had to find a place to rent for ourselves and for the church. We had to find office space. I remember when we got out here, we'd had a little radio ministry back in Illinois that was on once a week. And as we were listening to the radio, we discovered that Salem Radio, 94.7 AM KRKS, had the best listenership for Christian radio in Colorado. Had some of the national level speakers on every morning that I listened to. So we said, "We should go ask them if they'll put us on the radio." So we set an appointment with them and walked into their office on the sixth floor looking out at the mountains and said, "Hey, how do we get on the radio?" And they laughed and we said, "Well we want to be on, we don't even know." He goes, "Do you even have money for this?" And we're like, "No, it doesn't matter. We just want to be on the radio."

And they laughed for about six months and then they called us, said, "We got an opening on Sunday morning." We said, "We'll take it." Then they called back about six months later, said, "We have an opening Monday through Friday." We said, "We'll take it." Do you know right now we are on the radio in Denver five times a day Monday through Friday at all different times. And on Sunday morning at 11:00 every single week to the glory of God? You say, "Well, why is that a big deal?" Because not everybody gets to be part of a church like this and not everybody gets to hear the Lord speak. We've had so many stories of people whose marriages have been healed, who have been set free, who have come to know the Lord, who have grown in Christ because of the generosity of God's people supporting radio ministry so that it can get out there. And we're only getting started.

We're also on 33 stations nationally all across the country. And we really haven't tried to do anything yet, but we're getting ready to. We want to see more and more people hear the good news of Christ. I'm going to whet your appetite with some things that are going to happen because God is doing some great things in our church and we're taking steps of faith. We just finished building a podcast studio in 2022. We're going to start a podcast that's going to be phenomenal. We'll have more details coming with that. And we've structured some things differently. Some of you know, if come to first Tuesday, you know a lot of this stuff. If you don't come to first Tuesday and you're like, "How come I don't know what's going on?" Come to first Tuesday. That's where we give a lot of our announcements.

But as you know, we changed our elder structure. When we started our church,

we had a biblical form but it was not so helpful as our church began to grow because what we discovered is, different men have different gifts that serve in different capacities. And when you have one meeting trying to get three different things done, it's really, really difficult. So we spent a couple years praying about what do we do and how do we find the right men to help us? At the time we had five elders. We shifted the structure instead of having just one elder team, we now have three elder teams. We have shepherding elders. Shepherding elders help guide our church. Shepherding elders are praying for the congregation. They're pastoring the congregation, they're coming alongside the congregation, they're protecting the congregation. They're there for you. This allowed us to have shepherding elders not only here but on our Westminster campus and future campuses that we'll have.

We also have what we call stewarding elders. These are men of God who are elder qualified, who work on the church. There's a lot that it takes to steward resources of a church of our size and to have men that give their time, effort, and energy to talk about insurance practices and 501c3s and how we're going to structure and what we can do. And just so you know, we're well aware of the fact that we want to become more transparent with where does the money go and how does it go and who do I talk to about these things and all that kind of stuff. That's all forthcoming because we want to do that.

And then for me, I've seen a lot of founders blow out and I know you have too. And it concerns me. I want to finish well. That may be the number one goal in my life,

to finish well with my wife and my kids and my church. And so we put an extra layer of accountability. We have what's called supervising elders that help us with our growth, personal maturity, people that speak into my life, people that I regularly meet with that are pressing me and asking me questions. Guys and men that have pastored for a long time. As we've done this over the last year, there's been such an incredible health. We've gone from five elders, we've tripled the amount of elders in our church and that's only going to continue to grow and God's going to continue to use these men to guide us where we need to go.

In terms of our staff structure, we're doing some of the same things. As we've grown and we're becoming a church that has greater influence, we can't do what we've been doing and get to where God's telling us to go. So we've shifted our staff culture and this is a time where I need to give honor to some people too. Some of you here in Inglewood don't know Pastor Justin Hart who's our campus pastor in Westminster. But I want to let you know, we need to give honor where honors do. Pastor Justin Hart is a great campus pastor and can we give him some praise? Give God some praise for him too. Love you, brother.

Westminster, you're probably still clapping but I'm going to continue to go. He's great. But we said as he's building out that team, if we're going to really be multi-site, multi-campus, we need to have a campus pastor here. And so a couple weeks ago, a couple months ago, you'll know, on first Tuesday I appointed John Gaus. I know he was here first service, I don't know if he is here now, but John Gaus is now our campus pastor here in Inglewood and is doing a fine job. He and his wife Beth have

pastored four churches that they planted. Can we give God praise for Pastor John and who he is? What this has meant for me is, this is the first time in 12 years I'm not overseeing staff. I have other people overseeing staff.

As a founder, one of the more difficult things to do is let go and let others do. And I've been wanting to do that. And now we got qualified people that can do that. They're running staff, they're doing things. I'm able to play a cheerleading role and encourage them while I'm doing other things, doing more content creation and more vision casting and really setting us up for going where the Lord wants to take us so that we can all function in our best places. One of the things we're doing with staff right now is transformational leadership training so that our staff knows how to equip the saints to do the work of ministry. We are no longer hiring staff to do a job. We are hiring staff to help you to do your job for the glory of God. That's what the church is supposed to do. Amen. Can we praise God for them?

And with this, will come new pathways for structure. When you know of a problem at BRAVE, guarantee you I know it more than you. I'm more aware of it. I'm more acutely aware. One of the challenges that we've had as we've grown is, when you come to a church of this size, a question you ask is, what's my next step? How do I get involved? Where do I go? What's the pathway look like? I want to get into a group, I want to get into a ministry, I want to serve this way. What do I need to do? What's required of me? How are you going to help me get there? And we've not been clear as to how to do that. So we've spent about the last six months putting together a plan that we're finalizing. And in the spring when we do some launching a vision of what

we're going to do, we've created clear pathways for anybody here to grow into the fullness of whatever God wants you to be at any level that He wants you to become. That's what we're going to do.

So whether you're a first time visitor or whether you don't even know who Christ is and you want to know or whether you're fired up for Jesus, whether you've served in ministry for 20 years and want to serve, we will have pathways for you to get involved and make this your home to the glory of God. That's what we're going to do and we're looking forward to sharing that with you this spring. God's done so much in our churches, He's done so much. And I want to let you know, one of the things, I think it bears repeating and sharing this story as we talk about what our God is and what He's done is just how we got the building that we're in right now and how we got the buildings that we have. And it's interesting because I think we need to talk about this just a little bit.

Every time I talk about numbers, there's somebody, it may be you, that gets a little bit perturbed on the inside. Why do we talk about numbers all the time? Okay, so let's just address this. When we had 19 seats and couldn't fill them, I wanted to fill the 19 seats. Do you know why? Because I wanted more people to hear about Jesus and I wanted more people to grow in their faith. I remember we had a godly gentleman on our team at the time that told me when we moved into Cherry Creek High School and we had 35 people looking out at 600 seats. He said this to our team, "We're going to fill all these seats and have two services, we're going to fill them twice. Let's pray for that." And we prayed for that and I'm thinking that's 1200 people. Can you even

imagine a church of 1200 people?

When we got over 200 people, he wanted to have a coffee with me and he said, "Hey, I think we're talking too much about the numbers. I can't be part of this church anymore." And I said, "Bro, what? You prayed for us to fill it twice? That's 1200 people. We're only at 200. That's a sixth of the way there and you're getting ready to leave?" He's like, "Yeah, I'm not into numbers." We have had that happen at every single level at our church. You talk too much about numbers. Let me tell you something, I talk about numbers because God talks about numbers. The very first church that was birthed was 3000 people on the very first day. It was a megachurch day one. Why do you have to tell us that it was 3000 people? Because every life matters to God. And putting 3000 names in the Bible, while the Holy Spirit could have done it, would've taken up too much space so he just said 3000 were added to their number that day.

So here's when I'll stop talking about numbers. When everybody in Denver, Colorado is completely saved to the full and walking with Christ and is being sent out all over the world and everybody in America's saved and we're sending them all over the world, then I will stop talking about it. But until then, we're going to talk about it because we don't know everybody's name that needs to be saved, but we know that everybody apart from Christ does. And there is never going to be a time where we're going to manage the church and say this is our church and if they want to get saved, they can go somewhere else. We already have enough people. Never ever, never will

we stop the mission of Jesus, which is to reach people with the gospel and grow them up in their faith. Amen.

So as we did that, we got to a place we needed to find a building. And one of the challenges to finding a building when you're meeting in a space at a school is, you got to come up with resources. We were three years into our church. Our annual budget at the time was \$800,000 for the year. And the challenge was, if we found a space we could afford, by the time we renovated it and moved in it, we would've outgrown it. So we needed something bigger than what we could afford, but we couldn't afford it. That was the problem. That's always the faith problem. What you need, you can't have because God's got to do it. And I remember the building to the south of us right here, the building we've been meeting in for years, since 2013, came available.

There was a challenge to that though. I wasn't allowed to tell our congregation until two weeks before we needed to raise the money and the money we needed to raise at the time we needed to raise \$1.73 million. Let me say it again, \$1.73 million and have it to them by the time that I announced it. So I had to preach on a Sunday, collect the money that Saturday. We had six days to raise \$1.73 million. So I preached my socks off at Cherry Creek High School and I told people, "Now is the time. If we wait, it won't be available. We got to go now." After I preached that Sunday, I remember after I preached, I thought to myself, that was the dumbest message I've ever preached in my entire life. There's no way this is going to happen. And the challenge I had was when we preached and when people were just going to start giving, I began to think, what happens if we miss it?



What if all these people give generously and we don't come up with it? We don't have enough people to afford half our congregation to leave. We're going to lose the whole church. This was the dumbest thing ever. And you know what happened? On that Thursday night, God spoke to me and he said, "Hey, you will see the goodness of the Lord and the land of the living. Jeff, you haven't counted on me. I'm coming to the meeting. It is done." And from that point in time, I was at peace. On that Saturday night, we had a worship center over in that church. People came, people gave money, kids were pouring their babysitting money out and everything all over the stage. We had 313 giving units, 313 families that gave. We needed \$1.73 million. In six days, we raised \$1.93 million and were able to purchase that building next door. Miracle.

You say, "Why do you tell that story?" Because the generosity of the few secured the blessing of the many. If you've ever been blessed at BRAVE, it's because the generosity of those few that gave. You may have never come to Cherry Creek High School. I don't know that I would've come to Cherry Creek High School. And here's the interesting thing, when I was thinking about those 313 giving units, I did a little research this week. That's where we were at the time. Do you know this year in 2022, and this is worthy of praise to the Lord. Once upon time, 313 giving units was everybody. This year we've already had 3,808 families give generously to BRAVE Church. Can we praise God for that? Isn't that amazing?

Then we had somebody donate us a building in Broomfield. Said, "Hey, if you'll put a campus up there, I'll pay for it." We actually prayed about it. We didn't just say okay. We went and knelt down in the room and prayed and said, "Okay, we'll try this.

We don't even know what we're doing." And God birthed a church. Went through a lot of change. God did something incredible there. And then this year, we were able to acquire the new property that we had. And in one week went from averaging about 450 to well over a thousand in Westminster. And God is on the move doing incredible things up on the northwest side of our city. Amen.

We were able to move into this building the week after Easter. Listen, I sat in one of those chairs this week just to prove it to myself. I realize they're not comfortable. I realize they have wooden backs. I realize there's better looking churches and different, I realize all that. We'll fix all that because there is something to be said of what a building feels like when people walk in, whether they call it home or not. We'll take care of that. But God has been so gracious to us. Just so you know, we've talked to the church next door. Our vision has always been to have the block, the BRAVE block. We're in process. All I can tell you about that is, and we'll talk about it this spring, just pray. Here's been my prayer. God, whoever you can put over there that can bring you the most glory, put them there. If that's not us, bring somebody else. And if that's us, give it to us. That's how I pray. That's how I pray for every building that we've ever got.

But isn't it interesting, as we stand firm together, God does things. I mean, I'm more resolved now that this is our church, these are our people in our church and our people are needed more than ever in our culture. Our culture needs you. Our culture needs us like never before. Some of you remember in your history about two years

ago there was something that happened called a pandemic with COVID-19 that broke out. There became a sifting in the church and it was a confusing time because people didn't really know what to do. We were told you can only have 50 people in the building at the time, then you can only have 10 people in the time.

But we took the lemons and turned them into lemonade, because for the first time ever we were able to start an online campus. And while we can only tell where people are listening and how many hits, we can't tell if you're 12 people in a room or 40 people in a room or just one of you on a phone. We're averaging that over 3000 people every week are tuned into BRAVE, literally all over the country and the world now that are hearing the gospel in ways that they never had. And we praise God for that. Amen. You're part of us. You're one of our campuses and we want to see that continue to grow.

And then I had a ton of people that just stood with me and said, "Pastor Jeff, we'll stand with you." And what I learned through the process, as we were listening to the Lord and studying the scriptures is this, that the most important vehicle in this world is the local church. The local church is where Jesus resides. And the local church is what is needed for cultural transformation. And Jesus Christ, and Him alone, have authority over the church. And no one else can tell the church how the church needs to operate except for Jesus Christ. Amen. So while wanting to remain somewhat apolitical, we opened. We stayed open and we will always stay open. I remember during the pandemic, we had somebody come into our church that walked in and saw for the first time in a year, people that weren't wearing masks and nobody was telling

them to wear one. And he came up and said, "Even if you're preaching stinks, this is my church. I feel like I'm at home."

Friends, we need to realize that what we are stewarding is the most important resource that the world needs. It's the lordship and the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I love a church. I just love our church because our church has stood firm, stood firm in the sight of some tyranny and believed that the best is yet to come. Another thing that came out of that was Bandimere Speedway for Easter. We held services outside the last two years. God provided good weather. We've seen thousands of people come. We've seen over a thousand people saved, people baptized by the hundreds. It's been an amazing couple of years what we've seen God done.

And so what's God doing next? I love to teach through the word expositively, but there's coming a time this spring in March where I'm going to spend some time as your pastor and walk you through where God has taken us over a period of weeks to share with you the vision and clarify the vision and become more transparent and show you the different ways that we can connect.

As we've been praying over the last couple of years, we say we want to find out where God's at work and join him. That's not our comment, that's just something that we choose to do. And one of the places that we've seen God at work is on our campuses. And we believe that God wants us to plant other campuses all over our city and the nation of God would allow and wherever He would lead us. Another thing that has become crystal clear is that I can no longer stand by and see what I see and see the way our kids are being trained and not provide another solution, so we are going to

be starting schools. And we believe and we're praying that everywhere we put a campus, we put a school.

And as we're rolling this out, there's so much excitement for the school, I'm beginning to wonder, is it that we're going to put out schools and everywhere we put a school, we're going to be able to plant a church? I don't know. God knows how to build His church. He's not going to stop building His church, but we're going to be a resource for discipleship. And I believe God is positioning us to be a national source of ministry to our nation and He's going to do some great things. So hang on, because we're going to be sharing those visions coming this spring.

With that, I'm just going to encourage you, when it comes to giving this year, I'll teach on generosity in the spring. I'm just asking you to give a first fruits gift this year, maybe over above your regular giving to our church over and above your tithe, just some sort of first fruits gift to the church that says, "I'm in. I want to see where God's taking us." Why? Because God gave everything to us. He gave us His son to be slaughtered, who gave us His very life, who gave us His Holy Spirit. There's nothing He's withheld from us and our responsibilities to be generous back to Him. And when we are, it aligns our heart with everything that God is doing.

To get us to where we need to go, in the spring, right around Easter, we're going to start a three year capital campaign. It'll be the first time in the history of our church that we've ever done it. I'm fired up about it because I've watched God bless generosity in my life personally and corporately in the church. And you're going to get a

chance to participate in that, whether you're 10 years old or whether you've been living for a super long time. And I believe God's going to do some incredible things through it. Hey, Pastor Jeff, did you not hear there's going to be a recession in the spring? Yeah, I've heard. Pastor Jeff, we've never done that before, don't you know? Yes, I've heard. Pastor Jeff, don't you know when you talk about money, people leave church? Yes, I know. But here's the realization, we must do this if we're going to continue on our mission. And that sharing the greatest things to the Lord is what will get us there.

We're going to kick off the 2023 calendar year with a 21-day fast. We're going to invite you in. That means fasting from food. For some of you, it may be skipping your favorite beverage for 21 days. And for others of you, it may be not having a meal and just having water for 21 days. It's not what you skip, it's that you're going to give extra intentionality to seek the face of the Lord in prayer. And that's what we're going to do together. But I believe God's doing some incredible, incredible things in our church.

And then third and finally, I'll go through this one quickly. I am so thankful for a church that grows together and experiences the fullness of Christ. I'm so thankful for BRAVE. We're growing together. We may not know each other personally, but there's people here that you do. And as you get to know some of the wonderful people around BRAVE there, there's a mutual ministry that takes place where we're growing together and we get to experience Christ together. Paul says it this way, "And this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness, which comes

through the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." He says, "I pray real knowledge in all discernment, pray that your love would grow."

That's getting wisdom and insight and more experience of Christ, that your love for God and your love for others would just manifest itself. That you would grow, that you would experience everything you read about in the word, every good thing you would get to experience that and there'd be more and more fruitfulness. You know what Jesus said? "It is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit and so prove to me my disciples." All the things that God's put on your heart, he wants to see you do. And it brings God glory when you do those things. We want more of the gospel. We want more of Jesus. We want more of the Holy Spirit. We want more fruitfulness. We want more glory going to the Father. We want more.

There's nothing in me that says we've arrived. There's everything in me that says there's more, that God can do more, that God can take what is seemingly insignificant and through His spirit, turn it into something that is miraculous. That's what He's been doing in the beginning of our history. You may ask me, "Pastor Jeff, how have you changed the last 12 years? What have been your areas of growth?" I would say this. I think about the half brother of Jesus who tells us that faith without works is dead. Who tells us, you show me your faith without works and I'll show you my faith by what I do. Who says, if you know the good you ought to do and do not do it, you sin. What's changed in my heart over the past 12 years more significantly than before, while I believe that was this, as a proclaimer of God's truth, I don't want to proclaim truth in a way that you say, "I know the truth and I believe the truth." I want you to say, "I know

the truth and I believe the truth. So here's what I'm going to do as a result of it."

Friends, we can't contain what we hear here, just here. It's supposed to go out there. Meaning, on Tuesday, there's a vote coming. What I used to tell people is, you have a responsibility as a Christian to vote. I'm telling you today, as a Christian, you have a responsibility to vote. But I'll go one step further. As a Christian, you must vote for people that align with the authority of God's work. I'm not telling you who to vote for, but you can't vote for somebody that when God creates a life and God brings life, they kill it in the name of choice. You can never vote for a candidate that says that, ever. God created one race, the human race. You cannot vote for a candidate that wants to have all these multiple things out there and make people feel bad for the skin color that God gave them. You can never vote for a candidate like that. You can never vote for a candidate when God creates two genders, male and female, and have some hybrid of that, or you can never vote for that candidate.

So do your research and if people are trying to reverse the created order that God designed, vote them out. Get them out. Now, Pastor Jeff, what happens if after Tuesday it doesn't go that way? Then we continue to proclaim the gospel and we live and we trust that the Lord's going to do great things, but we are not going to sit passively and idly by. Oh, by the way, if you don't vote or you don't vote that way, you agree that evil is good and God is wrong. Period. So vote. That's our God-given responsibility. And here's what God wants us to do. He wants us to get active in the world. He wants us to be a place that is known for the gospel. Some of you have a favorite restaurant or favorite coffee shop that, if it got raptured, you would wonder



where they all went. You know where to find them all over the city. I want BRAVE Church to be a place that when the rapture takes place, everybody will say, "Where did that great group of people just go?"

BRAVE, it is an honor. It is an honor to be your pastor. I have a love for you. I have a love for this church. It is my calling. It is my design. It is my life. I believe God wants to use us to literally send people all over the world with the gospel, and he wants you to be a part of that. He's bringing us together for something special. I've studied church history. There's different moves of the Lord that I think sometimes when I read about it, whether it was John Wesley and his movement or what was going on in Charles Spurgeon's church where you jealously read that and be like, "I wish I could have seen one of those services", or "I wish I could have been one of those preachers". I've come to this conclusion, there's no greater time I'd rather live and there's no greater church I'd rather be a part of than to live right now and be part of BRAVE, because God's doing something so special right here through you. Amen.

And so as we think about all that God wants to do, I want to just remind you that it's God that's doing all the work. Everything we're cheering for today has nothing to do with any individual. It has everything to do with our great God who wants to unleash more of His goodness into a world that needs him. And we all get to be a part of that. We all get to stand together. We all get to believe together. We all get to pray together, grow together, trust together, and believe together that God's going to do something greater in and through us than we could ever do by ourselves. Amen.

And the good news, he's still saving people. He's still transforming lives, He's still doing a work, and He's still growing people up. And that's one of the markers we've seen from day one until now. In a few minutes, we're going to do some baptisms. I'd like you to turn your attention to the screens, see some of these testimonies, and then let's celebrate all that God is doing. Amen. Amen.