

SERMON OUTLINE 1

YOU ARE STAMPED WITH GOD'S IMAGE

GENESIS 1:26

Note: It is recommended that you read chapters 1–2 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In the time the book of Genesis was written, various kingdoms had a preeminent pagan god for their people. At the borders of the kingdom, statues—that is, *images*—of the god were erected, in essence saying, “This kingdom honors such-and-such god and is ruled by it.”
- B. When the true and living God made the earth, he also put images on his territory. But his images were living, breathing, walking-around human beings. Human beings were made “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27 NIV).
- C. In these messages, we will consider twelve promises that God has made to us in his Word. The first promise is that *we are stamped with God's image*.

II. TEACHING

- A. God created human beings in his own image and likeness.
 - 1. God said he would make human beings in his own image, and he kept his word. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27 NIV).
 - a. Nothing else in creation bears God's image—only human beings.
 - b. All creation declares the glory of God, and human beings reflect God's being.
 - i. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1 NIV).
 - ii. “What a wildly wonderful world, GOD! You made it all, with Wisdom at your side, made earth overflow with your wonderful creations” (Psalm 104:24 MSG).

- iii. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse” (Romans 1:20 NIV).
 - 2. All human beings bear God’s image—there are no exceptions.
 - a. Born and preborn, rich and poor, male and female, urban and rural, all ethnicities bear God’s image.
 - b. Sin has distorted God’s image in human beings, but it has not destroyed it.
- B. God intends for human beings to grow in their role as his image-bearers.
 - 1. Growing as God’s image-bearers is called *sanctification*.
 - a. Paul writes, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV).
 - b. The culture tells us to look inside ourselves to find value. It tells us that money, possessions, fame, status, church attendance, doing good deeds will make us significant. But these things do not.
 - 2. God tells us that we are significant simply because we have been made in his image.
 - a. There is something of God in each of us.
 - b. He stamped his name on our heart.
 - c. He breathed life into our lungs.
- C. Growing as God’s image-bearers transforms our vision.
 - 1. We see ourselves differently—as loved children of God. “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him” (1 John 3:1 NIV).
 - 2. We see others differently. Every human being deserves dignity and respect because he or she is God’s image-bearer.
- D. Growing as God’s image-bearers gives us our mission.
 - 1. We are to grow in knowing God our loving Father. “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3 NIV).

2. We are to grow in making God our Father known to others. “Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done” (Psalm 105:1 NIV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. Children reflect the traits and characteristics of their parents because of their genetics. In the same way, human beings were created to “take after” God and demonstrate his wisdom, love, grace and kindness.
- B. However, sin turned us inward, polluting our morality, dulling our intellect, and making us self-absorbed. Yet, even in light of our sin, God has **not** rescinded his promise to us in his Word. He still creates people in his image to bear his likeness and reflect his glory.
- C. God even sent his Son to die on the cross for our sins. Like an old valuable coin smudged with dirt and grime, God has cleaned us up so we can reflect his love, grace, and mercy.
- D. God saved us not only for his glory and for our eternal good, but also for the sake of others. Today, we have a choice to make . . .
 1. Will we embrace our role as God’s image bearers?
 2. Will we live to reflect God to others?

SERMON OUTLINE 2

GOD WILL WIN THE VICTORY

ROMANS 16:20

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 3 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The grand story of the Bible contains episodes of great conflict. The stakes are highest in the conflict the Bible describes between good and evil—between God and Satan. This is a spiritual battle with eternal consequences.
- B. Followers of Christ—whether they realize it or whether they deny it—are in this fierce battle. Paul wrote, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).
- C. All Christians are in a battle, yet God has made a tremendous promise about the outcome of this conflict. As Paul wrote, “The God who brings peace will soon defeat Satan and give you power over him” (Romans 16:20 NCV). The promise we will look at today is that *God will win the victory*.

II. TEACHING

- A. Satan declared war first against God and then against human beings.
 - 1. Satan, also known as Lucifer, was originally a glorious being and a guardian of God’s purposes.
 - a. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!” (Isaiah 14:12 NKJV).
 - b. “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you” (Ezekiel 28:12–13 NIV).

2. In his pride, Satan wanted to be worshiped like God.
 - a. “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’ ” (Isaiah 14:13–14 NIV).
 - b. “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor” (Ezekiel 28:17 NIV).
 3. God cast Satan out of heaven because of his rebellion.
 - a. “So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings” (Ezekiel 28:17 NIV).
 - b. “The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth” (Revelation 12:9 NIV).
 4. Satan has been an enemy to God and God’s followers ever since, roaming the earth and looking for opportunities to bring destruction.
 - a. “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Satan answered the LORD, ‘From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it’ ” (Job 1:7 NIV).
 - b. “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8 NIV).
- B. Satan has many names, but the *devil* reveals his wicked strategy.
1. There are many names for Satan given in the Bible:
 - a. accuser (see Revelation 12:10)
 - b. destroyer (see Revelation 9:11)
 - c. evil one (see Matthew 13:19)
 - d. father of lies (see John 8:44)
 - e. god of this age (see 2 Corinthians 4:4)
 - f. prince of this world (see John 12:31)
 - g. ruler of the kingdom of the air (see Ephesians 2:2)
 - h. tempter (see 1 Thessalonians 3:5)

2. The word *devil* comes from the Greek word *diabolos*, which means “splitter,” “divider,” or “separator.”
 - a. Satan, by lying to Eve and Adam, separated them from God, from one another, and from their purpose to love and obey God (see Genesis 3:1–5).
 - b. Jesus said, “If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Mark 3:25 NIV).
- C. God has provided resources for us to stand against Satan in the spiritual battle.
 1. We have divine weapons to defeat the tactics of the enemy.
 - a. “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4 NIV).
 - b. “Take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17 NIV).
 2. We have spiritual armor to help us defend ourselves against attack:
 - a. belt of truth (see Ephesians 6:14)
 - b. breastplate of righteousness (see Ephesians 6:14)
 - c. shoes of the gospel of peace (see Ephesians 6:15)
 - d. shield of faith (see Ephesians 6:16)
 - e. helmet of salvation (see Ephesians 6:17)
 3. We also battle through prayer and worship.
 - a. Through *prayer*, we call on Jesus’ victorious power (see Ephesians 6:18).
 - b. Through worship, we do what Satan refused to do and submit ourselves to God (see Psalm 95:6–7).
- D. We live in light of Jesus’ total defeat of Satan at the cross (see Colossians 2:15).
 1. Paul writes that Jesus, “having disarmed the powers and authorities . . . made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15 NIV).
 2. Satan knows that Jesus has defeated him. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8 NIV).

3. God will keep his promise to give us the ultimate victory over Satan.
“The God who brings peace will soon defeat Satan and give you power over him” (Romans 16:20 NCV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. The first power play did not happen on Wall Street, or in the halls of Congress, or even on a battlefield—but in the garden of Eden.
 1. Adam and Eve sinned, and through their fall, sin entered the whole human race. Human innocence was gone. Fear replaced love. Hard work and pain replaced the joys of the garden of Eden.
 2. However, our loving God—through Jesus—made it possible for us to live once again in a close, loving union with him.
 3. Satan, the devil, viciously seeks to separate us from God.
 - a. Do you acknowledge the spiritual battle you are in?
 - b. Do you know what Jesus has done for you?
- B. The story is told of General Patton’s battle against Field Marshall Rommel in North Africa during World War II.
 1. As the tide of battle turned in Patton’s favor, he yelled, “I read your book, Rommel! I read your book!” We have read God’s book. Jesus was—and *is*—victorious over Satan.
 2. The devil has been cast out of heaven, but not out of our lives. Yet we *can* face the devil with all his deceptive schemes and win. Why? Because Jesus has already won for us.
 3. When you think of the weapons of prayer, worship, and Scripture that you been given to battle the devil, which do you need to develop more? What is one step you can take to grow in that area?

SERMON OUTLINE 3

YOU ARE AN HEIR OF GOD

ROMANS 8:17

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 4 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. *Little Orphan Annie* originally appeared on the American scene as a comic strip created by Harold Gray in 1924.
 - 1. In the story, Annie, a poor orphan, ends up in the home of very wealthy man named Oliver “Daddy” Warbucks.
 - 2. *Annie* is a story of optimism and hope, of the surprising turns that life often takes, and the power of love to soften crusty old hearts.
 - 3. The Bible reveals that likewise, each of us has been orphaned because of our sin and separated from our true Creator. But God finds us where we are and adopts us into his own family.
- B. Meeting Jesus and choosing to trust in his claims and follow him changes *everything*. We become a part of God’s own family. Yet in the stresses and struggles of everyday life, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that we are children of the almighty God.
- C. God’s unshakable promise is *we are heirs of God*. Today, we will look at what this means and how it should shape the way in which we live.

II. TEACHING

- A. Being an heir of God is a promise filled with amazing realities.
 - 1. We are more than slaves, servants, or saints. We are God’s children and co-heirs with Christ.
 - 2. To be an *heir* means we have an unimaginable inheritance . . . right now.
- B. As heirs, we have legal rights to all the resources of heaven—even all the resources that Jesus himself possesses.

1. We have access to the breathtaking resources of our heavenly Father: “Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours” (1 Chronicles 29:11 NIV).
 2. We have the legal right to the family business and fortune of heaven. The will has been executed. The courts have been satisfied. Our spiritual account has been funded.
- C. Living as an heir of God requires living by faith in God’s goodness and promise.
1. In Numbers 13, we read how Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan—the territory God had promised to the Israelites—to do surveillance.
 - a. A man from each tribe of Israel was chosen and sent to spy out the land (see verse 2).
 - b. When the men returned, the spies reported conflicting stories of their findings (see verses 30–33).
 - c. The members of the community grumbled and rebelled against Moses and Aaron after hearing the negative reports.
 2. What the Israelites overlooked was that God had not told them to take the land by force—but to receive it as a gift. God had clearly said that he was “giving [the land] to the Israelites” (verse 2).
 3. God judged his people’s unbelief with forty years of wandering in the wilderness (see Numbers 14:29–35). The unbelieving generation died.
 4. God ultimately chose Joshua, one of the two believing spies, to replace Moses and lead the people into their inheritance—the Promised Land (see Joshua 1:1–3).
 - a. Joshua took God at his word that the Lord was giving the land to the Israelites, even though he and the people faced raging rivers, walled cities, and fierce enemies.
 - b. We enter our inheritance through faith in God’s solid promise that we are co-heirs with Christ. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3 NIV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. At times we may feel rejected, unworthy, and deficient, but we have this unshakable promise from God that he has endless resources available to us.

1. God has endless love for us. “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1 NIV).
 2. God has endless hope for us. “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23 NIV).
 3. God has endless grace for us. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8 NIV).
 4. God has endless wisdom for us. “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all” (James 1:5 NIV).
- B. Jesus was the Son of God, living on this earth with all the resources of heaven available to him. The Bible says we are like him in this world.
1. The apostle John states, “In this world we are like Jesus” (1 John 4:17 NIV). We, too, are children of God and co-heirs with Christ.
 2. For this reason, we do not need to live with timid imaginations and meager faith. Like Joshua, we can choose to be strong and courageous in entering into our inheritance.
 3. We don’t receive a pittance, leftovers, or hand-me-downs. We have been blessed in the heavenly realms with *every* spiritual blessing in Christ.
 - a. What would your life look like if you trusted God as his heir and used all that is rightly yours?
 - b. How would that have changed the way you lived your life?
 - c. What is holding you back? Trust him today.

SERMON OUTLINE 4

YOUR PRAYERS HAVE POWER

JAMES 5:16

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 5 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Most of learned to pray “in Jesus’ name” early in our lives. But ending our prayers in this way can become so common that we forget what Jesus’ name really means and the power it carries.
- B. In truth, the whole universe comes to attention when we whisper the name of Jesus. Not because we are powerful—for we are not. It is the *name* we whisper that has the power.
- C. Consider what happens when we show our passport at the immigration window of another country.
 - 1. When we have this document, we are confident we also have the authority of our nation with us. The same is true of prayer.
 - 2. As James wrote, “When a believing person prays, great things happen” (James 5:16 NCV).
 - 3. Today, we will consider this promise that *our prayers have power*

II. TEACHING

- A. Our prayers impact the very actions of God.
 - 1. In James 5:16, we are told, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (NIV).
 - 2. A great half-truth the devil tries to promote is that God only uses “special people.” In reality, God does use special people—but they are special because he uses them. “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Peter 2:9 NIV).
 - 3. Remember we are the children of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ. “We are children . . . we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ,

if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8:17 NIV).

- B. When we speak to God, he listens to our prayers.
 - 1. “God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer” (Psalm 66:19–20 NIV).
 - 2. “[God] listens to the godly person who does his will” (John 9:31 NIV).
 - 3. “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us” (1 John 5:14 NIV).
- C. When we pray and seek God’s will, heaven responds.
 - 1. “Truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:19–20 NIV).
 - 2. “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7 NIV).
 - 3. “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (John 16:24 NIV).
- D. When we pray to God, we join with him in governing the universe as ambassadors of Christ.
 - 1. “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (1 Corinthians 5:20 NIV).
 - 2. “And he raised us up with Christ and gave us a seat with him in the heavens. He did this for those in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6 NCV).
- E. Elijah provides an example of powerful prayer from an ordinary person.
 - 1. In 1 Kings 18, we read how Elijah confronted King Ahab about leading God’s people into idolatry. “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals” (verse 18 NIV).
 - a. Baal was a pagan weather/rain god who was worshiped in many ancient Middle Eastern communities, especially among the Canaanites.
 - b. There was a severe drought and famine in the land (see verses 2–3). It is clear Baal was not doing his job.

2. Elijah called for a contest to be held on Mount Carmel between the God of Israel and Baal.
 - a. Two bulls would be sacrificed on two different altars—one for Baal and one for the God of Israel.
 - b. Elijah would call on his God, and the 450 prophets of Baal would call on their god. Elijah told Ahab, “The god who answers by fire—he is God” (verse 24 NIV).
3. The prophets of Baal call out to their god from morning until noon but get no answer.
 - a. Elijah taunts them: “Shout louder! . . . Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened” (verse 27 NIV).
 - b. When it is Elijah’s turn, he instructs four large jars of water to be poured on the offering and the wood—three times. Then Elijah simply prays, “Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again” (verse 37 NIV).
 - c. God answers immediately, and the people repent. “When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!” (verse 39 NIV).
4. James, the brother of Jesus, tells us that Elijah was an ordinary person.
 - a. “Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops” (James 5:17–18 NLT).
 - b. Elijah was an ordinary person just like us. It was not he who had the power, but his prayers had the power.

III. APPLICATION

- A. The Bible tells us, “We cannot imagine the power of the Almighty” (Job 37:23 NLT). We may not see ourselves as anything special—we may even feel we are weak and powerless. But we have a Father in heaven who is all-powerful.
 1. The theological word to describe this characteristic of God is *omnipotent*.
 - a. *Omnipotent* is a Latin term that comes from two root words: *omni*, meaning “all”; and *potent*, meaning “powerful.”

- b. As Paul writes, “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6 NIV).
 - i. We are seated higher than a person who is in the U.S. Senate and higher than a judge on the Supreme Court. We are seated in Christ in the heavenly realms!
 - ii. Prayer is our communication with the all-powerful Father, who loves us and rules the universe. How will these truths transform your view and practice of prayer?
- 2. Our prayers matter to God because we matter to God. Through faith in Jesus, we are children of God and co-heirs with Christ.
 - a. We have clout because we bear the name of Jesus. Paul writes, “If we endure, we will also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:12 NIV). To *reign* with Christ means we will govern with him for all eternity.
 - b. Prayer is our partnership with God in getting things done in the world. We are never without hope because we are never without prayer.
 - c. What is keeping you from making prayer your priority and your passion?

SERMON OUTLINE 5

GOD GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE

1 PETER 5:5

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 6 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. History is riddled with accounts of people who fell prey to the sin of pride.
 - 1. Alexander the Great was a talented general and military leader who, in 334 BC, conquered the Persian Empire. But his pride compelled him to consider himself a god—which alienated his native Macedonians—and led him to overextend his forces. His zeal to conquer India might have also led to him contracting a fatal disease.
 - 2. Charles d’Albret led a superior force of French fighters in 1415 against the English army at the Battle of Agincourt. The English were short of food, and all d’Albret had to do was block their route to English-held territory. But when the English advanced with flags flying, d’Albret took this as an insult and, in his pride, led his army across a field of sticky clay mud. The French soldiers were bogged down, which gave the English archers time to pick them off one by one and carry the day.
 - 3. Napoleon was a talented general who by 1812 had conquered Europe and formed a French Empire. But his pride led him to believe he could conquer Russia—a mistake that cost him his army and his empire. As one writer stated, “Napoleon, supreme egoist that he was, ignored the significance of the omens until he and his host were completely and irrevocably committed to an undertaking that was doomed.”
- B. Each of these leaders—and many more since—learned the hard way what the apostle Peter pointed out: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5 NKJV). God delights to give grace to the humble. Today, we will explore this unshakable promise of God.

II. TEACHING

- A. The problem with pride is that it causes us to reject God's rightful place in our lives—which leads to devastating consequences.
 - 1. Satan's pride caused him to rebel against God and be cast out of heaven (see Isaiah 14:14; Ezekiel 28:17).
 - 2. Adam and Eve's desire to be like God plunged the world and human race into sin (see Genesis 3:5, 14–19, 24).
 - 3. In Proverbs 16:18, we read, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (NIV).
- B. One of the greatest examples of the negative effects of pride and its consequences is found in the story of Nebuchadnezzar.
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of a mighty empire. He built an impressive city, named Babylon, and at one time ruled the entire known world. The hanging gardens of Babylon were even considered one of the seven wonders of the world.
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem and carried thousands of God's people into captivity. Among his captives were four Jewish young men named Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to be worshiped (see Daniel 3:5).
 - b. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused, he had them thrown into a fiery furnace (see verse 21).
 - c. God delivered the three men from the flames—but the mighty king still did not humble himself.
 - 3. God ultimately led Nebuchadnezzar to realize who was truly in charge.
 - a. God warned the Babylonian king, through Daniel's interpretation of a dream, that judgment was coming to him (see Daniel 4:27).
 - b. But Nebuchadnezzar continued to boast about all of his accomplishments (see verses 39–40).
 - c. The king was transformed into an animal-like creature (an ox), who ate grass (see verse 33).
 - d. Nebuchadnezzar finally repented and confessed that God is able to humble the proud (see verse 37).
- C. Exhibiting humility places God in his rightful place in our lives and positions us to receive his grace.

1. Humility is a character trait of Jesus.
 - a. Jesus said, “I am . . . humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29 NIV).
 - b. Even though he was God, he humbled himself. “Being in very nature God . . . he humbled himself” (Philippians 2:6, 8 NIV).
 2. Humility acknowledges our total dependence on God.
 - a. Humility allows us to do what pride will not—confess our need for God and receive his grace. “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit” (Isaiah 57:15 NIV).
 - b. G.K. Chesterton wrote, “How much larger your life would be if your self could become smaller in it. You would break out of this tiny and tawdry theatre in which your own little plot is always being played, and you would find yourself under a freer sky.”
- C. Humility positions us to receive God’s grace.
1. Grace is only available from God, and he gives it freely. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8 NIV).
 2. We not only are *saved* by grace, but we also *live* by grace. As Paul wrote, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10 NIV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. God resists the proud because the proud resist God.
1. God detests what pride does to his creation. “The LORD detests all the proud of heart” (Proverbs 16:5).
 2. Pride causes us to want to be “king of the hill,” and our lives become all about us. We forget we are needy creatures who are dependent on God for our very lives.
- B. Many people, including some Christians, live under the tyranny of one diabolical question: *What are other people thinking of me?*
1. The true and most important question is: *What is God thinking of me?* The first question will lead us to pride, but the second question will lead us to humility.
 2. The Bible—almost from cover to cover—declares, “God is thinking of you with love, with a deep desire to be with you, and with the power to

change your life into what he designed it to be.” We can quit striving and begin resting in the great saving love of God.

3. What wreckage has pride produced in your life? What areas of pride do you need to acknowledge and confess?
4. Pride shipwrecks the soul. So confess your pride and take your place under his gracious care. The pathway of humility is the pathway of grace.

SERMON OUTLINE 6

GOD GETS YOU

HEBREWS 4:15

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 7 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. A television program called *Undercover Boss* shows owners and CEOs of businesses going undercover as rank-and-file employees of their companies. They disguise themselves to discover the challenges their workers face and the weaknesses in their companies.
- B. A recurring surprise is that these bosses often reward their employees for their honesty about areas in which the company is managed poorly. The upper-level people learn about those who work for them and appreciate them in new ways.
- C. Does God—the Creator of the universe, the almighty Holy One—understand the likes of us? Is God able to appreciate the weaknesses we have and the challenges we face? The Bible is clear that he does. Why? Because Jesus was the ultimate “undercover boss.”
- D. Today, we will look at the unshakable promise that, “our high priest [Jesus] is able to understand our weaknesses” (Hebrews 4:15 NCV).

II. TEACHING

- A. Jesus Christ is the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Revelation 19:16 NIV).
 - 1. Jesus created all things. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3 NIV).
 - 2. Jesus sustains (holds together) all things. “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17 NIV).
 - 3. Jesus declares he has all ultimate authority: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18 NIV).
 - 4. Jesus is God in human flesh.
 - a. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his

dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14 NIV).

- b. “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9 NIV).

B. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, went “undercover” and became one of us.

1. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to a virgin named Mary. “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35 NIV).
2. Jesus was born to a poor couple in unseemly circumstances.
 - a. “She gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them” (Luke 2:7 NIV).
 - b. “Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem . . . to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: ‘a pair of doves or two young pigeons’” (Luke 2:22, 24 NIV). A pair of doves was the required offering if a family could not afford a lamb.
3. Jesus faced all the experiences of human life in a sinful world, yet he never sinned. He is both fully human and fully God.

C. As *God*, we worship and respect Jesus. “When they saw him, they worshiped him” (Matthew 28:17 NIV). He is our King and our Lord.

D. As *human*, we draw near to Jesus and find help. “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16 NIV).

- a. Jesus, in great humiliation, died for our sins. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV).
- b. Jesus didn’t deserve to feel the shame, but he felt it. He didn’t deserve the humiliation, but he experienced it. He had never sinned, yet he was treated like a sinner. Jesus understands all the guilt, remorse, and embarrassment.

III. APPLICATION

- A. Jesus is the ultimate “undercover boss.” He created the universe and governs it as Lord of all. Yet, he came among us and lived the way we live.
 - 1. Jesus was so human he could touch people, yet so mighty he could heal them.
 - 2. He was so human he spoke with an accent, but so heavenly he spoke with authority.
 - 3. He was so human he could blend in, unnoticed for thirty years, yet so mighty he could change history—and be unforgotten 2,000 years later.
 - 4. He was all man . . . yet all God.
- B. What will you do with Jesus? Think again of what he did for you. He faced the joys and trials, the laughs and cries, the pleasure and pains of human life—and never sinned.
- C. Jesus purposely and willingly went to the cross to provide forgiveness of sins and a new way of life for all who believe in him. God the Son became our servant so we might become daughters and sons of God. Open your heart to him now and receive the life and love of God.

SERMON OUTLINE 7

JESUS IS PRAYING FOR YOU

ROMANS 8:34

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 8 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Robert Brown was the owner of the fishing boat the *Andrea Gail*, which was lost at sea in 1991 in what became known as “the perfect storm.” Six fishermen, along with the captain, died in the tragedy. When later asked about the incident, Brown reported to the Boston Globe, “What got me worried is that there were no communications for such a long time.”
- B. Storms of life come at us all. Jesus faced them, and so did his disciples. A vital factor in any storm is *communication*. This raises the question, “What does Jesus do when we are facing the sometimes crashing and chaotic times in life?”
- C. Today we will consider the unshakable hope in the promise that Jesus is praying for us when we face life’s intense struggles. As Paul wrote, “Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34 NIV).

II. TEACHING

- A. Jesus teaches that we will face the storms of life. “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33 NIV). Jesus is not being pessimistic in saying this but realistic.
 - 1. Jesus himself faced troubles (storms) of all kinds.
 - a. His family thought he was out of his mind. “When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind!’” (Mark 3:21 NIV).
 - b. His closest friends deserted him at his arrest. “Then everyone deserted him and fled” (Mark 14:50 NIV).
 - c. His own people rejected him. “Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’” (Luke 23:20–21 NIV).

- d. As the author of Hebrews wrote, “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:7–8 NIV).
2. Jesus’ followers will face storms. “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him” (Philippians 1:29 NIV).
 - a. Peter and John were put in jail for proclaiming the message of Jesus. “They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day” (Acts 4:3 NIV).
 - b. Stephen was put to death for his belief in Christ. “At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him” (Acts 7:57–58 NIV).
 - c. The early church was persecuted. “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1 NIV).
 - d. Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned for sharing the gospel of Christ. “The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods” (Acts 16:22 NIV).
- B. Jesus intercedes for us as we encounter the storms of life.
 1. The verb *intercedes* means “to make specific requests or petitions before someone.”
 2. In Matthew 14, we read how Jesus interceded for his disciples, who faced a real-life threatening storm on the Sea of Galilee.
 - a. Jesus directed his disciples to get in the boat and to cross the sea. “Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side” (verse 22 NIV).
 - b. The disciples soon faced gale-force winds and threatening waves. “The boat was . . . buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it” (verse 24 NIV).
 - c. Meanwhile, Jesus was alone on the mountain praying. “He went up on a mountainside by himself to pray” (verse 23 NIV).

- d. Jesus saved the fearful disciples and sinking Peter from death. “Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught [Peter]. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’ And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down” (verses 31–32 NIV).
 - e. The disciples’ response was to worship Jesus as the Son of God. “Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’ ”(verse 33 NIV).
- C. Jesus continues to intercede for us before the Father as we live out our days.
 - 1. In John 17, Jesus prayed for his disciples and for all of his followers.
 - a. “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word” (verse 6 NIV).
 - b. “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message” (verse 20 NIV).
 - 2. The Bible states that Jesus continues to intercede for us.
 - a. “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:25 NIV).
 - b. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5 NIV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. An unspoken assumption among Christians is often that they will “get a pass” on life’s troubles. Many think they won’t or shouldn’t face storms. But the Bible—and Jesus himself—dispels that dangerous assumption.
 - 1. How do you respond to the storms of life? Are you surprised by them?
 - 2. Do you get irritable with others? Do you question God’s goodness?
 - 3. What can you do to realistically face up to the storms of life?
- B. The owner of the Andrea Gail was alarmed by the lack of communication with the captain and crew of the boat in “the perfect storm.” However, we can know that Jesus is always communicating to God for us when we face the storms.
 - 1. How does this promise encourage you?
 - 2. How does it encourage you to know that when Jesus speaks—all of heaven listens?

- C. Jesus is sovereign over all storms. No one is promised a storm-free life, but we can all rest in the unshakable hope that Jesus is praying for us.

SERMON OUTLINE 8

DEATH HAS BEEN DEFEATED

1 CORINTHIANS 15:54

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 10 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The world-renown evangelist Billy Graham died at the age of 99 on February 21, 2018. During his lifetime, it is estimated that more than 250 million people in 185 countries heard the plan of salvation from his ministry.
 - 1. Billy Graham, true to his humble character, was buried in a simple pine plywood casket built by Richard Liggett, a prisoner in the Louisiana State Penitentiary, also known as “Angola.” The casket cost \$215.
 - 2. In addition to having an impact on world leaders and millions of people worldwide, Billy Graham also had an impact on one of the most forgotten people groups in the world—those serving sentences in prisons.
 - 3. Most of the prisoners in Angola are serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. This means they will likely die there and be buried in the Angola prison cemetery.
 - 4. During his lifetime, Billy Graham preached that Jesus came to bring life *to all who would receive him*. The casket in which he was buried serves as a reminder that Jesus came “to proclaim freedom for the prisoners . . . to set the oppressed free” (Luke 4:18 NIV).
- B. Jesus faced death, entered into death, and conquered death so that we could have life. He brought about the death of death!
 - 1. The apostle Paul writes, “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54 NIV).
 - 2. All of us are prisoners of sin and death. But Jesus came that we may have “life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10 NIV).
 - 3. Today, we will explore this unshakeable promise from God that through Christ, death has eternally been defeated.

II. TEACHING

- A. Death is a cruel and intruding enemy on the human race.
 - 1. God intended for people to live in fellowship with him forever.
 - a. God walked with Adam and Eve daily in the Garden of Eden.
 - i. “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8 NIV).
 - ii. The verb *walking* represents the customary or habitual action of God.
 - b. God had said, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:17 NIV). Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought death to the human race.
 - c. Behind Adam and Eve’s sin were the devious lies of God’s enemy, Satan. “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You must not eat from any tree in the garden”?’ ” (Genesis 3:1 NIV).
 - d. The apostle Paul wrote, “Sin came into the world because of what one man did, and with sin came death. This is why everyone must die—because everyone sinned” (Romans 5:12 NCV).
 - 2. The enemy desires to bring suffering and death into our existence.
 - a. In the book of Job, we read how Satan asked permission to test Job to see if would curse God. “Stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you” (Job 1:11 NIV).
 - i. Satan brought death to Job’s servants and his sons and daughters (see verses 15–19).
 - ii. Job dressed in rags and his friend heaped ashes on their heads, which was a ceremony used by mourners (see verses 8, 12).
 - b. Jesus described Satan as “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44 NIV) and said that he came “only to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10 NIV).

- B. Jesus Christ conquered death by his own death and resurrection.
1. Jesus was born into this world, died by crucifixion, and was buried.
 - a. “While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn, a son” (Luke 2:6–7 NIV).
 - b. “Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit . . . when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs” (John 19:30, 33 NIV).
 - c. “At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there” (John 19:41–42 NIV).
 2. Mary Magdalene and other women who went to Jesus’ tomb to prepare his body for burial discovered that he had been raised from the dead.
 - a. When the women reached the tomb, “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it” (Matthew 28:2 NIV).
 - b. The angel announced the resurrection of Jesus: “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said” (Matthew 28:6 NIV).
 - c. The angel commanded the women to announce the good news to Jesus’ disciples (see Matthew 28:7).
 3. The resurrected Jesus appeared to many people:
 - a. Mary Magdalene (see Mark 16:9–11; John 20:11–18)
 - b. Other women returning to the tomb (see Matthew 28:8–10)
 - c. Disciples on the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13–32)
 - d. Peter (see Luke 24:33–35; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
 - e. Disciples and others in Jerusalem (see Luke 24:36–49)
 - f. Disciples without Thomas (see John 20:19–25)
 - g. Disciples with Thomas (see John 20:26–29)
 - h. Seven disciples by the Lake of Galilee (see John 21:1–25)
 - i. Disciples on a mountain (see Matthew 28:16–20)
 - j. Five hundred people at once (see 1 Corinthians 15:6)
 - k. James (see 1 Corinthians 15:7)

- I. Disciples at Jesus' ascension (see Luke 24:50–52; Acts 1:4–11)
 - m. Paul (see Acts 9:3–5; 22:7–8; 26:14–16; 1 Corinthians 15:8)
- C. The authors of the New Testament proclaimed that Jesus had conquered death.
 - 1. “Christ has truly been raised from the dead—the first one and proof that those who sleep in death will also be raised” (1 Corinthians 15:20 NCV).
 - 2. “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrews 2:14–15 NIV).
 - 3. “Christ himself suffered for sins once. He was not guilty, but he suffered for those who are guilty to bring you to God. His body was killed, but he was made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18 NCV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. Sin and death reveal that life on this earth is not as God intended it to be. We lose loved ones, whether infant or aged, in death. Death seems severely final. For many, death brings hopelessness and despair.
 - 1. What do you think about death? Do you ignore it? Deny it? Pretend that you want face it?
 - 2. Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, wrote, “Death is the destiny of everyone” (Ecclesiastes 7:2 NIV).
- B. The Bible defines Jesus as “the firstfruits” from the dead (see 1 Corinthians 15:23). This means Jesus was the first of a huge crop of resurrected people.
 - 1. Because Jesus rose from the dead, death has been conquered for all of us. Death is not the end of our story—those who trust in Jesus for salvation experience eternal life.
 - 2. Just envision yourself as you were meant to be: completely whole. And envision this earth as it was intended to be: no more struggle, no more shame before God, no more tension between people, no more curse.
 - a. Have you found unshakeable hope in the face of death? You can.
 - b. Jesus walked the path through death into everlasting life. Jesus is saying to you, “Follow me.”
 - c. What is keeping you from receiving Jesus right now, today?

SERMON OUTLINE 9

JOY IS COMING SOON

PSALM 30:5

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 11 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In the morning sunshine of July 4, 1976, a huge C130 cargo plane landed at Ben Gurion Airport in Israel, carrying the rescued Jewish and French hostages from Entebbe Airport in Uganda, Africa.
 - 1. As the United States was celebrating 200 years of independence, Israel was celebrating the most audacious hostage rescue in human history.
 - 2. In the night darkness of July 3–4, Israeli commandos stormed the old terminal at Entebbe and gathered the hostages into a waiting C130.
 - 3. For the those rescued, a week of dark nights filled with fears of certain death suddenly turned into inexpressible joy.
- B. We may not face this kind of weeping at the hands of terrorists, but we will all face struggles that seem to never end, trials that seem too great to endure, and heartaches that seem to far beyond hope.
 - 1. God knows this about our human condition, and he makes an unshakeable promise: “Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5 NLT).
 - 2. Today, we will explore the story of Mary Magdalene and this promise that God makes to us.

II. TEACHING

- A. Jesus instructs his followers with a realistic observation: *life is not easy*.
 - 1. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33 NIV). He didn’t say “trouble *may* come” or “trouble will come to *some*.”
 - 2. With trouble comes times of darkness, loneliness, fear, and despair. David wrote, “My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning;

my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak” (Psalm 31:10 NIV).

3. Troubles and trials can seem endless, erasing all hope and creating despair. We may feel like David, who cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish” (Psalm 22:1 NIV).

B. The Bible is clear that troubles and sorrows do not have the last word.

1. Mary Magdalene came to understand the depth of this promise of God that “joy comes with the morning” (Psalm 30:5 NLT).
 - a. The Gospels refer to Mary Magdalene at least twelve times. She was from Magdala, a city on the western shore of the Galilee Sea. This informs her name: “Mary of Magdala,” or “Magdalene.”
 - b. She had been possessed by seven demons (see Luke 8:2).
 - c. She, along with other women, supported Jesus’ ministry. “These women were helping to support them out of their own means” (Luke 8:3 NIV).
 - d. As a follower of Christ, her hopes would have been crushed when she witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus. “Near the cross of Jesus stood . . . Mary Magdalene” (John 19:25 NIV).
2. Mary went to Jesus’ tomb to properly prepare his body for burial.
 - a. “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb” (John 20:1 NIV). The hasty burial on Friday didn’t allow for this.
 - b. It was there that Mary discovered “the stone had been removed from the entrance” (John 20:1 NIV).
 - c. After telling Peter and John that Jesus’ body was missing, she encountered two angels inside the tomb. She thought they might help her find Jesus’ body (see John 20:11–12).
3. Jesus spoke first to Mary after his resurrection.
 - a. Mary turned and saw Jesus. But she thought he was the gardener—perhaps even the grave robber. “Thinking he was the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him’ ” (John 20:15 NIV).

- b. When Mary heard Jesus speak her name, she knew it was him—alive from the dead! “She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means ‘Teacher’)” (John 20:16 NIV).
- c. Jesus’ crucifixion seemed to be a dark and hopeless situation for his disciples. They had lost their friend, teacher, and savior. But joy came in the morning when Jesus rose from the grave.

III. APPLICATION

- A. God has a promise for all people today with heavy hearts.
 - 1. Imagine Mary’s joy after the deep sorrow of Jesus’ cruel death and cold burial. Her weeping burst into eternal joy.
 - a. Notice that Jesus appeared to her first after his glorious resurrection. Not to Peter or John or any of his other disciples—but to Mary Magdalene.
 - b. Why? No epistle bears her name. No New Testament story describes her work. Why did Jesus create this moment for Mary Magdalene?
 - c. Perhaps Jesus did so to send this promise of hope to all the heavy-hearted people.
 - 2. Watch for the morning. Walk toward Jesus even if the trail is dark. Expect to hear him, because he knows your name. Embrace this unshakeable promise of God.
- B. What troubles have you faced or are facing right now?
 - 1. Pain is real and searing, but not everlasting. Despair will not rule the day. The clouds may eclipse the sun, but they cannot eliminate it. Night might prolong the dawn, but it cannot defeat it. Morning comes.
 - 2. Will you believe this promise of God in your situation?

SERMON OUTLINE 10

YOU WILL HAVE POWER

ACTS 1:8

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 12 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Imagine you own a 2018 Cadillac Escalade that weighs almost three tons. You need to parallel park. How will you do it?
 - 1. Almost effortlessly, you turn the steering wheel and parallel park with ease. What enabled you to maneuver the three-ton machine with so little effort?
 - 2. Simple: the Cadillac has a power-steering pump. The second you turned the steering wheel, the power steering pump instantly added thousands of pounds of power to the turning of the Cadillac's wheels.
- B. The Holy Spirit does the same for followers of Christ.
 - 1. The instant we decide to live obediently to God, the Holy Spirit empowers us with ability beyond our own to obey God.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit is one of the three Persons of the Trinity. We must know and rely on the him.
 - 3. Today, we will consider the unshakeable promise that God will give us power in our lives. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8 NIV).

II. TEACHING

- A. The Holy Spirit was given to all believers at the Feast of Pentecost.
 - 1. Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Harvest, was one of three feasts that all Jewish men were required to attend in Jerusalem.
 - a. The Law of Moses said, "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me. . . . Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow" (Exodus 23:14, 16 NIV).

- b. Jewish believers and Gentile “God fearers” from all over Europe, Africa, and Asia were in Jerusalem at this time. “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5 NIV).
 - c. Many ethnicities and languages were represented (see Acts 2:11).
 - 2. Jesus’ followers were gathered in Jerusalem to pray when the power of the Holy Spirit came over them.
 - a. They were a group of common and “ordinary” people. “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13 NIV).
 - b. Yet this group had been given a promise by Jesus—that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:8).
 - c. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was accompanied with a sound like a mighty wind, tongues of fire that rested on each of them, and speaking in other languages (see Acts 2:1–4).
- B. The Holy Spirit is often the neglected Person of the Trinity.
 - 1. Believers know the Father, admire the Son, but seem oblivious to the Spirit. The truth is we constantly need the Spirit. “Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3 NIV).
 - 2. Jesus spoke more about the Holy Spirit than about the church, marriage, money, or the future.
 - 3. After Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit is the active member of the Trinity on earth (see Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:17–22).
- C. The Holy Spirit causes our Christian lives to flourish.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit gives us power. “The Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Romans 8:26 NIV).
 - 2. The Holy Spirit bears fruit of godliness in us. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23 NIV).
 - 3. The Holy Spirit creates unity in the church. “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3 NIV).

4. The Holy Spirit energizes the church and gives us hope. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13 NIV).
5. The Holy Spirit produces holiness in the church. “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:7–8 NIV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. Are you settling on a “two-thirds God”?
 1. Are you familiar with God the Father and God the Son, but uninformed about God the Holy Spirit?
 2. As Max says, you would be skeptical of buying a tripod with only two legs or a tricycle with only two wheels. So why be content with relating to only the Father and the Son?
 3. How much of the Holy Spirit’s ministry are you aware of in your life?
- B. Jesus promises the power of the Holy Spirit to all who believe in him.
 1. Just look at the early disciples. No one accused them of over-qualification. There wasn’t a theologian, rabbi, scribe, or priest among them. Most of them were low-class and blue-collared. Yet God chose these individuals to empower with the Holy Spirit.
 2. You also received the Holy Spirit when you became a Christian. Do you believe you have all the power you need to live a life for God? Why or why not?
- C. The Holy Spirit brings transformation as he has his way in our lives.
 1. When we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us, we begin to think like God thinks, love like God loves, and see like God sees. We minister in power, pray in power, and walk in power.”
 2. What keeps you from fully relying on the Holy Spirit? Is there a sin you need to confess? A grudge you need to release? A promise you need to keep? Avail yourself now of the power of the Holy Spirit.
 3. The promise is yours to claim: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8 NIV).

THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

ROMANS 8:1

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 8 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Have you ever had a Road-to-Damascus moment?

1. This is a moment when you receive a significant burst of insight that leads to dramatic transformation in your beliefs or attitudes. The term is based on the experience of Saul of Tarsus, who, while on his way to Damascus to arrest and persecute Christians, encountered the risen Christ.
2. Martin Luther, the famous Protestant Reformer, experienced his own Road-to-Damascus moment
 - a. Luther was starting his law studies at the University of Erfurt when he decided to visit his parents.
 - b. On the way back to Erfurt, he was caught in a terrible thunderstorm. Lightning struck near him and he was thrown to the ground by the air pressure it created.
 - c. In that moment, Luther promised to leave the study of law and join the Catholic priesthood.
3. Charles Colson also had a Road-to-Damascus moment when a former client read C.S. Lewis's book *Mere Christianity* to him.
 - a. In 1973, Charles Colson successfully helped to reelect President Richard Nixon. He should have been on top of the world, but instead he found himself thinking, *So what?*
 - b. In August of that year, a former client read to him from Lewis's book. When he left the man's home, he notes, "Something happened that had never happened to me before." Colson felt convicted about his behavior and turned his life over to God.

- c. That fall, within one month of his conversion, he became a target of the Watergate investigation. He served seven months in prison.
 - d. During his time in prison, Colson became aware of what he saw as injustices done to the incarcerated. He left politics and became known for his ministry to prisoners.
- B. Today, we will look at the original Road-to-Damascus moment and God's promise that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

II. TEACHING

- A. Saul's life changed when he met the risen Christ on the Road to Damascus.
 - 1. Saul of Tarsus, a zealous Pharisee, had been attempting to destroy the followers of early Christianity (see Acts 9:1–2). In his own words:
 - a. “When the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him” (Acts 22:20 NIV).
 - b. “On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them” (Acts 26:10 niv).
 - c. “I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man” (1 Timothy 1:13 NIV).
 - 2. Saul dramatically encountered the risen Christ on the way to persecuting other members of the early church in Damascus (see Acts 9:3–5).
 - a. Saul must have wondered if the risen Christ would destroy him in a quick and painless death—as he deserved.
 - b. But his dramatic Road-to-Damascus moment was full of grace! “The Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel’ ” (Acts 9:15 NIV).
 - c. Saul—later called Paul—would become the great voice of the gospel to the Gentiles.
- B. Paul's experience gave him a new understanding of God's grace, and he later wrote about what it meant to have “no condemnation” in Christ.
 - 1. God is holy, perfect, and without sin. “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing” (Habakkuk 1:13 NIV).

2. We are all sinners both in nature and behavior. “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5 NIV).
 - a. Our sin separates us from God. “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2 NIV).
 - b. Good works and being good can’t save us. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9 NIV).
 - c. Being better than others can’t save us, for Christ is our standard. “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:11 NIV).
- C. Our situation was hopeless, but God provided the Way out through Jesus.
 1. When Jesus died, the curtain in the Temple that separated us from God was torn open. “With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mark 15:37–38 NIV).
 2. We could not reach God, so God came to us.
 - a. “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10 NIV).
 - b. “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4–5 NIV).
- D. Jesus has removed all that separated us from God
 1. Christ completely paid our sin debt to God by dying in our place.
 - a. “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished” (Romans 3:25 NIV).
 - b. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV).
 2. There is no longer any division, separation, or condemnation.
 - a. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NIV).

- b. “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV).
- c. “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1 NIV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. We could say a synonym for grace is *surprise*! God not only does not give us what we deserve (which is mercy), but he gives us what we don’t deserve—which is grace!
 - 1. Paul experienced this firsthand. He must have thought he was a goner on the Damascus road when he met the risen, all-powerful Jesus.
 - 2. But instead of being a goner, God made him into a *goer*. He later referred to himself as “the apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13 NIV).
 - 3. What Road-to-Damascus moment have you experienced?
- B. Do you experience simmering guilt for the things you’ve done and how you’ve treated God and God’s people?
 - 1. Paul certainly did. He regretted his life as a persecutor of Christians (see 1 Timothy 1:12–14). Yet he knew there was no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - 2. Nothing—no matter how horrible it is—need separate us from God.
 - a. Do you have this unshakable hope for yourself? Do you have this hope for the loved ones in your life?
 - b. Do you believe God wants to show grace to you and others?
 - c. Trust today that God accepts you and calls you to him through his grace, love, and forgiveness.

SERMON OUTLINE 12

JUSTICE WILL PREVAIL

ACTS 17:31

Note: It is recommended that you read chapters 13 and 14 in *Unshakable Hope* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. “It’s not the way it’s supposed to be.” Doesn’t that describe our world and, sometimes, our lives?
 - 1. Injustices are rampant on this planet. Child trafficking thrives in major nations of the world, including the United States. Corporate crime makes the headlines weekly, and crime rates in inner cities skyrocket. The world mocks and rejects the morality of the Scriptures. Human life seems as disposable as Styrofoam cups.
 - 2. All of this can cause us to ask, “When will it stop? When will things be made right? Why doesn’t God do something about global injustices?”
- B. The truth is that God has given us an unshakable promise: *justice will prevail*.
 - 1. Our God is a God of justice.
 - a. “Turn from evil and do good, and you will live in the land forever. For the LORD loves justice, and he will never abandon the godly” (Psalm 37:27–29 NLT).
 - b. “Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!” (Isaiah 30:18 NIV).
 - c. “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8 NIV).
 - 2. God, being just, promises that he will one day judge the earth.
 - a. Much of world history and human experience shows the wicked win and the righteous lose—but this is not true.

- b. We have great hope that God will render just verdicts about all the sins and injustices of all people. None will escape judgment—not even God’s children.
- C. Today, we will explore the unshakable hope we receive in the promise that justice—*God’s justice*—will ultimately prevail.

II. TEACHING

- A. God has selected an appointed day to judge the world. “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed” (Acts 17:31 NIV).
 - 1. The word *set* in this verse means “to single out” or “purposely choose.”
 - 2. The word *judge* means to render a righteous (right) decision about every human action and motive.
- B. The concept of God’s day of righteous judgment (or “Day of the Lord” is a recurring theme in the Bible.
 - 1. “He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity” (Psalm 98:9 NIV).
 - 2. “The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted” (Isaiah 2:12 NIV).
 - 3. “Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming” (Joel 2:1 NIV).
 - 4. “The day of the LORD is near for all nations” (Obadiah 1:15 NIV).
 - 5. “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30 NIV).
 - 6. “You are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed” (Romans 2:5 NIV).
 - 7. “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it” (Revelation 20:11–12 NIV).
- C. God will judge *all* people—both believers and unbelievers.
 - 1. God’s judgment of believers is referred to as the *judgment seat of Christ*.
 - a. Believers are not judged about their sins but their faithfulness to the will of God.

- i. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body” (2 Corinthians 5:10 NIV).
 - ii. “For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat” (Romans 14:10 NIV).
 - b. God will never hold any sin against believers, for Jesus paid the complete penalty at the cross.
 - i. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 NIV).
 - ii. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23 NIV).
 - iii. “ ‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed’ ” (1 Peter 2:24 NIV).
 - c. God’s judgment of believers results in reward and honor.
 - i. “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God” (1 Corinthians 4:5 NIV).
 - ii. “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8 NIV).
 - d. Believers, anticipating this judgment, abound in hope. God will make all things right and all things new. “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true’ ” (Revelation 21:5 NIV).
- 2. God’s judgment of unbelievers is referred to as *the great white throne*.
 - a. All the dead will be judged based on what they have done. “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened” (Revelation 20:12 NIV).

- b. God leaves those who choose to reject Christ with that choice. “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Revelation 20:12 NIV).
- c. Those who choose not to follow Christ experience the same judgment as Satan and his minions. “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. . . . Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14–15 NIV).

III. APPLICATION

- A. Just like today, the people of the Bible often cried out, “How long, Lord?” They agonized over unchecked, violent injustice.
 - 1. The prophet Habakkuk cried, “Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate the wicked?” (Habakkuk 1:3 NIV).
 - 2. However, God is not sitting idly by. He remembers the actions of every person, including their motives. He knows the violence done by the nations. He has heard every cry for help.
 - 3. God will make right every wrong done to his creation. He has *set a day* for judgment. If you have trusted in Jesus as your Savior, you can *joyfully* look forward to that day.
- B. God will make his universe right. New creation has no sin, evil, shame, pain, or death (see Revelation 21:4).
 - 1. Believers in Christ will be with God forever. The Christian hope is an eternal hope even in the face of the most horrendous evils. We are firmly anchored to a loving and just God (see Hebrews 6:19). Since no one can take our *Christ* away, no one can take our hope away.
 - 2. Perhaps you are the recipient of an injustice. God understands and cares.
 - a. He, of all beings in the universe, knows about violent injustice, as he witnessed his own innocent Son nailed to the cross.
 - b. Perhaps you have been unjust (and who hasn’t?). Know that your sins have been paid for at the cross. You can be made new.
 - c. By trusting Jesus Christ alone for salvation, you can look forward to that day when God will judge the world.