

Jonah: Wrestling with Grace
Week 4: Jonah 4
November 24, 2013

Good morning/intro stuff—THANK RODDY/CHBC WORSHIP TEAM

Guests: glad you're here, our vision is connecting people to God and each other, hope you experience a bit of both of those things

Especially if this is your first time ever to church or first time in a long time, glad you're here and hoping you'd come this morning

Vision: hope to be a part of that happening some day all across Chatham County but for today, just glad that you're with us

Praying that today starts a journey for you that ends with you knowing a good God in heaven who loves you

This is the last of our 4-week series out of the little book of Jonah in the Old Testament

if you've missed any of these, we've had a great time in this little book, you should go to the web site

we know that many of you travel on weekends or have other conflicts, so that's why we've got the sermons in three forms:

audio, video, and just recently we've started uploading the written out version of this thing if you'd like to read it and catch up with us.

So thank you to our outstanding tech team, and check that out next time you miss us here on Sunday morning

To get you up to speed if you've missed it, Jonah is an Old Testament prophet in Israel about 800 years before Jesus

and he gets a call from God to go to his enemies, the Ninevites, and proclaim God's judgment on them.

"BUT JONAH" didn't want anything to do with telling God's message to his enemies, he goes in the opposite direction from Nineveh, on a boat toward southern Spain a city called Tarshish

But God's not done with Jonah yet, he sends a big storm, the ship threatens to break apart, Jonah tells the crew to throw him overboard

They finally do so and the storm immediately stops and God sends a fish to swallow Jonah up whole.

Jonah finally prays in the belly of the fish, and God hears his prayer and the fish vomited Jonah out into dry land

And then the call comes a second time to Jonah to go to the Ninevites and proclaim God's word to them, he goes this time

And surprisingly to us, the whole city of Nineveh repents: the common people to the king to the cattle, everyone responds in sackcloth and ashes

And that's where we're going to pick up this morning

I want to start this morning by talking about movies and I want to get YOU talking about movies with one another

The category: "worst sequel"

So I want you to turn to a neighbor and my question to you this morning is this: what movie did you absolutely love that they then ruined by attempting to make a sequel?

Name a movie that you wish they would have just left well enough alone but they just couldn't help themselves, they had to try to make a buck and they made a terrible sequel?

1 minute, go!

Pop off with the audience a bit

Here are a few of mine and some of this will date me a bit: most recently in my family: Cars and Cars 2; but my all-time most disastrous has to be that I grew up on these and so I consider all of these an utter abomination.

Well in our western, happily-ever-after Hollywood world, most of us would like for Jonah 3 to be the end of the story: Jonah goes to Ninevah, the Ninevites repent, and everyone lives happily ever after--NO Jonah 4

In fact, we've got a couple of children's Bibles at home and most all of them stop at the end of Jonah 3, because Jonah 4 gets too complicated!

But here's the deal: have you ever seen someone who got away with something?

Ever seen someone who DIDN'T get what they deserved

The person who cheated on the test or who plagiarized the paper or who cheated on a spouse or stole an idea at work or did someone wrong to someone else or, or, or AND THEY GOT AWAY WITH IT?

How'd that make you feel?

That's a bit where we find Jonah as we turn to Jonah 4, let's look at Jonah 4, and Jonah's last stand, his last BUT in this story.

Jonah 4

1 But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. **2** He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. **3** Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

For a couple of months in junior high there was a guy who sort of verbally threatened and bullied me.

And I hated going to school for those months and I hated feeling picked on and like I was defenseless against this guy who was much bigger than my scrawny self

And it was one of the happiest days of my life when I learned that he and his family were moving away.

Fast forward to about three or four years ago, this guy FRIENDS ME ON FACEBOOK!

I'm like, are you kidding me, I don't want to have anything to do with you! I don't want to be real or pretend friends with you

I would be especially ticked off if I friended you on Facebook and found out you were some rich millionaire or something.

The only thing about being your friend on Facebook that would make me happy would be to find that you were a miserably unhappy human being!

And I sat on that friend request for like 3 days, and the Lord began to show me that I just maybe had some un-resolved forgiveness issues to deal with.

That's just a small, small piece of what Jonah's experiencing here in this passage.

The Ninevites, remember, were enemies of the Hebrew people.

There was a long history of these people coming and pillaging Israel, stealing food or crops, destroying villages, abducting children and wives

We can be hard on Jonah, but let's put this in modern day terms:

suppose you had a family member in the world trade center when it went down on September 11th

And God called you to go to the Al Qaeda cell that participated in that plot and tell them that God was going to strike them down unless they repented

What would YOU be hoping for? And how might you respond if they actually repented and God decided to not strike them down?

That's about how Jonah's feeling.

And so we get Jonah's last 'but' here at the end of the story: God has been gracious and Jonah doesn't like it—he wants destruction for his enemies, not mercy.

He knows who God is right? God is gracious and compassionate and because God has been gracious and compassionate and abounding in love to his enemies, he's mad about who he is.

He can't delight in God because he is reveling in his anger. In fact, throughout this whole passage as we'll see, Jonah's fierce anger completely hijacks his ability to think straight or engage with God

Have you ever had anger or jealousy or ambition or fear or anxiety or pride so overrun you that you can't engage with God? Can't see things from his perspective, are unwilling to even try to engage with God or see things from his perspective?

See, it's possible to know all about God and not love him. Jonah here can recite the Sunday school answer, but he does not delight in what God delights in.

Jonah liked that God was slow to anger and abounding in love toward HIM, he doesn't like it toward his enemies: ever felt that?

Now most of us don't really have a palpable feeling of "enemies" in our lives, perhaps some of you do but for most of us that's kind of foreign.

But what I want to propose to you is this: for all of us, if we hang around God long enough, there's going to be something God does or some part of him that we discover we just don't like.

If we linger around the presence of a holy God who is other than us, who is different from us, who is God bigger than we can imagine, we are going to discover a very uncomfortable reality: God isn't like us!

And for some reason you and I are perpetually shocked by this realization! How many of you are shocked when God reminds you that he's not like you?

God isn't like us! He's different! And he's got a different take on some things in ways that we might not like.

God might have different ideas about your life, about morality, about MONEY, about worship, about sexuality than you and I might have.

The original temptation in the garden of Eden was that we would be like God—and we still believe it! We still think that we can be like God!

And so God, who is slow to anger and rich in love, over the course of our lives, will occasionally re-shock us with the reality that God is God and we are not

And that is good for us!

You can call it training for eternity.

See, we think that when heaven is just going to be some great big party and that everyone would want to be there.

But Scripture describes what will happen as a new heaven and a new earth

And that new heaven and this new earth is a place where everything is done exactly like God would have it to be done—his will one day WILL be done in the new earth just as it is in heaven

And none of our little vices will be allowed into God's heaven or his new heaven and new earth

none of our pride, no lust, none of our gossip, none of our pettiness, none of our self-righteousness

nothing that is not good and pure and loving and selfless will exist there.

And if you start talking about an eternity that looks like that, it's clear that you and I have a lot of training to undergo to prepare for it.

Dallas Willard is one of my heroes, just died a few years ago, a philosophy professor who taught at the University of Southern California and a deeply committed Christian

And he talks about it something like this—to forgive our sins is very do-able for God. It cost him greatly, but he did it and it was something entirely under his control.

But to make us the kind of people who are fit and ready for an eternity with him, that's the hard part, because it requires our cooperation.

And then he says this: “God will let everyone into his heaven who can possibly stand it.”

How do you respond when you bump up against God who is “OTHER” and different than you? What do you do when God doesn’t fit your box?

When there’s something that he’s for and your against, or when he points out something in you that’s gotta’ go if you’re going to be ready for an eternity with him?

One of God’s deepest desires for you is to share in his heart, his passions, his loves; that what he loves, you would love and what he hates, you would hate.

Are you willing to share in your Father’s heart?

Jonah, here, is in eternity training. God is compassionate not only to him but also to his enemies whom he despises.

He is bumping up attributes and actions of God that he does not like, and we’re getting a raw description of Jonah as he struggles to embrace the God who is utterly not like him.

4 But the LORD replied, “Have you any right to be angry?”

5 Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. **6** Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine.

7 But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. **8** When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, “It would be better for me to die than to live.”

9 But God said to Jonah, “Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?”

“I do,” he said. “I am angry enough to die.”

A number of years ago I got a bug to write a book.

Being a skinny white guy with a lot of opinions who’d been in ministry for about ten years, I felt like I had really important things to say about leadership, especially for leaders who were just starting out.

So I decided to start writing this book.

And along the way a number of things started to open up, some opportunities that were unusual, I got into a writer’s workshop class that I wasn’t supposed to get into and I began to think that God was in this.

My supervisor was really encouraging and then a couple of chapters got picked up and accepted when I submitted them as articles to some magazines

So you can imagine my surprise and my angst when I got the small envelope from InterVarsity Press telling me thanks but no thanks, the world doesn't need another white guy writing a book about leadership.

And so for the next couple of days off and on I did what Jonah's doing here: I pouted.

I thought that God had set me up, that he had made a promise and didn't deliver. I felt like I was owed something, like I had worked hard and now here he was letting me down.

I had this litany of reasons why I thought I was owed this, not the least of which was the fact that I had put a lot hard work into it.

As I pouted over those couple of weeks and as I listened to Christmas music, I began to come to a realization that I want to invite you to consider as well.

That not just in this place, but really in all areas of my life, the place where I am most easily offended, the most easily wounded, where I am most quick to feel sorry for myself and to sulk and whine

Those are outward signs of a deeper root issues: self-righteousness.

Self-righteousness is this conviction that because of who I am or what I have done—because of my record of my own righteousness and goodness-- I am owed something: basically, whatever it is that I want at the time.

Self-righteousness is a particularly significant occupational hazard for prophets like Jonah—their full-time job is to speak the words of the Lord and they often take significant abuse for it.

But I want to propose to you that for all of us, self-righteousness is just beneath the surface.

You ever felt self-pity because someone didn't respond to you the way you wanted them to?

OR when you didn't get the grade or the job or the promotion you thought you deserved or the recognition you thought you deserved?

Ever have those conversations in your head with people, rehearsing how right you are and how wrong they are?

Ever experience a genuine getting slighted or overlooked or dis-respected and then realize several days later that you're still thinking about it and realize that you're way over-reacting?

That this has over-run you internally or emotionally in a way that's way out of proportion to the situation?

Those are all symptoms of a deeper issue called self-righteousness.

My friends, the Lord has given you this thing called a "self."

To quote George MacDonald, He has given you this "SELF" so that you might have something to give back to him.

This self that's been given to you by God is like the \$5 bill your parents gave you to buy their Christmas present with when you were a kid

So this thing called the self has been given to you that you might have something to give back to God.

You will either spend your days trying to placate and satisfy this self that God's given to you—you will either waste your days trying to make this self happy

OR you will hand this self over to Jesus and die to it, let it go and live for a bigger story and a larger purpose

Those are your choices.

Self-righteousness and self-pity and despair are the fruit of a life that is still being lived for the self rather than for God.

And Jonah is still stuck in himself and this self is ruining his ability to relate to God in a genuine way.

BUT GOD still has the last word. In fact, Jonah 1 STARTS with God speaking and Jonah 4 ENDS it with God speaking. Jonah has had his last "but"

And depending on which translation of the Scriptures you're looking at, God has at least the last one, maybe the last three but's in the story.

He is not done with Jonah, he will continue to pursue him to the end of his life because he wants to give him life.

And so God does this object lesson with Jonah—this plant that springs up and shades him and he's glad about it and then it dies and he's pouting again.

And in the midst of Jonah's pouting about the plant, God sets him up for the road to health

10 But the LORD said, “You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. **11** But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?”

Jonah can recite facts and truths about God but he doesn't really love God nor does he love the things that God loves.

Jonah knows ABOUT God but he does not share in God's heart for those who are far from him.

And the question is are we in the same boat: do we know ABOUT God but miss his heart for those who are far from him?

“Should I not care about that great city?” God presses Jonah to love people who are culturally and ethnically different, who are military enemies, who have been his oppressors in recent history.

God challenges Jonah to move past his anger and self-righteousness and hatred for these people and to enter into God's heart for them

Because Jonah right now is not fit for eternity;

God wants to bless Ninevah and he wants to bless Jonah with his love for Ninevah: “Should I not care about that great city?”

Jonah is self-absorbed and has deep antipathy towards Ninevah: he just does not like them.

And my friends, most of us don't have Jonah's exact problem, we have something slightly worse.

Jonah is stuck in self-absorption and antipathy—he hates the Ninevites, but at least he is engaged in the matter.

For most of us, we are stuck in self-absorption and apathy—we just don't care.

But the Father DOES. HE CARES ABOUT THAT GREAT CITY, HE CARES ABOUT OUR GREAT COUNTY, CHATHAM COUNTY

Friends, if we're going to share eternity with THIS God, we're going to have to share in his heart for our great cities, OUR COUNTY, THIS COMMUNITY, YOUR NEIGHBORS AND MINE

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a problem [PROBLEM]

The problem is this: if you put lemons and limes in the same bowl of water, the lemons float and the lime sinks.

The problem my friends is that if you put God's mission to bless Chatham County with his YES

in with a bunch of other equally biblical and important values: community, Bible study, prayer, service—God's mission sinks while other things float to the top.

God's Mission is a lime. It sinks, it requires extra focus and energy to keep God's mission to our neighbors and all of Chatham County and our part in it on the front burner.

Mission to our community does not float to the surface naturally in our walks with God

and because most of us are fairly self-focused, the call to love OUR great city that is Chatham County and our neighbors naturally sinks

And my friends, this is a problem because God does indeed care about this great county

every single person you come face to face with is made in God's image and was made to worship him.

It is the most natural, most true thing for every single person to be a worshipper of Jesus—picture the most resistant person you can imagine to this whole Jesus thing

For some of you—that's you!

Now picture them here beside you, singing songs of praise, praying, leaning into the Scriptures and learning and worshipping and soaking it all in

God has made us in his image and he is passionate about reclaiming all that is his. God is a on a mission, he is passionate about this great county

And most of us do not. You and I aren't ready to spend an eternity with this God.

A large part of our eternity training in this life is about growing up into his heart for every nation, tribe, tongue and we are invited to start by loving this county where he has placed us.

For most of us, our default it apathy, we let the lime sink. But God loves us way too much to let us get away with this.

We must find a way to see that the lime of God's reconciling mission to Chatham County no longer sinks but instead is a vital part of our lives and our chapters.

My friends, in about 20 minutes, you will be in your cars and on your way home

And as you drive through Chatham, past neighborhoods and homes and fields and pull into your house

God says to you and to me this morning: "Should I not be concerned about Chatham—that great county?"

This is a call to join God in his mission with a holy certainty that God cares about this great community called Chatham County

He is eager for his YES to be known here, he desires for your neighbors and co-workers and the parents you bump into at dance class to know his love and his redemption

Here's the deal my friends: for most of us, we are sleep-walking spiritually when it comes to God's heart for the people around us, aren't we?

Most of us are surrounded by people who do not know God, who are worshipping idols of success or popularity or money or independence or control or entertainment

and who are forfeiting the grace that could be theirs.

And most of us are completely oblivious to the fact that God's Spirit is always at work

and that there might be people around you that he is at work in and that you have a role to play in their lives

maybe even to lead them to a final embrace of God's yes to them in Jesus.

My friends, do you have any idea what the spiritual interest is and faith-journey of your neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances all around you?

Do you really have any idea or are you just guessing?

Are you praying for anyone right now who's in your immediate vicinity who does not know Jesus?

Are you praying and seeking out opportunities for spiritual conversations?

Are you intentionally thinking about the people around you and what kind of invitations might help them to see something of God's work?

Are you on your tip-toes, eager and expectant for God's Spirit to be at work around you and ready to jump in at a moment's notice the second you sense that there's a God-moment happening here?

My friends, the reality is that most of us are sleep-walking when it comes to your relationships with people who are not currently walking with Jesus.

And if you're here this morning and you've been sleepwalking through a semester or three years of college completely oblivious to spiritual realities and opportunities all around you, this is your wake up call.

It's time to wake up, brothers and sisters, it's time to wake up.

Kelsey and Savannah's Story

Here's a picture of Kelsey and Savannah from a couple of years ago when they were students at UNC.

Savannah first invited Kelsey to a campus ministry large group meeting that looked something like we're doing here with singing and a speaker in September, 2008.

Kelsey couldn't come, wasn't sure she wanted to come. But Savannah gently but persistently kept inviting her ALL YEAR LONG: large groups, church, small group Bible studies

Kelsey was busy, she ducked, she wasn't sure she was interested to begin with.

Finally, September 2009, one full year later, Kelsey came to one of our campus ministry large groups.

She was overwhelmed and intimidated, thought everyone around her know all about God and she didn't.

Savannah kept inviting her and God was stirring in her life.

Finally in January, 2010, two and a half years after she was first invited, Kelsey came back to large group.

And God moved in her to stir up a sense of being able to trust in him.

The next week she came back and talked to me after large group, said she was new to thinking about faith-stuff, I invited her to get coffee

We got coffee, I asked a bunch of questions about where she was with Jesus and all these things were checking off

"Kelsey, sounds like you're ready to trust Jesus, do you think so?"

"Yes! Just been waiting for someone to ask me!" and right then and there Kelsey received Christ.

Ladies and gentlemen, Kelsey's story kicks off with an invitation in September 2008,

Her story remains in play as Savannah continues to invite her to various things and it comes to a sweet new stage in January 2010 when the Holy Spirit used my invitation to have Kelsey receive Christ

That's 16 months of a trajectory that ended with a daughter of God coming back home and that trajectory was decided by 16 months of regular, gentle, consistent invitations.

I want to propose to you that if mission to Chatham County is a lime in our personal walks with God,

the life-raft that will get it floating is our diligent, willing, faithful, persistent invitations.

Who are your Kelseys? Who are the people in your life that God has put you in their lives on purpose?

Who are the people that God has put in your life on purpose to be an agent and a herald and an ambassador of his YES to them in Jesus?

And the point is this:

I want to invite you out of an un-holy apathy and into a holy audacity

If God has put you somewhere, he has put you there for a reason.

Somewhere in your network of relationships, God is at work in ways that he wants you to participate in—not all of them, but someone—one or two people whom he's at work in and he wants us to be a part of it.

Two steps from unholy apathy to holy audacity:

1. **Audacious** and expectant prayer: God, I'm assuming that you've got me in some person's life—maybe you know who that person is—for a reason.

I'm praying that you'll open up my heart to be alongside yours and that you'll open up a conversation.

You're simply assuming God's at work somewhere around you and making yourself available, putting yourself at the Lord's disposal to be a part of his work at whatever level is appropriate

You're not forcing anything, not striving, you're participating in God's work as he opens up opportunities

I've got three kids who play soccer or who take gymnastics or dance

My audacious prayer and expectation is that God has put me and my family on one of those teams for a reason: to meet someone who does not know Jesus and to share however the Lord might open up.

So I go into every soccer season, every eyes wide-open, on tip-toe—who is God at work in? Who is he setting me up on a blind-date with? I'm ready, Lord!

2. **Invest and Invite**—borrowing this from someone else.

Along with prayer, there's a call to invest in people relationally, to love on people because that's what Jesus did

God is a relational God, he created us for relationships and he works most tangibly in and through relationships

Jesus loved on people and healed people and served them

Those of us who are Jesus followers, we're called to do what he did: love and serve the people around us no matter where they are spiritually, no matter if they agree with us Christians or not.

So we invest in people relationally because we're followers of Jesus and that's what he did

As we do so, we ask questions: do you have a church background? Was that good or bad? What role does that have in your life today?

Lunch or coffee with an intentional question could be a more holy moment than coming to church.

And then we invite people into God's yes by inviting them to join us here on a Sunday morning on into your small group.

Some people would be very open and interested in coming here on a Sunday morning or interested in joining your small group.

But not everyone is ready for Sunday morning or for your small group.

A stage-appropriate invitation for that person is just to invest in the relationship, just to invest time and energies and to ask the Lord to open up spiritual conversations

Some of you don't have any relationships with people who aren't Christians—you just need to get lunch or coffee with a co-worker or neighbor

and let the Lord ask you his question: “should I not care about this great city?”

But as you’re making invitations, you’re praying and on the look-out for how God might be at work.

You’re asking thoughtful questions—was faith a part of your family growing up at all? What kind of experiences have you had with Christians? Tell me about your spiritual journey. Where are you now in relationship to God?

Eventually, the prayer is that leads to a place of spiritual openness where church is something that they’re interested in checking out

Some of you are here this morning because someone invited you, thanks for coming, we hope that this really is the start of a journey for you that ends with you knowing how much the God of the universe loves you

My eventual goal for us here at Chatham Church is every month, every member, one invitation.

There’s a larger circle of folks who would say that this is their home church and who would say that they’re members here.

My dream is that every single week, every one of you who call this your church home would be extending an intentional invitation:

to invest relationally in an intentional way like getting coffee or doing something together
and eventually to come to church on Sunday morning or to come to your small group.

And we do that because we believe and trust that God loves our great cities. God is on the move long before any of us got there and will be at work long after all of us are gone.

And we want to share in his love for our great cities in ways that are honoring and audacious and loving and gracious all at the same time.

At the end of Jonah in chapter 4, we get Jonah wrestling with God’s goodness; he’s done God’s work but at the end of it we see him camped out outside the city hoping that God will destroy this city.

If Jonah not only did God’s work but also shared in God’s heart, he would have been doing one of two things:

he would have been outside the city PRAYING FOR the city, not against it OR he would have been WITH the Ninevites, entering the PARTY!

There's a great work of God happening in real-time right there in Nineveh—God's grace and mercy poured out to the Ninevites IS ALSO poured out and extended to Jonah if he'll just willingly enter into it!

But there's a better Jonah, who not only knows that God is gracious to his enemies, he loves it: his name is Jesus—and he's the perfect Jonah.

And Jesus, the perfect Jonah said YES to the Father's invitation to go to his enemies.

And this perfect Jonah tells a story about two sons, one who runs away and comes back and one who stays home

And in that story, when the younger son repents and comes home, there's a big party, but the older son self-righteously refuses to enter into the party, just like Jonah here

And just like Jonah here, the story ends open-endedly, we don't know what Jonah does and we don't know what the older son in the story will do

And it's told that way to invite Israel in Jonah's day, the religious leaders in Jesus' day, and us today into the party, into God's heart for the lost.

But Jesus doesn't just go with the message, he himself is the message, he lays his life down for people who are set against him.

Just like Jonah, he spends three days in the depths and his Father vindicates him by raising him from the dead.

And after he's done his work, he doesn't set up shop in a shelter hoping to get vengeance and unleash destruction on "those people."

The Scriptures say Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and he pleads and prays for Chatham County, for all of us and for everyone around us
The made-in-God's-image people that they both love.

Jesus, right now, is praying for you, for me, and for our great county. He intercedes.

Because God's word to our community is YES—YES to life, YES to love, YES to grace, YES, YES, YES, YES, YES

And we're the one he has sent there to tell them.

My friends, Christmas is right around the corner—ready or not!

And as the holidays approach, this is a great season to invite people to come and see.

This is a great season to invite people to hear God's yes to them pronounced most clearly and specifically in Jesus Christ.

And so I want to move us into a time of response.

I'm going to invite the worship team to come back up here as we move into that.

You've got a Post-It note underneath your seat/a stack of them at the end of each row.

As we wrap up our time in Jonah, there are two questions that I want to invite you to respond to:

- 1.** First, if you're not a Christian or haven't been to church in a long time, I simply want to invite you to consider this question: ***are you willing to receive or re-receive God's YES to you in Jesus?***

If you're here this morning sort of checking out faith, or coming back to it for the first time, are you ready like Kelsey was to say yes to Jesus this morning, to trusting in his life, death, and resurrection for you?

If you're here and you're ready to make that decision for the first time or to re-dedicate your life to Jesus, I just want you to write down 1. "YES"

- 2.** If you're already a Christian, ***are you willing to participate in God's YES to Chatham County or wherever you come in contact with people he loves?***

If you're willing to leave here this morning as an agent, an emissary of God's yes to your campus in Jesus.

If you're ready to share in his heart for your great city.

If you're ready to live the lime of mission to love on the people around you to the surface and have it be an active part of your life with God.

I want you to write down the **name of the person that you're going to pray for, invest in relationally and invite over the holiday season to a service**

Just between you and the Lord, you're making a commitment over these next 5 or so weeks that you're going to:

pray, invest relationally, and invite someone to come to church or our Christmas eve service

Can you imagine what God might do with 200 invitations going out over these next five weeks during the holiday season for people to come and see?

Can you imagine what God might do in the next five weeks with that many of us committing to taking small steps of audacious faith—stepping into God’s heart with both prayer and small steps of active obedience?

Not every one of you will have a crazy experience, but my guess is that within one degree of someone in this room is someone else whom God is doing something right now to prepare them for your invitation.

Don’t write any names down if you’re not willing to actually do it.

But if God’s giving you a heart for specific people, and if you know that it’s time to take a next step in sharing in his heart for those people

Then write the name or names of people that you’re committing to praying for with holy audacity and issuing a stage-appropriate invitation to that person that respects who they are and where they are in their spiritual journey.

There’s no pressure here, no one is looking over your shoulder, all of this is just between you and the Lord
To do business with him.

Take a moment now to do whatever you need to do with the Lord

ONE MINUTE SILENCE

Going to close now in prayer, but before we close our time and move into our last song, I want to talk to a group of you

Perhaps for some of you, you took question number 1 this morning and made a significant decision just now—to trust in Jesus or to re-dedicate your life to him.

If you’ve done that this morning, as we move into a time of singing I want to invite you to share that decision with one of our prayer ministers in the back.

That’s the most important decision you could possibly make in your life and all they’re going to do is pray with you, celebrate with you, and help you think about next steps in your journey.

So if you made that first time or re-dedication decision this morning, invite you to go to the back and cement that decision with the folks in the back.

PRAY